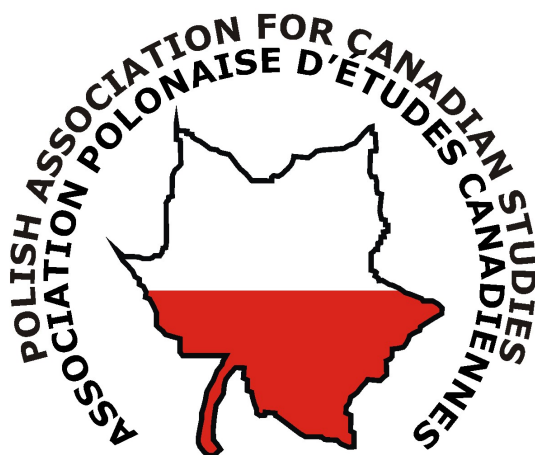


**Conflicts, Confrontations, Combats.  
Canada in the Face of Wars**

**Conflits, confrontations, combats.  
Le Canada face aux guerres**





# TransCanadiana

Polish Journal of Canadian Studies / Revue Polonaise d'Études Canadiennes

**Conflicts, Confrontations, Combats.  
Canada in the Face of Wars**

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Le Canada face aux guerres**

**9. 2017**

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## **INTRODUCTION / AVANT-PROPOS**

Wars have always been the staple diet of history. They seem to be as old as humanity and inherent to mankind. Primeval fight for survival and territory with the development of civilisations has turned into multifaceted conflicts between and among nations as well as cultures, which have either created new countries or destroyed the old ones, have fulfilled dreams or been the realisation of nightmares. Fought previously mostly on the battlefield, wars in modernity have transcended the military sphere and entered the civilian one having influenced lives of common people to a much greater extent than in the past. Therefore, while initially wars had an impact predominantly on soldiers and civilians directly involved in them or dwelling in the vicinity of the conflicts, today distant as well as global wars take a toll even on those living thousands of miles away from the war zones. The present world, as it is often noticed, has been, as a whole, at war. Multiple conflicts across the world, but especially the war on terrorism and the recent conflicts in the Middle East together with the Refugee Crisis in Europe, especially, have been a challenge to Canada, too. Distant and global wars have been fought, beyond and in Canada, not only by soldiers, but also in the minds of war survivors and refugees. The narratives of these struggles have always been shaped by worldwide forces, local or personal ideologies and have been redefining Canadian collective identity, culture, literary scene and politics.

Throughout centuries conflicts have not been limited only to military activities having extended much beyond the classical battlefield into the realm of the abstract. The progress of human civilisations has been motivated and redefined by clashes of differing ideas, thoughts, cultural and linguistic trends, combating perspectives as well as visions: individual, national or global ones. Throughout Canadian history such confrontations have resulted both in traumatic experiences and in spectacular achievements which have formed and have been altering Canada.

The volume of *TransCanadiana* entitled “Conflicts, Confrontations, Combats. Canada in the Face of Wars / Conflits, confrontations, combats. Le Canada face aux guerres” aims at addressing a multitude of Canadian conflicts and at exploring implications of wars in all their rich sense throughout Canadian history and in Canada’s present, as well as in Canadian literature, society, thought and languages. The various realms of the struggles are never limited or independent but they interrelate, mingle, and affect each other. The authors of the articles gathered hereby examine facets of numerous military conflicts, from combatant and noncombatant perspectives, as well as ideological disagreements which have not ceased to affect Canadian politics, society, and culture. The scholars point out the ways in which wars transform human identity and indicate how the past continues to exert influence on the present or how the present alters the understanding of the past. Moreover, they offer insight into how faraway lands as well as struggles, distant both in terms of geography or time, affect the here and now. What is more, the papers demonstrate Canada’s constant efforts, literary, cultural, or political, to accommodate, re-examine and learn from traumatic experiences of her citizens in her struggle to construct a peaceful contemporary society not only within her borders but also beyond them, bearing in mind both Canadian prosperity and the world’s future. The articles collected in the current issue of *TransCanadiana* are divided into four sections: “The Great War in and beyond Canada in Literature, Culture and History”, “The Second World War and Other Wars in Canadian Literature”, “The Impact of (Global) Conflicts on Canadian Literature and Society” and “Other Apocalypses – Metaphors of War and Identity, Linguistic and Cultural Conflicts.”

The first group of essays entitled “The Great War in and beyond Canada in Literature, Culture and History” discuss aspects of the First World War in Canadian literature and its significance for Canadian as well as global history. Therefore, **Anna Branach-Kallas** in “The Great War, Trauma, and Survivor Guilt in Selected Contemporary Canadian Fiction and Drama” focuses on the representation of trauma, and especially survivor guilt, in recent Canadian literature about the First World War, such as *Soldier’s Heart* (2001) by David French, *The Underpainter* (1997) by Jane Urquhart, *Dancock’s Dance* (1996) by Guy Vanderhaeghe and *The Cartographer of No Man’s Land* (2013) by P.S. Duffy. Applying trauma theory Branach-Kallas pays attention to problems with adaptation to the post-war reality due to the characters’ necessity of giving testimony in the process of trauma recovery, excruciating pain connected with outliving others as well as unbearable responsibility for other soldiers’ deaths. The war, which casts a shadow on all the characters’ lives, transforms the protagonists profoundly and frequently results in doubling or fracturing their selves. The author underlies the ways in which the four writers undermine the Great War myths due to examining its negative and

long-lasting effects and points to the need for reexamination of the painful loss in Canadian collective memory.

In his paper entitled “La Grande Guerre dans la littérature canadienne-française et québécoise” **Piotr Sadkowski** explores little-known war themes in the cultural imaginary of Quebec as he analyses literary works which focus on the First World War experiences. Therefore, in his comparative examination of *L’Emmitouflé [The Draft Dodger]* by Louis Caron and *La Kermesse [A Secret Between Us]* by Daniel Poliquin Sadkowski not only concentrates on the conscription crisis regarded to be the sole Québécois collective memory generated by the two world conflicts, but refers also to recent examples of popular fiction and fiction for young readers, which deal with such recurrent themes as the above crisis and the Spanish flu. Besides, he analyses the consequences of the First World War for Quebec, including, for example, the internment camps for enemy aliens.

In “The Call to Duty: Representations of Canadian WWI Nurses in Contemporary Canadian Literature” **Jan Lermite** presents revisions of the typical images of Canadian Great War nurses and in this way tries to expand the reader’s understanding of the past, with its traumatic experiences and moral or ethical challenges influencing the protagonists’ choices. By examining recent literary incarnations of Canadian nurses from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in three texts: David Macfarlane’s *The Danger Tree* (1991), Michael Poole’s *Rain Before Morning* (2006), and Vern Thiessen’s *Vimy* (2007), the author’s goal is to complete the traditional Canadian nurse portrait. According to Lermite, the model nurse of the Great War time appeared patriotic, enthusiastic and dutiful. In her analysis, however, the author suggests that this image is over-simplified, and proves that the characters of the three texts are caring and loyal, but also daring and rebellious, when the prevailing morality or military rules become a hindrance to their professional commitment.

**Edyta Lorek-Jezińska** reads Massicotte’s 2002 play as a juxtaposition of an anti-war manifesto and a pro-war message which deconstructs and, paradoxically, at the same time strengthens myths about the First World War, in the light of hauntology, trauma theory and the phantom in her article entitled “Dreaming and Haunting in *Mary’s Wedding* by Stephen Massicotte”. The author examines the role of dreams, memory, remembering and forgetting in the drama. Lorek-Jezińska sees the text, with its several levels of haunting, implying the inability to erase war memories as well as the inevitability of reexperiencing war trauma, as a prerequisite to disremembering the past, but also as an act of symbolic exorcism which aims at accepting death and loss. Simultaneously, the author notices, the play underlies the process of representation: addressing the theme of war and putting the war into words. Although referring to the beginning of the twentieth century, the play, as

Lorek-Jezińska believes, constructs a frame for discussing contemporary wars, too, because it invents adequate theatrical diction necessary to address present-day military conflicts.

The First World War acquires a universal dimension in **Ewa Urbaniak-Rybicka's** article "'A War of Worlds' – Timothy Findley's *The Wars*" which draws the reader's attention to the use and transformation of symbols of nature and challenging Canadian national myths in the breakthrough anti-war Canadian novel. Starting with the claim by one of Margaret Atwood's characters that Canada has been built on dead animals the author points to the ways in which Timothy Findley exposes the truth by endowing the novel with an ecological message. The examination of the novel emphasises the protagonist's interaction with nature, but the analysis also demonstrates that the First World War was an ecological disaster and a violation of the natural order. The fiction, despite its specific social and cultural context, can be read, Urbaniak-Rybicka suggests, as a parable about the need for reconsideration of the relationship between human and non-human animals, as well as nature and a unique First World War 'othered' narrative.

It is also the Other, but a human one, which becomes the subject of **Mateusz Bogdanowicz's** paper "A 'White Man's War'? Canadian Blacks' Contribution to Canada's Effort in the Great War". Bogdanowicz concentrates on the role of African Canadians during the First World War in the Canadian military forces and their contribution to the war effort in Canada as well as on the changing perception of Black Canadian soldiers during the global conflict. Bogdanowicz underlines racism African Canadians faced in the Canadian army and discusses legal problems (prospective) Canadian Black soldiers confronted. African Canadians' forgotten contribution to the First World War has resulted not only from the racist attitudes Canada shared then with the whole Western world but also from the fact that Canadian Blacks who enlisted and were accepted in the army constituted about 0,4% of Canadian armed forces. Bogdanowicz's paper becomes a way to commemorate Black Canadian men and women against all, both subjective and objective, odds.

Uncovering a little-known story, in spite of the scarcity of available documents, **Anna Reczyńska** in her article entitled "Actions for Independence of Poland Taken in Canada during World War One" examines the status of Poles in Canada during the global conflict which triggered ethnic tensions and resulted in prejudice against as well as interment of Poles from the territories under German or Austro-Hungarian rule. Furthermore, the author reconstructs the path of volunteers from the Polish diasporas in the United States and in Canada to the Polish army, which was incorporated into the so called Blue Army formed in France under the command of General Józef Haller. Reczyńska describes, therefore, the forming, development and functioning of The Tadeusz Kościuszko Polish Army Training Camp in Niagara-on-the-Lake,

Ontario, in the years 1917-1919. Disclosing largely unknown pages from the history of Canadian and Polish relations, Reczyńska recognises the cooperation between Canadians and Poles during the Great War when the latter's loyalty to their country of residence was finally recognised and distrust towards them dispersed.

The impact of the Second World War as well as other 20<sup>th</sup> century conflicts on survivors, Canadians and Canadian cultural life becomes the central issue explored in the second section of the present volume: "The Second World War and Other Wars in Canadian Literature". In the first article of this part, "Le Canada et Auschwitz : enquête et fiction dans *Le Cœur d'Auschwitz* et *Artéfact* de Carl Leblanc", **Robert Dion** explores the exposure of Québécois, Canadian, and other Western writers to armed global conflicts which leads to narrativizing the wars, and subsequent literary interpretations. He focuses on a film and a novel, *Le Cœur d'Auschwitz* (2010) as well as *Artéfact* (2012) by Carl Leblanc to analyse references to the Holocaust and its impact on the contemporary media. The author, displaying how the novel and the film connect the past with the present and the dead with the living, tries to prove that Quebec and Montreal have always been implicated in global history and emphasises the importance of Auschwitz for Canada. The presence of 40,000 Jewish immigrants in Quebec, especially in Montreal, considered to be one of the largest Jewish cities in the world, after 1945, with their traumatic experiences and survivor stories transported the conflict to the Canadian soil as well as remodelled Canadians' collective imagination.

**Brygida Gasztold** in her paper "Montreal Jews, Eastern European Survivors, and the Intergenerational Legacy of the Holocaust in Nancy Richler's *The Imposter Bride*" focuses on a survivor's story set against the background of a global conflict and analyses the impact of the mother's war trauma on family relations as well as the interconnection between the mother's and the daughter's identities, memory or rather, to use Hirsch's concept, postmemory. Giving the reader access to the rich, multilingual postwar Montreal Jewish community, the novel, with its gendered lens, centering on the intimate and the private, underlies the intergenerational nature of the Holocaust legacy. Furthermore, it explores the tensions between the Canadian Jews and the Holocaust survivors who become disturbing emblems of war trauma Canadians would rather choose to forget about. Deliberating on the suspension of traditional moral standards during the Holocaust with reference to the ethically ambiguous decisions of the heroine from Richler's novel Gasztold emphasizes the therapeutic potential of putting one's life in a story and of storytelling.

In his paper "Les Italiens de Montréal, la Seconde Guerre mondiale et le fascisme : transferts culturels et littéraires" **Gerardo Acerenza** aims at analysing still another perspective on global and Canadian conflicts.

Therefore, he examines the responses of the Italian community of Montreal to World War Two and to Mussolini's taking over as well as to Canadian authorities' treatment of the diaspora's support for fascism and Mussolini's policy. The study concentrates on Filippo Salvatore's play *La Fresque de Mussolini* (1985) which recreates the history of the iconic mural located in the church Nostra Signora della Difesa in Little Italy of Montreal dating back to 1910. At the focal point of the paper there are the relationship between Canada and Italo-Québécois, as well as the diaspora's disparate attitudes towards fascism and the war in general.

The four articles which follow concentrate on the figure of the child as an inheritor of the past generations and, consequently, its traumas. The notion of war is transferred beyond the direct experience of the battlefield due to the child protagonist and presented as having psychological as well as social consequences. Therefore, the central concept of **Ewelina Berek's** article entitled "Entre Europe et États-Unis – tensions dues à la Seconde Guerre mondiale dans *Le ciel de Bay City* de Catherine Mavrikakis" are presence, on the one hand, and absence, on the other, as she analyses the theme of war in contemporary Quebec literature. Berek examines the notion of American memory constructed out of European Holocaust recollections in Catherine Mavrikakis's 2008 novel entitled *Le ciel de Bay City*. The paper studies the interdependence of the past and the present as it explores the impact the Holocaust, with its repercussions and memories, has had on a Polish-Jewish francophone Canadian character, who seeks refuge from traumatic war experiences on the North American soil.

Othered perspectives on war become the focus of the article entitled "L'enfant, la guerre, le trauma. La parole des « enfants du silence »" in which **Yvonne Völkl** examines contemporary novels by Québécois migrant writers originating from Eastern Europe and Haiti. In her analysis Völkl focuses on narratives of war offered by – for a long time silenced – child victims of the Holocaust and the Duvalier regime. «Les enfants du silence», in novels by Régine Robin, Monique Bosco, or Émile Ollivier, to mention just a few, are survivors who salvage their memories and put their traumatic experiences into stories. These fictional narratives of war traumas and life under the totalitarian government offer a unique perspective on the conflicts and, as the author notices, affect present-day Québécois and francophone readers despite time and physical distance from the described wars.

War through a child's eyes is the focal point of **Ewa Figas's** article entitled "La guerre perçue par des enfants dans le roman *Guerres* de Charlotte Gingras". The novel gives voice to two children whose father fights in Afghanistan. Figas demonstrates how his absence mars their and their mother's everyday lives and points to the consequences of disrupted family

balance and asks whether any type of harmony without the father engaged in a war in a faraway land is possible.

The multifaceted nature of the notion of war and the theme of the child in the face of wars returns in **Anna Żurawska's** paper "La guerre dans *Lignes de faille* de Nancy Huston". The conflict, as presented in Huston's novel, triggers contemplation on memory as well as humanity. While it may not seem to be in the foreground of the text, the war certainly emerges in the process of transgenerational memory transmission. Żurawska analyses the concept of memory in the novel in relation to Marianne Hirsh's and Henri Raczymow's theories and draws attention to formal aspects of the text which help convey traumatic war experiences.

In her paper "The Material of Memory in Helen Humphreys' *The Lost Garden*" **Rūta Šlapkauskaitė** approaches the war, the past and memory in an intricate way when she analyses the correlation between place and memory in Helen Humphreys' novel, full of intertextual references, set in the middle of the Second World War in England. The author offers a Bachelardian reading of the text to display how the novelist negotiates the relationships between the material and the spiritual in the process of transforming death into life. Šlapkauskaitė draws attention to the importance of power as well as place in Canadian literature referring to Canadian problematic and historically conditioned link with the land. The central element of the paper's analysis is a multidimensional symbol of the garden which functions as a tool recreating the past, as well as an agent of renewal and replenishment, which connects materiality and memory with imagination, the present with the past, two world wars, life with death, humans with *humus*, and which helps the main heroine of *The Lost Garden* escape, if only momentarily, the war ordeal.

The third section of this issue of *TransCanadiana*, "The Impact of (Global) Conflicts on Canadian Literature and Society", centres on the repercussions of worldwide wars in Canadian multicultural memory. Thus, **Olivier Harenda** in his paper entitled "'Git-mit, git-mit talk': A Woman's Perspective on The Partition of India in Shauna Singh Baldwin's *What the Body Remembers*" looks at a literary representation of a multidimensional historic event as reimagined by a Canadian born writer in her 1999 novel. Harenda presents the reader with a historical introduction to the Partition and comments on its impact on various literary genres. Referring to trauma theories the author claims that the novel offers a woman's perspective on the momentous event and places the female body, in its various incarnations of successive heroines, the most helpless victims of the Partition, as the central allegory. The female body, therefore, becomes not only the storage of memories and the tool for memorising the past but also the symbol of the land – abused, raped, dismembered, disfigured and divided India. Harenda concludes that reliving the Partition of India in Shauna Singh Baldwin's novel

may make the contemporary reader aware of the dangers which ethnic as well as religious tensions trigger, and serve as a potent warning.

**Bettina Mack** in her article entitled “Creating Canada Elsewhere: The Global Spaces of War in Canadian Historiographic Metafiction” focuses on transnational movement, which she perceives as an origin of and a remedy for war, in three novels – Timothy Findley’s *The Wars* (1977), Anne Michaels’ *Fugitive Pieces* (1996) and Madeleine Thien’s *Dogs at the Perimeter* (2011). In her analysis the scholar emphasises the interaction between the global spaces and the territories where the conflicts take place as well as the cultural space in Canada, perceived both as a war participant and a shelter from conflicts, constructed from European or Asian experiences of soldiers and refugees. The wars fought elsewhere influence the protagonists’ Canadian identities forged in the interplay among cultures, lands, borders and nations. The three historiographic metafictional settings of which alternates between Canada, Europe or Asia, foreground displacement and exile – either literal or metaphorical. In these war novels the stability of national identities is challenged, crossing various borders becomes as a necessity, while language serves as a tool of discovering as well as constructing the world. The space is often imbued with ideology but, as Mack claims, because geographical places are amoral, the earth offers transnational connections. The novels seem to offer alternative spaces for the displaced while the image of blurring borders underlines postmodern fluidity of concepts.

**Aurelia Klimkiewicz** in her paper entitled “The Experience of (Pre)Exile: Preliminary Considerations about Eastern Europeans in Transit through Italy (1956-1989)” focuses not on conflicts per-se, but rather on the impact of conflicts in Europe and beyond in the final decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when she analyses the refugee camp Latina, which operated between the years 1956-1989 in Italy near Rome. The author concentrates on the (pre)exile experience located between pre-emigration and post-emigration and claims that the Latina camp and its archives serve as one of the few accounts registering this stage of the migratory experience. Klimkiewicz believes in the necessity of bringing the narrative about the stay in the camp to the public attention as part of the healing process for Poles who lived in Latina having escaped the strikes in Gdańsk in the 1980s, the martial law in Poland and then, after 1989, the economic problems in their country. The harsh life in the camp with its overwhelming feelings of powerlessness, insignificance and disturbing suspension, anxiety, mental health issues, criminal activities or interethnic tensions does not offer a success story but becomes an essential reconstruction of traumas the Polish refugees experienced in this transitory stage which, as Klimkiewicz notices, gives an insight into the ordeals of migrants in the middle of the present refugee crisis in Europe.



**Oleh Kozachuk** in his paper entitled “Ukraine in Canadian Foreign Policy After 2014” examines the nature of ties between Canada and Ukraine, and analyses Canadian foreign policy with respect to Ukraine in the light of the Ukrainian crisis. Firstly, the author presents the actions and reactions of the international community to what he calls a hybrid Russian-Ukrainian war which, in his view, has been depicted by the Russian propaganda as an ethnic one, and notices the disadvantaged position of Ukraine in the conflict. Further, the scholar acknowledges Canada’s Prime Ministers’, Stephen Harper’s and Justin Trudeau’s, declarations to react to the Russian Federation’s activities in the Crimea and discusses Canada’s support for Ukraine in three categories: sanctions, actions resulting from Canada’s NATO obligations and direct support for the country – financial, humanitarian as well as military. Kozachuk claims that Canada has been assisting Ukraine in her battle for freedom as well as values for the duration of the conflict and indicates new ways in which assistance could be provided, for instance by Canada’s official recognition of Russia’s violation of the international laws due to her territorial transgression into Ukraine or investigation of the Russian Federation propaganda on the Internet and in the media worldwide.

The relations of Canada with Europe are also in the foreground of the next article in this section. In her paper entitled “Canada’s Cooperation with Poland in the Face of the Crisis in Ukraine (2014-2016)” **Magdalena Marczuk-Karbownik** studies Canada and Poland’s bilateral historical, social, economic as well as military alliances. She discusses the new challenges to this effective cooperation which appeared with the Russian Federation’s occupation of Crimea in Ukraine. Due to the shared core values, despite the changes in the countries’ governments, the relationship has become ever stronger, as the author proves in her detailed examination. Furthermore, Marczuk-Karbownik provides a comprehensive account of Canadian as well as Polish officials’ declarations addressing not only the present but also the future of the partnership, which aims at, among others, maintaining the world peace and discouraging aggressive parties from ignoring international laws.

The response to the European Refugee Crisis of 2015 and its influence on Canadian political life becomes the focal point of **Richard Nimijean’s** paper. In his article entitled “Migrant Spirit Contested: Competing Visions of Canada’s National Identity in the 2015 Federal Election” Nimijean discusses the attitude to one of “Canadian official narratives” – “Migrant spirit”, rooted in Canadian diversity and denoting the search for a better life and the readiness to accommodate the newcomers in the adopted motherland. Nimijean proves how, with the Syrian war and the European refugee crisis in the background, this narrative, together with two attitudes towards immigration as well as the notion of Canadianness itself, were challenged in the 2015 Canadian federal election. It was the Liberal Party’s inclusive

perspective on migrant spirit distinguishing Canada from some xenophobic European countries and constructing it as a leader in the refugee file which prevailed over the Conservative Party's discomfort with diversity issues. Nevertheless, the Canadian multidimensional national narrative, as the author tries to demonstrate, is still raising controversies and is being reconstructed denying Canadians dangerous self-satisfaction.

The last in this section **Marta Trembecka-Kijewska's** "A Note on the Post-War Story of the Wawel Tapestries in Canada" deals with the history of the Wawel tapestries from the Wawel castle in Cracow and their return after the Second World War from Canada to Poland. The historian focuses on the details of the long and complicated journey the tapestries had to make before they returned home and describes the four main areas of disagreement between the Polish government in exile in London and the Polish communist government, the Canadian administration and the two Polish governments, the Canadian authorities in Ottawa and Quebec, as well as between the caregivers of the tapestries. Consequently, the whole process implicated in political rivalries lasted as many as 15 years.

Metaphorical images of struggles and various manifestations of antagonisms in Québécois literature as well as culture link the articles gathered in the last subsection of the volume entitled "Other Apocalypses-Metaphors of War and Identity, Linguistic and Cultural Conflicts". The part begins with **Petr Kylaoušek's** search for war narratives. In "Apocalypses : entre Marie-Claire Blais, Éric Dupont et Nicolas Dickner" he notices the general lack of a great national narrative of war in Quebec. Such a tale, especially in the Old World literature, is usually constructed out of the stories of conflict with an external enemy. Quebec history is devoid of such confrontations. Still, in his comparative analysis of Marie-Claire Blais's novel cycle *Soifs*, Nicolas Dickner's *Tarmac* and Éric Dupont's *La finacée américaine*, having recognized the legacy of the Catholic tradition and Québécois community habitus, Kylaoušek identifies elements of such a story disguised as apocalyptic themes as well as images. The war narrative, therefore, as the scholar demonstrates, is transferred to the realm of the symbolic, which allows for ignoring time limits or neglecting national boundaries and which also enables the reader to deliberate on axiological problems such as, for example, the concept of evil.

Subsequently, the symbolic dimension of war is studied in **Krzysztof Jarosz's** paper "Les frères ennemis : une guerre civile à l'échelle familiale. *L'Œil de Marquise* de Monique LaRue". The author's aim is to analyse, in the novel *L'Œil de Marquise*, antagonistic attitudes which divided the society of Quebec at the moment when the question of its autonomy was considered. Such viewpoints are presented by means of biblical themes and with reference to LaRue's famous essay entitled "L'arpenteur et le navigateur". Therefore, a

contemporary version of Cain and Abel, the Cardinal brothers from the novel, and the antagonism between them show the conflict between the proponents of Quebec's independence and the defenders of Quebec's multicultural character.

In his paper "La tortue autochtone ou l'ordre de l'imaginaire. La poésie d'Éléonore Sioui" **Michał Krzykowski** notices that although Québécois culture has granted an important meaning to the immigrant, national Québécois narrations are not ready yet to acknowledge the presence and art by Quebec's First Nations. Having discussed the concept of collective imagination from psychoanalytic as well as pragmatic perspectives, Krzykowski examines Éléonore Sioui's poetry as an example of Québécois Amerindian francophone literature as he aims at rejecting the victimising and accusatory tone characterising, as he believes, the contemporary discussion of First Nation's literary output in Quebec. Such a liberation enables the encounter between communities arguing over history and its interpretations.

Acknowledging the fact that there is no one and universal history or truth, and that each historical narration is characterised by gaps as well as ambiguities, in his paper "Le conflit des mémoires dans *Volkswagen blues* de Jacques Poulin" **Marcin Janczak** describes the clash between the mainstream and the ex-centric histories of America in Poulin's novel. This historiographic metafiction recovers the First Nation's accounts of the past, frequently considered to be marginal, and demonstrates how the initial disparity between Canada's First Nations' and the Whites' versions of history complete rather than exclude each other to create Québécois identity as multicultural. The paper, therefore, displays a multiplicity of historical truths and interpretations of history as it focuses on the conflict among them.

Referring to the Quebec cinema and especially such concepts related to The Quiet Revolution as "cinéma d'identification" (Christian Poirier), "national cinema" (Andrew Higson, Bill Marshall) and "transnational cinema" (Andrew Higson), or "cinéma mineur" (Gilles Deleuze), in her article entitled "Conflits identitaires dans le cinéma direct québécois de la Révolution tranquille" **Katarzyna Wójcik** discusses identity conflicts, both social and linguistic, within the community and encounters with the Other, in three Quebec films. The analysis focuses on *Le chat dans le sac* by Gilles Groulx (1964), *Les Ordres* by Michel Brault (1974), and, finally *La Vie heureuse de Léopold Z.* by Gilles Carle (1965).

For **Malgorzata Czubińska** in her "La renaissance de la légende métisse? Les enjeux de la traduction de la bande dessinée sur l'exemple de la version polonaise et française de Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography de Chester Brown" the conflict becomes a translator's challenge. The author first sketches the history of the disagreement between the Métis and the Canadian authorities which resulted in two uprisings – the Red River Rebellion (1869-1870) and the Northwest Rebellion (1885) and, subsequently, discusses this

formally innovative biography of Métis' charismatic leader – Louis Riel. However, it is the translation process which is in the centre of her attention. Having the historical context in mind, Czubińska points to Riel's bilingualism as well as the links between the word and the image as the main challenges of the translator. In her comparative study of French and Polish versions of *Louis Riel: A Comic Strip Biography* the author refers to the concept of a semiotic complex as she focuses on the intricacies of translating cultural elements, the historical background, or proper names together with bilingualism.

The final paper by **Joanna Warmuzińska-Rogóż** offers an insight into the language difference and its consequences for English as well as French Canadas. Therefore, “La traduction littéraire au Canada : domination, coexistence paisible ou source de ferment intellectuel?” examines the distinctive features of the literary translations market between Quebec and English-Canada. At the beginning of the translation history between the English speaking part of Canada and the French speaking province mostly pragmatic documents were translated. These, however, were followed by translations of Québécois literary works, which were encouraged by the state. As a result, as Joanna Warmuzińska-Rogóż notices, Québécois literature, especially works by feminist writers, has become a powerful influence on the English-Canadian literary system.

Volume 9 of *TransCanadiana* closes with selected parts of the MA thesis which won the 2016 Nancy Burke competition for the best MA thesis in Canadian Studies. In “Unlayering the Multilayered: An Intertextual Study of *A Short Sad Book* by George Bowering” the winner, **Marcin Markowicz** from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, analyses the multidimensional array of intertextual references in Bowering's second novel.

In the present volume we hope to offer its readers articles by international scholars focusing on disparate conflicts with, in, beyond and among Canada(s). We hope that “Conflicts, Confrontations, Combats. Canada in the Face of Wars / Conflits, confrontations, combats. Le Canada face aux guerres” will prompt discussions and encourage still fresh perspectives on the significance of variously conceived of confrontations and their bearing on the understanding of Canadian past, constructing the present and imagining the future.

**THE GREAT WAR IN AND BEYOND  
CANADA IN LITERATURE, CULTURE  
AND HISTORY**

**LA GRANDE GUERRE DANS  
ET AU-DELÀ DU CANADA  
DANS LA LITTÉRATURE,  
LA CULTURE ET L'HISTOIRE**



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## THE GREAT WAR, TRAUMA, AND SURVIVOR GUILT IN SELECTED CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN FICTION AND DRAMA

### Abstract

The article is an analysis of the representation of trauma, and more specifically survivor guilt, in recent Canadian fiction and drama about the First World War, such as *Soldier's Heart* (2001) by David French, *The Underpainter* (1997) by Jane Urquhart, *Dancock's Dance* (1996) by Guy Vanderhaeghe and *The Cartographer of No Man's Land* (2013) by P.S. Duffy. These novels and plays present complex portraits of the Great War survivors, who struggle with horrible memories of the front and find it impossible to adjust to the post-war reality. Trauma theory is applied in the analysis of the four texts.

**Keywords:** survivor guilt, trauma, Canadian fiction and drama, Great War

### Résumé

L'article est une analyse des troubles de stress post-traumatique, et plus exactement du syndrome de la culpabilité du survivant, dans deux romans et deux pièces canadiens de la Grande Guerre publiés récemment : *Soldier's Heart* (2001) de David French, *The Underpainter* (1997) de Jane Urquhart, *Dancock's Dance* (1996) de Guy Vanderhaeghe et *The Cartographer of No Man's Land* (2013) de P.S. Duffy. On y trouve des portraits complexes des survivants de la Grande Guerre qui sont tourmentés par des souvenirs horribles du front et sont incapables de s'habituer à l'existence de l'après-guerre. Diverses théories du traumatisme sont appliquées dans l'analyse.

**Mots-clés :** la culpabilité du survivant, traumatisme, romans et pièces canadiens, Grande Guerre

## Introduction

The goal of this paper is to analyse the representation of trauma, and more specifically survivor guilt, in recent Canadian fiction and drama about the First World War, such as *Soldier's Heart* (2001) by David French, *The Underpainter* (1997) by Jane Urquhart, *Dancock's Dance* (1996) by Guy Vanderhaeghe and *The Cartographer's of No Man's Land* (2013) by P.S. Duffy. These novels and plays present complex portraits of the Great War survivors, who struggle with horrible memories of the front and find it impossible to adjust to the post-war reality.

As Cathy Caruth explains, “for those who undergo trauma, it is not only the moment of the event, but of the passing out of it that is traumatic; [...] *survival itself*, in other words, *can be a crisis*” (“Trauma” 9; italics in the original). Frequently, survivors suffer from numerous symptoms of what is today referred to as PTSD, such as numbing, flashbacks and nightmares, for many years after the war. According to Dori Laub, “The traumatic event, although real, took place outside the parameters of ‘normal’ reality, such as causality, sequence, place and time. The trauma is thus an event that has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during and no after” (“Bearing” 69). The trauma victim suffers from two contradictory reactions – amnesia and acting out – the compulsive, terrifying recurrence of traumatic memory. Caruth suggests that “while the images of traumatic reenactment remain absolutely accurate and precise, they are largely inaccessible to conscious recall and control” (Caruth, “Recapturing” 151). This pathological dialectic undergoes some evolution: whereas flashbacks dominate immediately after the traumatic event, later the victim succumbs ever more often to numbing, trying to avoid the intense emotional distress caused by reliving trauma. This self-protective mechanism might result, however, in a narrowing of consciousness, which further aggravates the post-traumatic syndrome (Herman 42-50).

Paradoxically, guilt seems to be a universal feeling among survivors of traumatic events. To have been spared oneself, whereas others have perished, creates a heavy psychological burden (Herman 53-54). Consequently, survivors experience a profound sense of accountability for the death of others and a desire to bear witness to those deaths (Lifton 145). Although scholars have raised objections to the use of the concept of “guilt” to describe these feelings, pointing out the ethical perils of thinking in terms of the guilt of victims rather than victimizers, psychologists and psychiatrists recognize self-blame as an important moral aspect of suffering (Lifton 144-145; Krystal 77).

Scholars mention the necessity of giving testimony in working through the process of recovery from trauma (LaCapra 157-8). According to Laub,



This re-externalization of the event can occur and take effect only when one can articulate and *transmit* the story, literally transfer it to another outside oneself and then take it back again, inside. Telling thus entails a reassertion of the hegemony of reality and a re-externalization of the evil that affected and contaminated the trauma victim (Laub, "Bearing" 69; italics in the original).

It is of utmost importance, however, that the listener take on part of the responsibility for bearing witness that the narrator could not carry alone (Laub, "An Event" 85).

### Giving Testimony

In his 2001 play *Soldier's Heart*, David French focuses on the relationship between sixteen-year-old Jacob and his father Esau, a First World War veteran from Newfoundland, who suffered from shell shock, or what had been referred to since the US civil war as "soldier's heart" (Moore and Reger 4). During the six years after the Armistice, Jacob and his mother have been tormented by Esau's emotional numbness, violence bouts, and suicide attempts. Estranged from and deeply hurt by his father, Jacob decides to leave his hometown. The action of this one-act play is set on the railway station platform at Bay Roberts in Newfoundland. In the dramatic dialogues between the three characters, Jacob, Esau, and his former comrade-in-arms Bert, French depicts the massacre of the Newfoundland Regiment at the battle of Beaumont-Hamel on July 1, 1916.

Throughout the play, Jacob voices his resentment towards his father, who has never revealed to him what happened during the Great War. He insists that "Talking about the war might do some good. It's a way to let off steam" (French 79). Esau tries to explain then that "It's a waste of time... Things happen in war that can never be forgotten... never be forgiven. Things that a man just has to live with. It's his punishment" (French 79). The problem is that Esau has never found anybody willing to really listen to him; the attitude of the society is epitomized by his friend Bert who, throughout the play, attempts to prevent Esau from verbalizing his story, so horrible and terrifying it is. Esau has felt ostracized by the community which offered him neither work nor help, and has been forced to deal on his own with post-traumatic symptoms. Struggling with his emotional distress, he hardly speaks to his family and has been repetitively angry as well as violent towards his wife and son. Once, he even put a knife to his son's throat, so real was the attack imagery in his mind (French 72). Esau certainly feels he has been badly used by the people in power; his sense of victimization involves the threat of moral and psychological disintegration. It is the sense of betrayal that provokes his rage. According to Lifton, anger and violence can function as strategies of

self-defence, desperate attempts to regain autonomy and integrity: “the experience of anger and rage become necessary for self-definition. Violence may seem to be the only form of action that can fend off imagery of victimization and disintegration” (Lifton 149). Importantly, French thus points to the larger problem of the social reintegration of war veterans, who were offered little help when returning from the front to Canada (see Rutherforddale).

While Esau tries to prevent Jacob from leaving, he finally realizes the necessity of giving testimony to his beloved son, the voice of whom calling him in No Man’s Land saved him from death. French poignantly illustrates the veteran’s efforts to voice the terrible truth, which is gradually unfolded, with the kind support of Jacob: after the Somme offensive on the first of July 1916, his father, severely wounded, bayoneted his own brother Will, mistaking him for the enemy. During the six years since the end of the war, Esau has been tormented by guilt, as he feels that he was supposed to protect his younger brother (French 79). He is tortured by “the survivor’s unanswerable inner question, ‘Why did I survive while he, she, they died?’” (Lifton 142-143), from which it is a relatively simple step to: “If I had died *instead*, he, she, or they would have lived” (Lifton 171; italics in the original):

ESAU But why spare me, Bert? Why me and not Will? Why?  
BERT No one can answer that. Not even the Pope... (French 93).

Instead of the condemnation that he expects from his son, the sixteen-year-old offers his father understanding and forgiveness. In Esau’s case, “The testimony is therefore, the process by which the narrator (the survivor) reclaims his position as a witness [...] or a listener inside himself” (Laub, “An Event” 85). The compassion with which Jacob listens to his father and his decision to stay at Bay Roberts in the family home might help the veteran to accept his past and ease the burden of self-condemnation. The play ends in reconciliation and a note of hope for the future.

Jane Urquhart’s Governor General’s Literary Award winning novel *The Underpainter* (1997) depicts two survivors of the First World War: George and Augusta. The novel is narrated by Austin Fraser, a self-centred American abstract painter, who uses his Canadian friends’ stories as a source of inspiration for his art. Both Augusta and George suffer from traumatic shock during the war. George, a china painter and art lover from a modest family in Ontario, enlists, believing that the war will provide him with a wonderful opportunity to visit Europe. Yet, with time, he realizes that the war is an explosion of brutality that annihilates European culture. As Robert Lifton explains, large-scale absurd destruction creates a “loss of grounding so extreme that victims are overwhelmed by the social ‘deviation’ from ordinary standards of harmony or limited disharmony” (145). George never talks about

the war to Austin. It is from Augusta that the hero-narrator learns, in a long conversation in 1937, that his friend was severely traumatized during the battle of Passchendaele when he discovered, in some ruins, a piece of broken china, which became a symbol of the apocalypse for him. George spends several months in a hospital for shell shock victims, yet even many years after the war he suffers from traumatic symptoms, such as horrible flashbacks and nightmares.

As to Augusta, she was a nurse at the Number One Canadian Hospital in Étaples, responsible for the “unceasing cargo of ruined flesh delivered to her ward” (Urquhart 186-187). Recounting her war experience to Austin, Augusta mentions the utter exhaustion of the medical staff, who were not allowed to rest and felt guilty when they were incapable of helping their patients (Urquhart 153). The female protagonist started to use morphine to be able to withstand the surrounding horror. After the death of her beloved colleague and friend Maggie, Augusta succumbed to stress and developed a complex dissociative disorder. Eventually, she was treated at the same hospital as George.

Almost two decades after the war, both the protagonists of *The Underpainter* suffer from PTSD and have not assimilated their war experiences. Their relationship is ambivalent. On the one hand, partners who share a similar traumatic experience can develop a very strong bond (Felman 43). On the other hand, however, Urquhart’s protagonists remind each other constantly about the traumatic past. Augusta and George seem to have reconstructed their lives, but their existence is founded on a wound, which cannot be healed (Laub, “Bearing” 73). Augusta seems to be particularly vulnerable. In her nightmares, she goes back to the front hospital and is overwhelmed by guilt, when she hears the soldiers moaning in agony: “The guilt in her was so terrible that she could not rise from her own bed” (Urquhart 152). Several years after the war, she goes back to her morphine addiction, trying to neutralise the horrible memories that haunt her. In Neta Gordon’s words, “for Augusta, the addiction to morphine is also an addiction to forgetting” (108). She is unable to reintegrate the traumatic past and to confront the feeling of guilt that torments her; thus, she finds refuge in numbing.

When Austin, unconcerned with his friends’ suffering, brings George’s first sweetheart to Davenport, Augusta’s world collapses and she questions her relationship with her lover and the sense of survival itself: “What were any of us to do with the rest of our lives anyway? After all that. We were only in our early twenties and our lives were finished. And yet here we are, George and me, right in the middle of the aftermath. What makes it just continue and continue?” (Urquhart 34). Having decided to give testimony in the presence of George’s American friend, an act apparently necessary to assimilate the

traumatic past, the female protagonist does not experience the purification and self-acceptance associated with “living through testimony” (Laub, “An Event” 85). For Austin is not an empathetic listener. According to Laub, in the process of testimony, “When the trauma fragments [...] accelerate, threaten to get too intense, too tumultuous and out of hand, [the listener] has to reign them in, to modulate their flow. And he has to see and hear beyond the trauma fragments, to wider circles of reflection” (“Bearing” 71). In his egotism, Austin remains impassive and withdrawn, as a result of which he does not become a true witness to Augusta’s trauma. As Laub suggests, “The act of telling might itself become severely traumatizing, if the price of speaking is *re-living*; not relief, but further retraumatization” (“Bearing” 67; italics in the original). Ultimately, Augusta commits suicide and George follows his lover in death.

The non-linear narration of *The Underpainter* renders the elusive character of trauma and the dialectic of remembering and amnesia. The past comes back in the form of flashbacks; some important events are never verbalized. It is important to emphasise, however, the ethical ambivalence of art – painting, writing – in the novel. It is Austin’s reconstructed life that is at the centre of the story, and Augusta and George function only in the background of his narrative. Augusta’s painful testimony is lost and indecipherable in the abstract series of paintings created by Austin, which literally erase reality. What is essential in the novel is ekphrasis. As Neta Gordon suggests, *The Underpainter* depicts, in an ambivalent way, the superiority granted by Austin, a war outsider, to artistic reconstruction over experience itself. Urquhart shows the disastrous effects of recollection on the witness who, in fact, desires to forget: “Art here does not simply supplement the witness’s account but manages, in the operation, to annihilate the witness” (Gordon 107). The pain of remembering illustrated in *The Underpainter* therefore raises the larger ethical question of commemoration of trauma and loss.<sup>1</sup>

## Missions

Guy Vanderhaeghe’s play *Dancock’s Dance* (1996) takes place within an insane asylum, where Lieutenant John Carlyle Dancock, diagnosed with acute neurasthenia, is treated after the war. The play illustrates the novel treatment methods of emotionally distressed patients and the Superintendent’s efforts to maintain a modern hospital instead of a prison. Vanderhaeghe also depicts the psychological, physical and sexual abuse of the German patient Braun by the

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<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed analysis of trauma in *The Underpainter* see Branach-Kallas 191-201.

demoralised orderly Kennealy. He is concerned as well with the effects of the influenza epidemic of 1918 on the microcosm of the hospital and, by extension, Canadian society in general. Like David French in *Soldier's Heart*, Vanderhaeghe points to the difficult problem of the reintegration and treatment of shell-shocked veterans. "[N]o one can set a boundary to war", claims the Superintendent at the end of the play. "Our soldiers brought it home with them in their lungs and in their blood" (219) as well as, we might add, in their minds. It is not only the veterans that have been transformed by the war, but the whole society that has been severely traumatised and affected by it.

Dancock, a sensitive and an intelligent young man, shows symptoms of hysteria and melancholia. The Superintendent of the asylum suspects him, moreover, of a paranoid mania towards persons in authority. Indeed, Dancock "save[s] [his]hatred for dishonest enemies. The ones who pretend to be your friends, then stab you in the back" (Vanderhaeghe 167). By these, he means mostly generals and politicians whose purpose is to silence any criticism of the war. Dancock seems, in fact, to suffer from betrayal trauma, feeling exploited and misused by people in power whom he used to trust (Widera-Wysoczańska 38). He does not feel broken or depressed but irrevocably "changed" (Vanderhaeghe 170). Vanderhaeghe thus emphasises the unavoidable transformation of soldiers on the front. What his protagonist has to accept, however, is the fact that apart from politicians and senior military staff, he also bears responsibility for what happened during the war and for his own metamorphosis.

The Superintendent is not aware of the fact that Dancock is regularly haunted by a revenant and that he keeps scratching his hands because he believes that they are covered with blood. The mysterious ghost seems to embody the lieutenant's survivor guilt<sup>2</sup>, proving to him that, as a junior officer, although he claims to have cared for the privates under his command, Dancock was responsible for the tragic fate of his men who were used as cannon fodder. The ghost claims that Dancock will be locked for years; he compares the asylum to the trenches, in which Dancock will be punished for disobedience to the medical staff, just as he used to punish the soldiers under his command: "A lifetime of slow rot" (Vanderhaeghe 192). Vanderhaeghe thus illustrates the conflicting bonds of loyalty experienced by the junior officers, who were accountable to their superiors but, at the same time, responsible for the lives of their men.

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<sup>2</sup> Neta Gordon claims that the figure of the soldier functions as a prosopopaeic device, because he is devoid of name and history and is not mourned in the play (39). In my view, Vanderhaeghe raises here the complex problem of mourning/forgetting about psychologically damaged, cowardly soldiers during the Great War. The tainted hands, always polluted with blood, refer to the Shakespearian figure of guilt, Lady Macbeth.

With the support of Dorothea, a voluntary patient who falls in love with him, Dancock learns to confront the painful memory of the past, in which he shot a terrified private for refusing to go over the top:

DANCOCK (*shouting in his face*) Pick up your weapon, Private! Pick it up!  
 SOLDIER (*small, frightened voice*) No. [...]  
 DANCOCK You began to whimper. Like a pup.  
 SOLDIER (*whimpering*) Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.... [...]  
 DANCOCK Jesus is sitting in the judgment seat. And Jesus says you're going over the top. No more dodging, no more shirking. No more cheating your brothers in arms. No more asking them to wear your wounds and do your dying for you. Time to do your bit. Time to put your bloody shoulder to the wheel. Do as you're told or I'll send you to kiss the devil's arse! (*wonder in his voice*) And then you started to pray to me.  
 SOLDIER Dear Jesus. Just this once. Don't make me do it. I can't do it. Please. [...]  
 DANCOCK Nobody moved. Up and down the line they were all going over the top but my boys didn't budge. (*louder, shriller whistles, the sound of gunfire*) I saw it in their eyes. If you were let off the hook – they weren't going either.  
 SOLDIER The truth now!  
 DANCOCK (*desperate, urging on his men*) Come on, boys! Forward!  
 SOLDIER They aren't fools! They don't want to die either! [...]  
*DANCOCK turns on him, enraged. Ear-splitting whistles. Then a sudden silence. DANCOCK begins to speak with a terrible, pitiless determination.*  
 DANCOCK Pick up your rifle. You think I won't do it? I'll do it.  
*Pause. Whistles resume.*  
 Pick it up! Pick it up! Pick it-  
*The terrific report of a pistol. Silence.*  
 (*looking at his hands*) There was blood on my hand. A gush of blood – (*begins scraping at his hand with his nails*) It was an accident... An accident. (*to the audience*) It was an accident!  
 SOLDIER Liar! [...]  
 DANCOCK There's nothing I wouldn't have done for my men. I would have died for them!  
 SOLDIER (*quietly*) Fuck you. I died for them (Vanderhaeghe 214-216).

What is interesting in the above citation is the ambivalent notion of sacrifice. During the war, Canadian soldiers were often represented as Christ figures, ready to sacrifice themselves to redeem the world (Vance 71-72; Evans 44).<sup>3</sup> Dancock invokes the notion of Christ's sacrifice to provide a role model for the terrified soldier, who, in turn, is represented as a Christ figure, having been

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<sup>3</sup> The Christ figure was often used in early Canadian First World War fiction, for example in *The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land* by Ralph Connor.

ruthlessly killed as an example for others. In a way, as Neta Gordon points out, Vanderhaeghe uses the traditional military sacrificial narrative, condemning careless politicians unconcerned with individual casualties during the war (35). Nevertheless, “Vanderhaeghe takes up the paradox of what it means to claim an anti-war position that concurrently maintains the stance that fighting a battle in the name of honour is somehow, transcendently, still worthwhile” (Gordon 37). He achieves this by undermining the soldier’s sacrifice, as he appears a devilish figure devoted to revenge, and by rehabilitating the surviving officer and thus a class structure based on a rigid code of honour (Gordon 41).

As far as the protagonist’s trauma is concerned, however, when the revenant finally forces Dancock to look him in the face and to kiss his mouth, the lieutenant is repulsed by the taste of death, which symbolizes the difficult process of accepting his responsibility and debt to the dead. Only then, having accepted his role as a murderer and the fact that moral rules do not always apply to difficult ethical situations, can the protagonist begin the process of working through trauma. As Spanish influenza has reached the hospital, many nurses and orderlies have been infected and are unable to attend to their patients. Dancock decides then to assemble all the patients and assigns to them the job of orderlies, nurses, cooks, dishwashers, launderers and grave diggers. Together with his volunteers, the male protagonist saves the hospital; this sense of mission helps him recover. The play ends with Dancock and Dorothea dancing together, having surmounted their initial phobias. Working through trauma, Dancock has not forgotten the traumatic past, but he has been able to accept it and to differentiate it from the present. As Dominick LaCapra emphasises, in an ethical perspective, “working through does not mean avoidance, harmonization, simply forgetting the past, or submerging oneself in the present. It means coming to terms with the trauma, including its details, and critically engaging the tendency to act out the past and even to recognize why it may be necessary and even in certain respects desirable or at least compelling” (144). Thus Dancock acquires “the possibility of being an ethical and political agent” (LaCapra 144). The final dance is also an affirmation of vitality, a counterpart of the dance with death, a compulsive repetition of trauma, to which the ghost-soldier kept inviting the male protagonist.

The protagonist of P.S. Duffy’s *The Cartographer of No Man’s Land* (2013), Angus MacGrath, volunteers for the front when his wife’s brother and his beloved friend, Ebbin Hant, is reported missing in action. He cannot believe his brather-in-law is dead. Although promised a safe job as a military cartographer in London, Angus is sent with an infantry unit to the front. He encounters Ebbin who has assumed the identity of a charismatic soldier called Lance Corporal Lawrence Havers. Although Havers was in the war from the

beginning, bullets never touched him.<sup>4</sup> Ebbin claims that he was the witness of Havers' death; the dying man asked him to wear his uniform and his tags, just as he got them from another soldier two months earlier, who got it from someone as far back as the beginning of the war. As Lifton emphasises, "extreme trauma creates a second self" (Caruth, "An Interview" 137), which helps the soldier negotiate in challenging ethical situations by "doubling" "in order to adapt to evil" (Caruth, "An Interview" 137). This "severing of self from self" (Duffy 161) involves a profound transformation: fearful soldiers might become very brave, whereas, on the contrary, courageous ones can lose their inner confidence (Nash 65-66). In this sense, Ebbin rejects his former self as fainthearted, most likely responsible for the accidental death of a comrade in the trenches, imagining himself as the mythical Havers, who has the reputation of a hero, eager to risk his own life to save others. He is convinced that the cowardly Ebbin has died and, as a life-enhancing strategy, identifies with Havers: "Ebbin was broken, but *believed* he was whole and had survived as Havers" (Duffy 162; italics in the original). He is deeply traumatised and convinced that the war is an apocalypse: all the soldiers "are going to die over here. The only thing that matters is how" (Duffy 161). His mission is therefore to continue Havers' and to rescue his comrades, while killing as many Germans as possible.

During the battle of Vimy Ridge, however, Ebbin-Havers dies, like most men in Angus' battalion. The protagonist himself is seriously injured and his right arm remains immobile. There is no medical reason for his paralysis and Angus is convinced that his withered limb is God's punishment for his comrades' death. He feels ashamed for having survived and is anxious to return to the front,<sup>5</sup> a matter of honour: "I need to go back to my unit. I owe them. Owe *myself*. Do you understand honor? How do you think it feels to have escaped and left my men back there, slogging through it. I belong with them" (Duffy 268; italics in the original). He is, nevertheless, invalided back to Nova Scotia, where he continues to suffer from stifled anger and shame. His mind is filled with noise of battle and he wills "himself invisible" (Duffy 347), thinking of death as deliverance. "[A]lone with his war" (Duffy 347), he considers his life as empty and keeps apart from his family, an emotional withdrawal particularly painful for his son. Lifton points out that war creates

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<sup>4</sup> Such rumours, legends, myths and fantasies in the trenches of the First World War are well documented (see Leed 115-123; Fussell 114-125). According to Eric J. Leed, "War effects a psychic regression toward a place where the restraints of reality do not operate. The myths and fantasies of war are an escape, a flight from constraining modern realities that in war were translated into military terms" (118).

<sup>5</sup> A frequent syndrome, well-documented, for example, in the case of the famous British poet Siegfried Sassoon (see Fussell 91).



“a sense of being tainted by death, of carrying what might be called the psychic stigma of the annihilated” (176). Angus is thus afraid that through contact with him his family will also become “unclean” (Duffy 269). *The Cartographer of No Man’s Land* therefore illustrates how difficult it is for the survivor, who identifies himself with an “entire constellation of annihilation and destruction” (Lifton 176), to rebuild human relationships.

Only when helping the casualties of the explosion in Halifax<sup>6</sup> does Angus regain a sense of mission and his arm seems to revive. He feels again in control supervising the distribution of supplies and comforting the casualties: “He knew how to navigate human suffering” (Duffy 352). Becoming involved in helping others is a form of “acting out”, the tendency to repeat compulsively the patterns of behaviour learnt during the war (see La Capra 142-143). However, Lifton and Herman both highlight the importance of transmuting guilt into responsibility to the dead:

[...] that responsibility becomes a very central agent for the reintegration of the self. One has had this experience, it has been overwhelming, the self has been shattered in some degree; the only way one can feel right or justified in reconstituting oneself and going on living with some vitality is to carry through one’s responsibility to the dead. And it’s carrying through that responsibility via one’s witness, that survivor mission, that enables one to be an integrated human being once more (Caruth, “An Interview” 138).

Devoting oneself to others might help the survivor to work through trauma and justify his survival in his own eyes. “Carrying through the witness” to massive death (Caruth, “An Interview” 138) has therefore an enormous therapeutic potential but also a significant social function (Herman 52). The sense of mission might make the protagonist finally come back home. *The Cartographer of No Man’s Land* ends with Angus trying to save his son from drowning and the potential reconnection between father and son.

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<sup>6</sup> On the morning of 6 December 1917, a French freighter loaded with tons of explosives collided with a Norwegian vessel in Halifax harbour, causing a large explosion, which killed approximately 2,000 people, injured 9,000 and left 20,000 homeless (see Berton 213-218). In this way, the war reached Canada, blurring the border between war front and home front. It is worth mentioning that in *The Cartographer of No Man’s Land* the chapters set in France alternate with the ones set at the home front. Moreover, through Angus’ relationship with a Frenchwoman and her son, Duffy also explores the devastating effects of the war on French civilians.

## Conclusions

The works I have discussed in this paper, *Soldier's Heart*, *The Underpainter*, *Dancock's Dance* and *The Cartographer of No Man's Land* illustrate the long-lasting effect of war, which continues to torment the survivor long after the cessation of hostilities. Survivor guilt seems a particularly complex ethical issue,<sup>7</sup> explored in the texts under analyses by various aesthetic means. The process of healing after trauma might lead through testimony or a sense of mission, yet, as I have tried to demonstrate, such solutions do not always result in recovery. While in French's play giving testimony purifies the protagonist, Urquhart shows its annihilating power. Vanderhaeghe points to the therapeutic potential of mission, whereas Duffy's protagonists exemplify an ambivalent sense of fulfilment, which might lead to the annihilation of the fractured self. *Soldier's Heart*, *The Underpainter*, *Dancock's Dance* and *The Cartographer of No Man's Land* indicate a sense of debt and responsibility to the dead and function as fictional memorials to the war victims. Synchronously, however, by focusing on the aftermath of the Great War, French, Urquhart, Vanderhaeghe and Duffy debunk the mythologization of this catastrophic event and confront the massive disruption it caused to Canada as a nation. They also signal a desire for ethical reconsideration of (the commemoration of) the pain of loss in Canadian collective memory.

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<sup>7</sup> Survivor guilt in the context of the First World War appears as an important theme in a number of other recent Canadian novels, such as Jack Hodgins's *Broken Ground*, Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road*, and Frances Itani's *Deafening* (see Branach-Kallas 170; 184-214).

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## LA GRANDE GUERRE DANS LA LITTÉRATURE CANADIENNE-FRANÇAISE ET QUÉBÉCOISE<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

In his foreword to Pierre Falardeau's posthumous *Le Jardinier des Molson* Pierre-Luc Bégin claims that the war thematic is barely present in the cultural imaginary of Quebec. Contrary to this statement, in the following article I examine literary works which treat explicitly about the experience of the First World War. Referring to the works of Micheline Cambron, Michel Biron and Olivier Parenteau, who emphasize that the conscription crisis is the only Québécois collective memory generated by the two world conflicts, I analyse one of the few classics of Québécois fiction which fictionalizes this memory – *L'Emmitouflé (The Draft dodger)* by Louis Caron, to compare it subsequently with *La Kermesse (A Secret Between Us)* by Daniel Poliquin. I also mention some recent works, categorized as popular fiction or as fiction for young readers, which explore the recurrent themes of Québécois and Franco-Ontarian First World War fiction, namely the conscription crisis and the Spanish flu. In conclusion, I also mention two novels referring to the consequences of the First World War for Quebec, but which instead of thematising the victimization of French Canadians during the conscription crisis focus on the internment camps for enemy aliens: *Spirit Lake, 1915-1917* by Gilles Massicotte and *Spirit Lake* by Sylvie Brien.

**Keywords:** Great War, French Canadian literature, Québécois fiction, conscription crisis, internment camps

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## Résumé

Pierre-Luc Bégin dans sa préface au scénario posthume de Pierre Falardeau *Le Jardinier des Molson* constate que le thème de la guerre est presque complètement absent de l'imaginaire et de l'art au Québec. Dans le présent article nous examinons quelques ouvrages littéraires qui contrairement à cet axiome traitent explicitement de l'expérience de la Première Guerre mondiale. En tenant compte des analyses de Micheline Cambron, de Michel Biron et d'Olivier Parenteau qui soulignent que la crise de la conscription est le seul souvenir collectif des Québécois lié aux deux conflits mondiaux, nous aborderons un des rares classiques de la littérature québécoise qui a pour thème ledit souvenir : *L'Emmitouflé* de Louis Caron, que nous comparerons avec *La Kermesse* de Daniel Poliquin. Il sera aussi question de quelques ouvrages récents, qualifiés comme exemples de la littérature populaire, pour jeunes lecteurs et à portée didactique, qui reprennent les motifs récurrents de l'imaginaire québécois et franco-ontarien de la Grande Guerre que sont toujours la crise de la conscription et la grippe espagnole. Dans la conclusion, nous ferons appel à deux romans qui tout en abordant les conséquences de la Première Guerre mondiale pour le Québec, s'éloignent du thème de la victimisation des Canadiens français au cours de la crise de la conscription, pour soulever le problème de l'existence des camps d'internement pour les immigrés : *Spirit Lake, 1915-1917* de Gilles Massicotte et *Spirit Lake* de Sylvie Brien.

**Mots-clés :** Grande Guerre, littérature canadienne-française et québécoise, crise de la conscription, camps d'internement

Parmi les projets inachevés de Pierre Falardeau se trouve un film intitulé *Le Jardinier des Molson* auquel le cinéaste travaillait peu de temps avant sa mort. En 2012 Les Éditions du Québécois ont publié son scénario sous forme de livre, préfacé par Pierre-Luc Bégin. L'éditeur commente l'idée de Falardeau de montrer la violence de la Première Guerre mondiale vue de la perspective des soldats québécois qui partageaient avec des Africains, sur le front en Europe, le destin des colonisés servant, comme il le formule, « de chair à canon pour les empires » (12). Bégin constate aussi :

Il y a de ces sujets pour lesquels on préfère l'amnésie en ce pays... En conséquence, c'est fou à quel point les Québécois ont oublié qu'ils forment un peuple historiquement très guerrier. Depuis les premiers heurts avec l'envahisseur anglais jusqu'à la Seconde Guerre mondiale, presque chaque génération de Québécois sera montée au front. [...] Pourtant, les Québécois à la guerre n'existent pas dans notre imaginaire collectif et dans nos œuvres, ou si peu. C'est ça, être un peuple colonisé, disait Falardeau : des pans entiers du réel sont absents de nos cerveaux. [...] Un sujet tabou, donc, dans notre société. Et un sujet violent (10-11).

Dans le présent article nous nous proposons d'examiner dans quelle mesure l'observation de Pierre-Luc Bégin sur l'absence de la Grande Guerre, dans les textes de culture et dans l'imaginaire collectif des francophones, est confirmée ou infirmée par la littérature canadienne-française et québécoise à l'époque où en France, en Grande-Bretagne et au Canada anglais<sup>2</sup> on assiste toujours à des stratégies variées de la réinterprétation du thème de la « Der des ders ».

Il est vrai que des références explicites à la Première Guerre mondiale dans les ouvrages artistiques au Canada francophone semblent, de prime abord, si rares que les auteurs de *l'Histoire de la littérature québécoise*, publiée en 2007, n'en mentionnent, très brièvement, qu'un cas : le roman *L'Emmitouflé* (1977) de Louis Caron (cf. Biron, Dumont, Nardout-Lafarge 504). Quant aux textes écrits au cours de la période 1914-1918 et ceux datant des années 1930 et 1940, Micheline Cambron en offre une analyse pointue dans son article « Le discours sur la Grande Guerre. Demande d'histoire » dans le numéro 110 de *Voix et Images* consacré au thème de la guerre dans la littérature québécoise. En partant de la constatation que la littérature de la Belle Province parle de la guerre indirectement, Cambron émet l'hypothèse suivante : « dans le discours québécois, les événements guerriers sont donnés moins comme participant de récits collectifs, en tant que pièces d'un puzzle ou d'une fresque, que comme des éléments qui témoigneraient d'une mémoire individuelle privée d'horizon général » (15). La chercheuse fait aussi appel aux études récentes du discours journalistique du temps de la Grande Guerre permettant de comparer les articles parus dans le journal *La Presse*, qui soutenait la politique du gouvernement fédéral, et ceux du *Devoir* et du *Nationaliste*, favorables à la position d'Henri Bourassa opposée à l'enrôlement des Canadiens français (16-19). Dans le domaine littéraire Micheline Cambron n'a répertorié que deux textes romanesques, de la période 14-18, qui ont pour thème la Première Guerre mondiale : une fiction d'Ulric Barthe, *Similia Similibus ou la guerre au Canada. Essai romantique sur un sujet d'actualité* (1916), qui à travers un récit imaginaire sur l'invasion allemande au Québec cherche à persuader la population francophone de la nécessité de la conscription, et un roman populaire de Jules Jehin Prume, *Les aventures extraordinaires de deux Canayens. Charivari littéraire et scientifique* (1918) écrit « dans le registre du fantastique et de l'anticipation », avec une visée satirique. Cependant, selon l'auteure de l'article, cet ouvrage n'a nullement contribué « à une mémoire de l'expérience du champ de bataille » (21). Le recueil *Lauriers et feuilles d'érables*, rassemblant les sonnets d'Albert Lozeau parus au cours de la guerre dans *Le Devoir*, célébrant pathétiquement le patriotisme, le courage et le

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<sup>2</sup> Il convient de noter qu'au Canada anglais la Première Guerre mondiale a joué un rôle capital pour la définition de l'identité nationale, ce qui explique sa présence beaucoup plus importante dans la mémoire collective et dans la culture anglophone qu'au Québec.

martyre de la France et de la Belgique, est un troisième ouvrage, commenté par Cambron (22). La chercheuse note aussi la présence du journal *L'Aide à la France. To France the Heroic and Indomptable!* dans lequel les représentations de la guerre sont proches du discours officiel du gouvernement fédéral (25).

Durant les années 1930 et 1940 la Grande Guerre en tant que thème littéraire n'apparaît que très rarement. Micheline Cambron a scruté les échos du conflit dans les ouvrages de Ringuet, dans les romans *Trente arpents* et *Le poids du jour* et dans le recueil de nouvelles *Confidences*. Ce qui y est révélateur, c'est un traitement toujours elliptique de la guerre perçue comme un événement lointain et étranger (Cambron 30). Il en est de même dans le texte de Robert de Roquebrune, *Cherchant mes souvenirs, 1911-1940* (30-31). Une image peut-être plus complexe et plus réaliste de la Grande Guerre serait à chercher dans le roman *Les mémoires d'un soldat inconnu* (1939) d'Adolphe Brassard, mais, comme le démontre Cambron, ce texte retiré par la censure de la circulation à cause de sa dimension antimilitariste demeure inconnu auprès des lecteurs (31). Dans la conclusion de son article, la chercheuse se réfère à l'analyse de Robert Comeau qui prétend que : « Les Québécois ne semblent avoir retenu de la Grande Guerre que cette manifestation [celle de Québec, contre la conscription], sanglante certes, mais sans commune mesure avec l'horreur des tranchées que pourtant de nombreux Canadiens ont connue » (cité dans Cambron 32). Cette opinion est partagée par Michel Biron et Olivier Parenteau qui, dans l'éditorial du numéro de *Voix et Images* sur la guerre dans la littérature québécoise, constatent que dans le pays qui n'a pas de lieux mémoires liés au conflit de 14-18<sup>3</sup> : « Le seul souvenir collectif rattaché aux deux guerres mondiales [...] est celui de la conscription, qui trouve immédiatement son sens dans le grand récit national opposant les Canadiens français aux Canadiens anglais » (13)<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Mourad Djebabla-Brun note : « Entre 1919 et 1931, sept monuments aux morts [de la Grande Guerre] sont érigés sur l'île de Montréal [...]. À part Montréal, il s'agit ici des zones à majorité canadienne-anglaise de l'île » (43).

<sup>4</sup> Quant à la période 1919-1931, Mourad Djebabla-Brun observe que les premiers écrits « se rapportant à la Première Guerre mondiale sont des témoignages de vétérans canadiens-français. Il faut préciser que ces derniers se sont peu exprimés au Québec et seuls deux d'entre eux ont publié des mémoires de guerre en 1919 : Claudius Corneloup avec *L'épopée du 22<sup>e</sup>* et Joseph Lapointe avec ses *Souvenirs et impressions de ma vie de soldat*. Par la suite, ce sont les civils qui traitent de la guerre. Le docteur Baland fait ainsi part de son expérience en Belgique occupée avec *Mille et un jours en prison à Berlin* (1919). En poésie, la Grande Guerre a constitué une source d'inspiration pour *L'oublié, à nos héros du 22<sup>e</sup>* d'Alfred Bienvenu (1919) qui offre des vers hagiographiques, au contraire de *L'âge de sang* de Jean Charbonneau dont le discours est plus critique (1921). Certains écrivains usent du conflit dans leurs intrigues romanesques, c'est le cas de Francis



En tenant compte des observations citées plus haut sur l'absence ou la quasi-absence de la Grande Guerre dans l'imaginaire collectif canadien-français et québécois, considérons maintenant ce problème à la lumière des textes littéraires plus récents<sup>5</sup> publiés à l'époque qui voit, selon Dominique Viart, le retour de l'Histoire, du sujet et de la narration, ce qui se traduit en France par le renouveau de l'intérêt prêté par plusieurs écrivains au thème de la Grande Guerre (cf. Viart 127-141). Qu'en est-il au Canada français ?

Il ne fait aucun doute que la question de la crise de la conscription, des années 1917-1918, est le thème le plus souvent abordé dans les ouvrages littéraires francophones qui se rapportent à la Première Guerre. Béatrice Richard, en examinant le contexte social et politique de l'opposition massive des Canadiens français contre la Loi du service militaire adoptée par le Parlement fédéral en juillet 1917, souligne les facteurs suivants :

Furieuse de se voir imposer le service militaire, la population n'a pas oublié non plus que le reste du Canada l'accuse depuis plus d'un an de ne pas faire sa part. À ces considérations, se greffe une longue liste de récriminations. L'indignation causée par l'abolition de l'usage du français dans les écoles ontariennes quelques années auparavant arrive en tête. Aller défendre les droits d'autrui outre-Atlantique alors que l'on estime les siens bafoués dans son propre pays reste inacceptable pour beaucoup. Joue également le caractère rédhibitoire d'une armée canadienne unilingue anglaise qui, de ce fait, offre de faibles perspectives

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DesRoches avec *En furetant* (1919), de Joseph Raïche avec *Les dépayés* (1929), mais également de Renée des Ormes avec *Entre deux rives* (1920), de Jean-François Simon avec *Deux du vingt-deuxième bataillon* (1929), de Laurent Barré avec *L'emprise* (1929), de Françoise Morin avec *L'orgueil vaincu* (1930) et Jean Nell avec *La flamme qui vacille* (1930) » (Djebabla-Brun 75-76). Le même chercheur a également répertorié des écrits, ayant pour thème la Grande Guerre, publiés au cours de la période 1931-1960 : deux récits de vétérans – *Par mon hublot* (1931) de Jean Flahaut et *La coccinelle du 22<sup>e</sup>* (1934) de Claudius Corneloup, les romans de Marie Bonenfant, *Canadiennes d'hier* (1941), d'Oscar Massé, *La conscience de Pierre Loubier* (1943), de Laetitia Filion, *Yolande la fiancée* (1935), d'Adrienne Maillet, *Quelle vie !* (1942) et de Germaine Guèvremont, *Marie-Didace* (1947) (cf. Djebabla-Brun 105). Dans la littérature québécoise produite après 1961, outre *L'Emmitouflé* de Louis Caron que nous aborderons dans la suite du présent article, Mourad Djebabla-Brun a examiné deux ouvrages de Jacques Ferron – une comédie, *La tête du roi* (1963) et un recueil de nouvelles, *Du fond de mon arrière-cuisine* (1973) ainsi qu'un roman de Wilfrid Girard, *Le conscrit* (1972) et une chronique de Jean Provencher, *Québec sous la loi des mesures de guerre* (1971) (cf. Djebabla-Brun 139).

<sup>5</sup> Anna Branach-Kallas et Piotr Sadkowski, les co-auteurs du projet « Le traumatisme culturel de la Première Guerre mondiale dans la littérature britannique, française et canadienne contemporaine », adressent leurs remerciements à Béatrice Richard, professeur du Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean, pour ses aimables conseils qui ont permis d'établir le corpus de textes examinés dans le présent article.

d'avancement pour la minorité d'origine française. Enfin, les rares régiments francophones, les plus accessibles aux Canadiens français, sont des unités de combat, donc plus exposées aux pertes (114-115).

Le traumatisme causé par la menace de la guerre et de l'enrôlement se trouve au cœur du premier roman de Louis Caron *L'Emmitouflé*, publié initialement sous le titre *Le goût d'éternité* en feuilleton dans *Le Nouvelliste* de Trois-Rivières (cf. Boivin), et ensuite en 1977 à Paris chez Robert Laffont. Honoré par les Prix Québec-Paris (cf. Stockman), cet ouvrage constitue un de très rares cas d'un texte littéraire québécois sur la Grande Guerre qui a acquis une notoriété importante auprès des lecteurs et critiques. Le livre a été traduit en anglais par David Toby Homel, sous le titre *The Draft dodger* (1980) et l'original a été réédité en 1980 aux éditions du Seuil et en 1991 aux éditions du Boréal. André Vanasse l'a salué comme « le nouveau roman de la tradition », en rappelant les opinions d'autres critiques qui comparaient Caron avec Steinbeck (9). Qui plus est, la perspective intergénérationnelle adoptée dans *L'Emmitouflé* à partir de laquelle le traumatisme de guerre est traité, fait que le romancier québécois devance d'une dizaine d'années ses homologues français qui, à la charnière des XX<sup>e</sup> et XXI<sup>e</sup> siècles, thématiseront la Grande Guerre en corrélation avec d'autres conflits sanglants<sup>6</sup>.

Le héros-narrateur, Jean-François, est un objecteur de conscience franco-américain, âgé de vingt-cinq ans, issu d'une famille québécoise immigrée au Vermont. En fuyant l'enrôlement dans l'armée et la guerre au Viêt-Nam, il s'est réfugié à Montréal. Suite à sa participation à une manifestation devant le consulat américain, il est arrêté par la police qui découvre que son droit de séjour sur le territoire canadien a expiré. Il doit alors retourner illégalement aux États et tenter une fois de plus de repasser la frontière pour pouvoir demander officiellement le statut d'immigré au Québec. Au début du roman Jean-François, en compagnie d'un déserteur noir, se cache pour une nuit dans la maison de sa sœur Françoise, au Vermont, où ils se racontent l'histoire de leur oncle Nazaire avec qui le jeune objecteur de conscience croit s'identifier : « Exilé au Canada, moi, un petit-fils de Canadien français immigré aux États ! Caché à Montréal ! Caché comme Nazaire ! Caché moi aussi à mon tour pour pas aller à la guerre ! » (Caron 15) En 1964, quand Jean-François avait quatorze ans, Nazaire a décidé de quitter son Nicolet natal, au Québec, et

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<sup>6</sup> On pensera ici à la coprésence des contextes de la Grande Guerre et de la Seconde Guerre mondiale dans *L'Acacia* de Claude Simon, du conflit en Bosnie dans *La scie patriotique* de Nicole Caligaris et *La Vigie* de Thierry Jonquet. *Le Premier Homme* d'Albert Camus, évoquant la guerre de 14 et celle d'Algérie constitue un cas à part du fait que le roman écrit vers 1960 ne paraîtra que trente-quatre ans après la mort de l'auteur, en 1994.

rejoindre son frère au Vermont. Au cours d'une fête familiale, ayant entendu les convives parler de la politique et de la guerre, il disparaît subitement et se cache dans les montagnes. Le père du narrateur se met alors à raconter les expériences de Nazaire qui a vécu la période de 1914-1918 clandestinement dans la peur d'être enrôlé dans l'armée. En se souvenant de ce récit, Jean-François se rend compte à quel degré l'histoire qu'il a entendue sur la réaction de son oncle à la guerre et à la conscription, à laquelle il avait échappé en 1917, a déterminé sa propre identité de futur objecteur de conscience. Par le biais de l'histoire familiale, le jeune Franco-Américain, de la Nouvelle-Angleterre, apparaît de cette manière comme un héritier non seulement d'un pacifisme caractéristique pour la société canadienne-française, mais aussi d'une mémoire collective traumatisée par la Grande Guerre. D'autant plus que la fuite et la recherche de Nazaire, dont Jean-François est témoin en 1964, occasionnent des querelles qui lui font comprendre l'ampleur des tensions idéologiques entre les francophones et les anglophones causées par deux types de discours sur l'histoire et la guerre présentés, de prime abord, d'une façon plutôt schématique. Le shérif, en tant que porte-parole de la majorité anglophone, en parlant avec enthousiasme de ses souvenirs de la Seconde Guerre mondiale et en se référant immédiatement à celle de 14-18, soutient que dans les deux cas il s'agissait de la lutte commune de « vrais hommes » (53) pour la liberté. À la lumière de ses propos, la société franco-canadienne, réfractaire à la participation à la guerre en Europe, avec ses nombreux déserteurs (parmi lesquels se trouvait Nazaire), se voit blâmée et exclue de la communauté du monde civilisé. Ce système de valeurs paraissait évident au personnage-narrateur, âgé alors de quatorze ans, éduqué dans une école états-unienne :

Nazaire devait avoir dix-sept ou dix-huit ans à l'époque de la Première Guerre mondiale et je ne doutais pas qu'il y ait participé. Je savais que ni lui ni mon père n'étaient allés à la guerre de quarante, celle juste avant ma naissance, mais en quatorze ils devaient avoir été d'âge à donner leur vie pour leur patrie. Ils devaient être allés à la guerre tous les deux et s'être conduits en héros. C'était indiscutable. Des hommes de la trempe de mon père et de Nazaire avaient balayé l'Europe de la marée allemande (52).

Il est profondément bouleversé en entendant la réponse de son père au discours patriotique et belliqueux du shérif : « – On n'est pas allés à la guerre [...]. On n'avait pas envie de la faire leur maudite guerre » (54). Dans les répliques du père de Jean-François on retrouve les arguments anti-guerriers bien connus, répandus dans l'imaginaire collectif canadien-français autour de la crise de la conscription : la guerre absurde, la guerre des autres, la condition économique et démographique des Franco-Canadiens obligés de lutter pour

leur survie sur le sol québécois au lieu de se sacrifier pour l'Europe lointaine et inconnue, d'autant plus que la Grande-Bretagne est vue comme puissance colonisatrice oppressive et la France comme cette mauvaise mère patrie traîtresse à qui on reproche la perte de la bataille des Plaines d'Abraham et le reniement du catholicisme (83-85).

Malgré cette dichotomie stéréotypée, opposant l'anglophone belliqueux au francophone pacifiste, le roman de Caron n'est point un panégyrique de la société franco-canadienne avec ses prises de positions et ses choix moraux. Tout au contraire, l'histoire de Nazaire et d'autres déserteurs de sa région est l'occasion de dépeindre la corruption, la délation et la décomposition des liens communautaires parmi les habitants de Nicolet suite à la guerre. Qui plus est, le roman met l'accent principalement sur des choix existentiels individuels que sur une doxa idéologique ce qui dépolitise l'essence du discours sur la guerre. Par conséquent *L'Emmitouflé* incite à réinterpréter le thème de la conscription dans une optique analogue à l'approche microhistorique et éthique des expériences collectives. Béatrice Richard observe que le traumatisme causé par la crise de la conscription n'a intéressé que très tard les historiens et par conséquent, dans l'imaginaire québécois, ces faits apparaissent « sous la forme d'une "dramaturgie mélancolique" » (115). La chercheuse postule une révision des événements de 17-18 pour en étudier plus profondément les choix individuels ainsi que l'importance des antagonismes sociaux au sein de la société québécoise durant cette période. Il importe de noter que le roman de Louis Caron offre une vision complexe de la crise qui, à plusieurs égards, correspondrait aux critères de la relecture de l'Histoire proposée par Béatrice Richard.

Seulement trente ans après la publication de *L'Emmitouflé*, la littérature francophone offrira un roman sur la Première Guerre, dans le contexte québécois et ontarien, qui connaît une certaine reconnaissance auprès des critiques et des chercheurs : *La Kermesse* de Daniel Poliquin publié au Boréal en 2006. La guerre et ses lésions occupent une place importante dans les expériences du héros-narrateur, Lusignan, provenant – comme Nazaire – des environs de Nicolet au Québec. Pourtant le problème de la conscription y est à peine mentionné, du fait que le personnage principal fait partie de ces rares Canadiens français qui s'enrôlent comme volontaires pour participer à la guerre en Europe. Et il faut ajouter qu'il s'agit d'une participation bien particulière. Le héros, dont les traits caractéristiques principaux sont le cynisme et l'autodérision, en parle ainsi :

La guerre. Je ne peux pas vraiment dire que je l'ai faite, mais j'y étais, ça c'est certain. Quand on me dit qu'elle est finie depuis presque un an, je ne demande pas mieux que de le croire, mais je ne suis pas sûr qu'elle soit si finie que ça.

C'est parce que, depuis mon retour à Ottawa, un fantôme ivre me suit dans la rue. Quand il m'interpelle, nous nous lançons aussitôt dans des conversations passionnantes. Je peine à le reconnaître quand il m'apparaît, et dès que je commence à distinguer mes propres traits sur son visage, il s'évanouit, me laissant seul avec mes arguments pourtant convaincants. C'est bien moi-même pourtant que je revois, mon sosie complètement soûl et débraillé (Poliquin 73).

Ce témoignage est bien symptomatique du traumatisme de guerre que le héros essaie de noyer dans l'alcool. Cependant parler de la guerre signifie, pour Lusignan, avant tout évoquer son aventure homosexuelle vécue avec Essiambre d'Argenteuil, un jeune officier d'origine noble dont le corps « a été déchiqueté à Passchendaele » (39) ou sa relation avec Flavie, une infirmière française (161). Le désir de faire revivre ces moments de l'intimité heureuse plonge le héros dans la perplexité quant à ses expériences vécues en Europe : il s'y attache obsessionnellement, tout en refusant de procéder à un récit d'événements militaires qui serait conforme, soit à la propagande étatique soit au discours pacifiste. En même temps, conscient de l'impossibilité de partager avec les autres la réalité cauchemardesque (cf. 81 et 204), il se limite à narrer, avec une tonalité rappelant l'ironie macabre de Bardamu célinien, ce qu'il appelle la guerre « grotesque » (81), qui revient à dépeindre son antihéroïsme et celui des autres. Pour cette raison, il évoque des scènes révélatrices de la fausse camaraderie des soldats qui se volent entre eux (21) ou des exemples de sa propre lâcheté et de son incompetence. Le patriotisme du soldat canadien est aussi traité sur un mode dérisoire et macabre quand Lusignan affirme que tout au long de la guerre il n'a tué personne et quand il était obligé de tirer pour s'entraîner, il visait les cadavres. Et il précise qu'il déchargeait son arme sur les dépouilles de soldats anglais, français ou australiens, mais, dit-il « sur des morts canadiens, jamais ; nous avons quand même des principes » (82). Il en est de même quand le protagoniste évoque les mensonges qu'il reproduisait, en parlant d'une mort héroïque, dans les lettres envoyées aux familles des déserteurs exécutés. Sous la forme ironique, voire apparemment désinvolte, du récit de Lusignan, centré sur son expérience intime, on devine donc des interrogations plus universelles sur le sens ou le non-sens de la participation à la Grande Guerre dans le contexte colonial. Pour le protagoniste, l'enrôlement volontaire dans l'armée de l'empire britannique semble signifier la chance de fuir le terroir canadien-français qu'il dépeint comme un espace de claustration avec comme corrélat la religiosité démesurée, la perversion sexuelle et la cruauté. Voici sa réponse à la question sur sa motivation de s'enrôler :

Pris au dépourvu, j'ai balbutié la première vérité qui m'est venue à la bouche. « Et bien... pour le plaisir d'être vêtu en lieutenant. Pour servir le roi aussi. J'aurais préféré le roi de France, mais j'ai pris le seul que j'avais sous la main. Je

suis monarchiste, mais seulement pour faire chier ceux qui ne le sont pas. Je voulais être beau et différent, quoi. L'esthétique est mon seul guide dans la vie. Voilà... » (88)

Malgré cette attitude apparemment légère et insouciant, Lusignan est capable (et c'est peut-être son unique acte héroïque pendant la guerre) de refuser la proposition de faire la propagande auprès des Canadiens pour l'engagement massif (167). La tension entre l'espièglerie et la gravité des réflexions du héros sur la guerre se manifeste d'une façon encore plus saisissante quand il extrapole à partir de son cas particulier en examinant la condition du soldat colonisé. Il en parle à Flavie, son amante vendéenne :

Pourquoi des Canadiens français traités injustement dans leur pays se mettaient-ils au service de la couronne anglaise, et avec eux tous ces Indiens et ces Métis, comme ce Patrick Riel dont j'avais entendu parler, qui combattait dans une unité de francs-tireurs avec les petits-fils des bourreaux de son grand-père ? Et ces Gurkhas de l'armée britannique, ces tirailleurs algériens, sénégalais et canaques qui se faisaient tuer pour leurs conquérants ? [...] Parce qu'en mêlant son sang au maître, le serviteur s'élève jusqu'à lui, pour s'en affranchir peut-être ? Le dépasser même ? Pour le dominer à son tour ? (163)

Après maints déboires, Lusignan se réinstalle dans sa maison familiale près de Nicolet. Le choix de ce lieu qui rappelle l'espace-temps du roman de Louis Caron ne semble pas anodin du fait que dans le portrait du héros de *La Kermesse* on peut voir un double antinomique de Nazaire. Tandis que le protagoniste de *L'Emmitouflé* apparaît comme un homme courageux fuyant la guerre, Lusignan est un lâche qui y a participé et qui a reçu en récompense un résultat symétriquement opposé à ses intentions : l'exclusion sociale. Cependant, avec le temps, il commence à traiter sa marginalisation comme un privilège et son passé de soldat de la Grande Guerre devient un stigmaté qu'il montre avec ostentation pour choquer la population de son village. Les Canadiens français traumatisés par la crise de la conscription ne sont pas à ces yeux des victimes dignes de pitié, mais des poltrons qui méritent son dédain :

Ce que j'ai fini par comprendre aussi, c'est qu'ils me craignent parce que moi je l'ai faite. La guerre. Ils ont tous été réfractaires ici [...] Les horreurs de la guerre que d'autres leur ont racontées m'enveloppent d'un courage cruel que je n'ai pas vraiment. [...] C'est un plaisir immense que les voir pisser de peur quand je rôde dans les joncs et les aulnaies l'automne, vêtu de mon manteau militaire et armé de mon Lee Enfield qui ne tire plus (263).

Dans ce contexte, le roman de Daniel Poliquin transgresse la représentation stéréotypée de l'expérience franco-canadienne de la Grande Guerre en inversant de façon provocatrice les paradigmes de la mémoire collective concernant le choc de la conscription.

En ce qui concerne l'arrière-plan politique et social de la Première Guerre mondiale vue de la perspective d'Ottawa, le roman de Louis Caron aborde des thèmes gênants, difficiles à gérer par la mémoire collective officielle comme, par exemple, la supériorité numérique d'officiers nés en Angleterre dans l'armée canadienne (89) ou le problème de la réinsertion des vétérans dans la société. *La Kermesse* dresse un tableau satirique des anglophones d'Ottawa qui manifestent leur francophilie de parade, quand le français devient « la langue à la mode » (120). Comme l'observe, avec ironie, Amalia Driscoll, une amie d'Essiambre exclue de la haute société canadienne, qui a fréquenté des soirées de secours qui, en réalité, était une sorte de loisir et une occasion de vivre une aventure galante :

*Je me souviens maintenant avec amusement de l'époque où je courais tous les théâtres qu'on donnait en l'honneur de nos glorieux soldats. Pour leur témoigner ma solidarité, je me limitais dans mes coquetteries, je portais des robes grises ou noires, comme une veuve. [...] je tricotais des bas et des passe-montagnes pour les braves du Princess Pat. J'aimais beaucoup aussi les soirées qu'on donnait pour recueillir des fonds à l'intention des réfugiés belges et où il était de bon ton de ne parler que le français. Je souris maintenant à la pensée de ces braves douairières qui se seraient fait crucifier plutôt que de dire deux mots aimables au boulanger canadien-français [...] (227-228 ; italique dans l'original).*

Le roman polyphonique, mélangeant les voix et les tonalités, *La Kermesse* de Daniel Poliquin réintroduit donc le thème de la Grande Guerre dans la littérature francophone, en l'inscrivant dans des contextes sociaux et des questions éthiques très complexes, échappant aux accaparements et schématisations idéologiques.

À part *L'Emmitouffé* et *La Kermesse*, la Première Guerre mondiale est-elle absente de l'imaginaire québécois et franco-ontarien ? Il est légitime de constater qu'au début du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle des ouvrages littéraires évoquant de façon explicite le conflit de 14-18 vu de la perspective canadienne-française sont beaucoup plus nombreux qu'à l'époque qui a été l'objet de l'étude susmentionnée de Micheline Cambron. Cependant dans tous les cas il s'agit des textes qui ne retiennent pas l'attention des critiques et des chercheurs. Or la Première Guerre mondiale est depuis quelques années présente dans la littérature populaire et dans les livres pour jeunesse avec une visée didactique. La conscription y est le motif dominant, joint souvent au problème de la grippe espagnole, comme par exemple dans le premier roman de Gaston Thériault *Béatrice. Québec 1918* (2007). Le déchirement au sein d'une famille

québécoise suite au débat sur la participation des Canadiens français à la guerre est le thème du roman *Frères ennemis* (2009) de Jean Mohsen Fahmy. Les épreuves causées par la Grande Guerre marquent profondément les destins des protagonistes d'un roman-fleuve très populaire : *Les Portes de Québec* de Jean-Pierre Charland. Le troisième tome *Le prix du sang* (2008) raconte l'histoire de la famille Picard tourmentée par la crise de la conscription, tandis que les motifs du retour du soldat québécois du front et de la grippe espagnole qui touche la population canadienne se trouvent au cœur du quatrième tome *La mort bleue* (2009). La saga de Charland se poursuit dans le cycle *Les Folles années* dont le premier tome, *Les héritiers* (2010), dépeint les conséquences de la guerre pour la famille Picard dans le contexte des événements ayant lieu au cours de l'année 1919. On retrouve les motifs pareils (le retour de la guerre, la grippe espagnole), situés cette fois dans le milieu franco-ontarien, dans un livre destiné aux jeunes lecteurs, *La première guerre de Toronto* (2010), de Daniel Marchildon.

Il faut noter aussi deux romans qui tout en abordant les conséquences de la Première Guerre mondiale pour le Québec, s'éloignent du thème de la victimisation des Canadiens français afin de soulever un épisode douloureux, voire honteux, de l'histoire du Canada que fut le traitement, pendant le conflit de 14-18, des immigrants originaires des pays considérés comme ennemis.

L'ouvrage de Gilles Massicotte *Spirit Lake, 1915-1917* contient la dédicace :

*Aux Ukrainiens  
aux Canadiens  
et aux Québécois,*

*pour que le souvenir demeure* (7 ; italique dans l'original).

Comme le précise l'éditeur, sur la quatrième de couverture, le manuscrit de ce roman historique, dont le titre original était *Liberté défendue*, a été distingué par le Prix Littéraire de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue et publié en 1998 chez Vents d'Ouest de Gatineau. Sa nouvelle version revue et augmentée est sortie en 2015 « dans la collection Textes et Contextes des Éditions du Quartz, une collection dédiée à la réédition d'œuvres significatives, mais épuisées, liées à l'histoire et à l'imaginaire de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue ». Ces informations éditoriales suggèrent que la parution du livre de Gilles Massicotte a eu un certain retentissement à l'échelle locale, abitibienne. Cependant l'auteur y met en scènes des faits relevant de l'histoire canadienne, dans sa dimension globale, qui pendant longtemps ont été absents de la mémoire collective. Il s'agit du nativisme, compris comme « une opposition à une minorité interne sous prétexte qu'elle menaçait la vie nationale canadienne » (cf. Thompson 3),



qui, sous forme de mesures officielles du gouvernement fédéral, a frappé de nombreux Ukrainiens et d'autres ressortissants de Galicie et de Bucovine, reconnus comme ennemis et dangereux de par le fait qu'ils provenaient des territoires sous le pouvoir de l'Empire austro-hongrois. On les appelle alors « Autrichiens » ou « Allemands ». Plus de huit mille cinq cent d'entre eux, sous prétexte de leur situation non régularisée, ont été internés dans vingt-six camps répartis à travers le Canada, dont le plus grand (cf. Massicotte 20-21), qui devait servir aussi comme ferme expérimentale, avait été construit au Québec, à Spirit Lake près d'Amos, en Abitibi. Gilles Massicotte retrace son histoire, en conjuguant le travail d'archiviste et de romancier, à travers les destins des personnages réels, prisonniers et officiers de l'armée canadienne, parmi lesquels on trouve le dirigeant du camp : le major général William Dillon Otter « connu pour sa participation à la guerre contre les Métis de Louis Riel en 1885 » (Massicotte 20).

L'ouvrage de Massicotte se distingue certes par sa valeur documentaire. Le livre contient plusieurs photographies d'archives et d'autres documents annexes ainsi qu'une bibliographie détaillée. Cet aspect factuel du roman n'empêche pas son caractère engagé sur le plan éthique et ses accents accusateurs. Son auteur ne ménage pas ses paroles quand il dépeint Spirit Lake en tant qu'univers concentrationnaire annonçant le cauchemar de la Seconde Guerre.

L'histoire du même camp, présentée à partir de la perspective d'un adolescent ukrainien qui y a été emprisonné avec son frère, est également racontée dans un roman pour jeunes lecteurs, avec des accents fantastiques, *Spirit Lake* (2008) de Sylvie Brien, auteure québécoise originaire d'Amos.

Les ouvrages de Massicotte et de Brien, malgré leur réception qui restera probablement très modeste, méritent notre attention en tant que tentative non seulement de faire sortir de l'oubli collectif l'époque de 14-18 mais aussi de faire apparaître dans l'imaginaire québécois le destin de ces « acteurs secondaires » (Dubé 13) qui, pour paraphraser Marco Micone, sont venus d'ailleurs pour dire aux victimes de la crise de la conscription qu'elles n'étaient pas seules.

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**THE CALL TO DUTY:  
REPRESENTATIONS OF CANADIAN WWI NURSES  
IN CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN LITERATURE**

**Abstract**

Recent publications about the role of women nurses in the Great War make an important contribution to public understanding of a group too long marginalized in the historical record. While these articles provide relevant historical information, they also reinforce public perceptions that nurses were motivated mainly by a powerful sense of duty and patriotism. However, an examination of contemporary Canadian literary works such as David Macfarlane's *The Danger Tree*, Vern Thiessen's *Vimy*, and Michael Poole's *Rain Before Morning*, suggests a more nuanced view. Although the values of duty, sacrifice, family, and friendship are important in these texts, they are also questioned and challenged as the nurses bear witness to the trauma, violence, gendered spaces, and military hierarchy that dominate the hospitals on the home front and bases overseas. This paper argues that contemporary representations of Canadian nurses in WWI engage in moral, ethical and humanitarian questions about war and conflict that have traditionally been left unexplored in historical representations of women on the Western front.

**Keywords:** World War I, Canadian historical fiction, nurses, trauma, representations of women

**Résumé**

Des publications récentes sur le rôle des femmes infirmières pendant la Grande Guerre ont apporté un éclairage instructif sur ce groupe de personnes trop longtemps laissées en marge de la documentation historique. Bien que ces articles fournissent des informations pertinentes, ils renforcent également la perception générale que les infirmières étaient principalement motivées par un grand sens du devoir et du patriotisme. Mais la lecture d'œuvres littéraires canadiennes contemporaines telles

que *The Danger Tree* de David Macfarlane, *Vimy* de Vern Thiessen et *Rain Before Morning* de Michael Poole donne accès à un point de vue plus nuancé. Bien que très présentes dans ces œuvres, les valeurs du devoir, du sacrifice, de la famille et de l'amitié y sont également remises en question par les infirmières ayant été témoins des traumatismes, de la violence, de l'iniquité sexuelle et de la hiérarchie militaire qui régnaient dans les hôpitaux au pays et sur les bases militaires à l'étranger. Le présent article soutient que la représentation contemporaine des infirmières canadiennes de la Première Guerre mondiale soulève des questions morales, éthiques et humanitaires sur la guerre et les conflits qui ont souvent été ignorées dans la représentation historique des femmes ayant servi sur le Front occidental.

**Mots-clés :** la Première Guerre mondiale, fiction historique canadienne, infirmières, traumatismes, représentation des femmes

Translation by Geneviève Letarte, of Montreal, Quebec.

“Everyone was called to duty – nursing sisters, surgeons, orderlies. Save for the occasional cup of tea and a catnap, she could expect to work round the clock if casualties were heavy.” (Poole 108)

Traditional nationalist depictions of Canadian nurses who served in WWI portray an image of patriotic young women, cheerfully and efficiently persevering in the most difficult of circumstances, whether on hospital ships, in huts or tents close to the front, or in well-equipped military, city or university hospitals in Canada and abroad. Veterans Affairs Canada, a ministry of the Canadian Government, currently provides historical information about Canada's military history, including nurses who served in the Canadian Army Medical Corps (CAMC). Their publications and online material include “traditional” representations of those who served in the Great War, meaning that patriotism and service are emphasized. Their publication, “The Nursing Sisters of Canada” describes these nurses as “compassionate,” “courageous” and sacrificial women who earned the “admiration” of the soldiers (Veterans Affairs Canada 6). Traditional perspectives also tend to focus on the nurses' distinctive light blue uniforms, which included an odd mixture of a nun's habit, a child's pinafore (or a servant's apron) and a matron's housedress, complete with all the gendered connotations the outfit suggested (Mann xxii). The moniker “Bluebirds,” which referred to the nurses' blue uniforms, quickly took hold among the soldiers who relied on their care. But who, really, were these women? And what do we know about them? Were they the dutiful, suffering servants described in the historical record of the post-war period? Or were they more complex and less two dimensional, with various reasons for enlisting and a range of personalities,

social concerns and common struggles? It has taken almost 100 years for scholars to ask such questions. In contemporary Canadian literature, representations of nurses who served in WWI generally reflect *some* of the traditional characteristics previously described. However, there are certain important differences, which this paper will attempt to address. Specifically, my analysis of three contemporary texts will identify the ways in which contemporary representations of WWI Canadian nurses provide a more nuanced understanding of the nurses themselves, and of the moral and humanitarian questions they faced. This paper will also explore how these depictions are affected by the mores and values of contemporary writers.

Since 1977 when Timothy Findley's *The Wars* was published to critical acclaim in Canada and internationally, representations of nurses in Canadian literature have been changing as writers have sought to develop more realistic portrayals of women and minorities in Canadian historical literature. These representations of nurses have often been influenced by a small number of diaries and stories that have been published since WWI. Some background on these diaries is useful to our understanding of contemporary literary depictions of nurses. Attempts to gather historical documents and diaries were made after WWI; however, as Susan Mann notes in her excellent introduction to *The War Diary of Clare Gass*, nurses' responses to calls for "memories" and documentation in the late 1920's were met with silence (Mann xxxv-xxxvii). In fact, Gass' diary was not published until the year 2000, thirty two years after her death. More recently, Shawna M. Quinn has confirmed that in 1920, Margaret Macdonald, former Matron-in-Chief of the Canadian Army Medical Corps (C.A.M.C.) Nursing Service, wrote to twenty-five hundred former nursing sisters requesting their stories and photographs, but had only eight responses. Of these eight, some declined to contribute and others declared that they had nothing important to offer (Quinn 8). Quinn speculates that nurses were reluctant to believe their "eyewitness" accounts were of value to the historical record, and notes their possible unwillingness to appear indiscrete or immodest by publicizing their work experience (9). Quinn also cites Susan Mann's conjecture that nurses may have felt a "professional obligation" to protect the privacy of their patients (9). Not surprisingly, only a handful of diaries have been published, including Constance Bruce's *Humour in Tragedy* (1918) and Mabel Clint's *Our Bit* (1934). As Cynthia Toman notes in her recent book, *Sister Soldiers of the Great War*, it is still unclear why so few nurses have written about their experiences (6). In the past ten years, historians such as Susan Mann, Shawna Quinn, and Cynthia Toman have drawn attention to the dearth of Canadian nurses' diaries and accounts of their

experiences in WWI (Quinn 151-52; Mann xxxv-xxxvi; Toman 6),<sup>1</sup> and each of them has issued a call for scholars to “fill in the gaps that remain” in terms of understanding the lives of these Canadian women (Glassford and Shaw 7). For now, we are a generation that continues to speculate or draw conclusions from the small number of diaries that have been published, but there is hope for more work to be done in this field as historians draw attention to the need for more research.

In 2012, Canadian scholars Sarah Glassford and Amy Shaw published a collection of articles about the lives of women (and girls) during the Great War. Although this collection does not focus only on nurses, Glassford and Shaw recognize that the Great War was transformational for women, even though the various authors in the collection differ in their assessments of whether “female contributions challenged or conformed to prevailing gender norms” (Glassford and Shaw 17). Their historical perspectives provide literary scholars with a new understanding of the depictions of women working abroad and at home during war time. Similarly, Canadian literary scholars Sherrill Grace (2014) and Neta Gordon (2014) have also recently published theoretical analysis about representations of women (among other topics), in the spate of WWI novels written since *The Wars*. While Gordon’s focus is on the representation of Canadian commemoration, sacrifice and service in WWI as it relates to Canadian identity, Grace’s most recent work, *Landscapes of War and Memory* (2015), discusses her theory of memory as a landscape. Grace’s theory, based on the work of Laurence Kirmayer, argues that “the landscape of memory is not a static or fixed paradigm; like a map, such a landscape may be altered, added to, changed and, thereby, made to accept new information and correct old errors” (59). I consider this theory parallel to Herb Wyile’s work on Canadian historical fiction, in which he argues that the “traditional historical novel usually revolves around some pivotal historical incident, or era, or figure” whereas the work of contemporary Canadian writers “engages in a dialogue with the public historical record and identifiable historical figures, but has also started to push the boundaries of that definition and of the definition of history” (*Speaking* 4). Wyile asserts that while the historical record has tended to be pre-occupied with the actions of “white, upper-class English males” (5) to the exclusion of “women, the working class, and

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<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that many contemporary historians have mentioned the relative silence of nursing sisters and VADS after WWI. As ever more diaries have been found and are being published as well as analysed, a clearer picture of the challenges these women faced has surfaced. Since 2010, Quinn, Mann, Toman, Quiney, and Bishop Stirling have all published new work about Canadian WWI nurses. Quiney’s latest book, *This Small Army of Women: Canadian Nurses and the First World War* (UBC Press) was published in June 2017.

racial(ized) minorities” (4), contemporary novels interrogate the complexity of the “negotiation between the literary and the historical” (10). In other words, present-day literary texts question the historical record and attempt to revise our understanding of the past. I will begin my discussion where Grace and Wylie have led me: to ask if the representations of nurses that I find in three contemporary texts alter the historical versions of Canadian nurses formally described in the exhibits, archival material, and documents held in such places as the Canadian War Museum, the Canadian Archives, and Veterans Affairs Canada, to name a few. Alternatively, do these additions reflect a contemporary sensibility and the views or values of present-day writers?

This paper is the beginning of a longer discussion on contemporary representations of Canadian nursing sisters from WWI. Through examination of a group of contemporary Canadian works, a more complicated view of Canadian women nurses emerges. Three nurses play key roles in the following texts: Kate in David Macfarlane’s *The Danger Tree* (1991), Leah in Michael Poole’s *Rain Before Morning* (2006), and Clare in Vern Thiessen’s *Vimy* (2007). The ways in which these women demonstrate the values of duty, sacrifice, family, and friendship, while important, are questioned and challenged in the context of the trauma, violence, gendered spaces and military hierarchy that dominated hospitals on the home front and bases overseas. Not only do the nurses bear witness to some of the troubling and traumatic actions of their own countrymen, but they also speak up against the moral and ethical issues of their day in ways that put their personal or professional lives at risk. Such stories remind contemporary readers that simplistic depictions of nurses defy the complex situations in which these women lived and worked.

Kate, a young nurse who plays a minor role in Macfarlane’s historical memoir, *The Danger Tree*, stands out for her willingness to risk her professional career for the sake of a soldier’s wellbeing. Her story begins with a description of her work as a nurse in her first of three years of training at St. Luke’s Hospital in Ottawa, a small private facility that in 1915 was weekly taking in casualties: Canadian soldiers who were too badly wounded to return to their fighting units, and were being sent back to Canada from English hospitals because they would not be able to resume military duties. These men were often disfigured, or damaged by shrapnel, poisonous gas or illness. The small hospital was not able to accommodate all the men who were sent there, and thus the staff was forced to billet some patients in the hallways. Kate was a young “probie” with limited experience, under the careful scrutiny of Miss Emily Maxwell, the head of nurses. Miss Maxwell is described as a demanding overseer who “expected perfection of her staff” (Macfarlane 252). She reinforced the hospital hierarchy, and ensured that nurses would never consider themselves equal to the doctors. Rather, she thought that nurses were



to be “Well-trained and tireless, dedicated and obedient [...] carry[ing] out the mundane and routine tasks on which patients so depended [...] with efficiency, careful attention to detail, and brisk good cheer” (Macfarlane 252). Kate was expected to do her duty, follow the rules and obey her superiors. However, when a young man about the age of one of her brothers is left for hours to sleep on a cot in the busy hallway, Kate lies to an orderly and has the soldier moved upstairs to a room reserved for officers. When her actions are discovered the next morning, Kate, frightened and upset, is called into the Superintendent’s office. When pressed for an apology, she gathers her courage and tells her superiors in no uncertain terms that she will never let a suffering soldier lie in a hallway when a bed is available: “I. Will. Not. Have. It,” she declares (Macfarlane 258-59). Surprisingly, her superiors are chastened, and the soldier stays put. Macfarlane’s account is anecdotal and a key episode in the memoir. The importance of Kate’s role in Macfarlane’s story of memory, war and family is suggested by the presence of a close up of her attractive face on the cover of the book. Although Kate’s passionate response is the subject of family lore, when she is questioned about it later, Kate refuses to tell the story. Like other nurses who served in wartime, Kate prefers silence over story-telling. She allows memories to surface, but quickly dismisses them (Macfarlane 260).<sup>2</sup> Kate’s character may resonate with readers because, from a cultural studies view, she emulates the self-image Canadians often hold: citizens who are practical, stoic, morally upright, and willing to do the dirty work. Thus, her story suggests that nurses were similar to their male soldier counterparts who, as popular historian Pierre Berton argues, were resourceful “pioneer[s],” innovators, leaders, willing to “stumble forward into the whirlwind” for the sake of their closest friends (155-56).<sup>3</sup> Although Kate “fits” within the image portrayed by historical documentation regarding the nursing profession, our understanding of the challenges of the nursing environment is expanded through Macfarlane’s memoir.

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<sup>2</sup> Jay Winter also recounts this story in his article, “Forms of Kinship and Remembrance in the Aftermath of the Great War.” *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*. Ed. Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivven. Cambridge UP, 1999. 44-46.

<sup>3</sup> This paper focuses on the nurses who were members of the CAMC, and qualified as military nurses because of their comprehensive academic training. However, it is worth noting that women who were part of the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) also served as unpaid nurses. These women were casually trained in short courses offered by the St. John Ambulance Association (Quiney 103). Linda Quiney notes that over two thousand women served as VAD’s in military convalescent hospitals in Canada or in British military hospitals overseas (103). Quiney has also claimed that VAD’s were “equated” with soldiers—especially those who worked as ambulance drivers (116-17). She observes that the nurses were typically portrayed in a gendered fashion, through visuals of the women wearing veils and modest uniforms, and through expectations of piety and patriotism (115).

In a similar way, Leah Jamieson, a central and complex character in Michael Poole's *Rain Before Morning*, enhances our understanding of the nursing environment during wartime. Like Kate, Leah is a young nurse working in a hospital setting. Poole's novel, unlike many other examples of contemporary Canadian historical fiction, such as *The Wars* or Urquhart's *The Underpainter*, has a realistic, chronological story line and a conventional omniscient narrator. The complexity of Leah's character appears to be more at the level of her somewhat risqué situation: as a sexually active teenager, she initiates a love affair with her young friend Nathan, and they run away together; after they are caught, Leah's parents send her to Montreal to finish high school and begin nurse's training. Although Leah hopes that Nathan will come for her, she is sent overseas to work as a nurse in the Number One Canadian General Hospital in France. The narrator describes the way that she is different from the other nurses on staff: she "could not abide the detachment from patients that nursing sisters were taught to maintain. To be effective, she believed, the nurse must reach out, offering understanding, trust, even friendship to the men" (Poole 111). So she becomes the interlocutor, listening to the men talk and offering comfort by bearing witness to their stories. However, Poole's portrayal of Leah is also as a rebel. When she engages in a discussion about conscription with some doctors, Leah is outraged by their patriotic stance and speaks out boldly; she bends the rules and spends her free time with a single private; she maintains her belief that each soldier is a unique individual, and never just a casualty. Increasingly Leah goes out on her own, roaming the dunes or riding a bicycle into the country. According to Susan Mann, this is a practice that would have been unlikely in 1915 – single women nurses usually travelled in groups; they were carefully monitored and routinely required to report to the Matron (xxxii). Piety, purity, modesty, and moral character were some of the values identified institutionally and socially as clearly exhibited by nurses, especially in relation to their distinctive uniforms (Quiney 114). While Leah shows moral character in terms of her commitment to her profession, she also consistently challenges the rules. Another example of this tendency is evident when Leah accidentally encounters a frightened, starving, teenage boy wearing a soldier's tunic and offers him her lunch (Poole 123). Because she is convinced that he may be a deserter who is suffering from shell shock, later she leaves food for him again, and ultimately she befriends him, in spite of her understanding that this makes her "guilty of a capital crime" (Poole 127). Leah's friendship with Dylan Hearne provides her with confidential information about military abuse in the allied forces, which in turn leads to her awareness of the practice of executing deserters. Later in the story, when Leah is attacked and beaten by a drunken allied soldier who is part of a mutiny, Dylan rescues her; however, as a result of his involvement in the situation, he is arrested for desertion and threatened with

execution. Poole, at this point in the narrative, pulls together several strands that would be considered information “added to” the traditional narrative: the problem of mutinies by allied soldiers, the ‘over-looked’ enlistment of under-age men, and the practice of execution of deserters by Canadian military. As Sherrill Grace has asserted (*Landscapes* 151, 207), the truth about the execution of Canadian deserters was not discussed for decades after the Great War. That Leah becomes privy to this information creates an unlikely scenario based on the historical documents that describe typical hospital hierarchies and military practice. In addition, the fact that so little attention is paid to the arrest of Leah’s attacker is disturbing to a contemporary reader. The focus instead is on Leah’s insubordination in aiding a deserter, which results in her being dismissed from her nursing position. Nevertheless, it sets the stage for Leah’s later encouragement to her boyfriend, Nathan, to avoid conscription and become a conscientious objector, which also signals Leah’s resistance to military authority.<sup>4</sup> Leah’s actions, while sensible to us as modern readers, might have seemed inappropriate, even shocking, behaviour for women brought up in the Victorian era who valued duty, obedience to authority, and adherence to Christian doctrine, which Leah also resists. In contrast to the scene in *The Danger Tree* in which Kate, terrified and trembling, stands up to her supervisors in the hospital, Leah angrily confronts both a major and a colonel, and ably demonstrates the conflict that exists between military rules and her professional commitment to provide care, or “succour,” for her patients (Poole 141). Once she returns home, Leah is embittered and shocked by the propaganda that presents lies about the conditions at the front, and ultimately she encourages Nathan to evade the conscription authorities. While this kind of moral stance might seem normal to modern sensibilities, the moral, religious and social milieu of the early 1900’s was different. In fact, Leah Jamison appears to be shaped more by the author’s twenty first century ethical values than by the values and morality of early twentieth century Canada. Glassford and Shaw discuss in depth the complex social and political situation in Canada during WWI, in which women’s “expanded public role[s]” were being transformed through their engagement in a wide range of paid and volunteer work done mainly at home, but also overseas (5). At the beginning of the war, the majority of women did domestic work such as knitting socks, rolling bandages, or raising funds for the war effort. However, as the war progressed, women took on a wider range of activities, including working on farms and in munitions factories, as well as serving overseas as nurses and ambulance drivers. At the same time, women were encouraged to take active roles in the enlistment of men. In general, Canadian women supported

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<sup>4</sup> Anna Branach-Kallas also discusses this scene in her article “Conflicting Narratives of Obligation” as it relates to the novel’s depiction of “objection to war” (Branach-Kallas 9).

conscription, but this too was contentious, according to Glassford and Shaw, and political manoeuvres that appeared to support women's suffrage tended to disenfranchise conscientious objectors and members of pacifist religions (16). Thus, we must be careful to avoid generalizations about the Canadian situation during WWI, but it appears to be true that Poole's representation of Leah, as a member of the CAMC, alters and adds to the meta-narrative in a way that may seem contrived.

In Vern Thiessen's play *Vimy*, his representation of Clare, a nurse in a field hospital near the front, also indicates some acceptance of the master narrative. Although both Sherrill Grace (*Landscapes* 65, 81) and Martin Löschnigg ("Like Dying" 159) argue that *Vimy* marks resistance to the national myth or meta-narrative, Clare, in terms of the "nurse" characters, is more the heroic, dutiful figure that Canadians might expect. A young Nova Scotian who signs up to serve because "They need people" (Thiessen 14), Clare remains stoically cheerful throughout the play. This observation appears to support Neta Gordon's argument that Thiessen's commemorative goals in the play take precedence over the presentation of individuals, who are more like "types" based on a historical person (128). However, Clare's monologue in the play's opening also tells us that Clare is unwilling to glamorize war. She uses the language of landscape to connect her memories of home to her memories of war. Descriptions of the cliffs at Five Islands, the Bay of Fundy, and old Glooscap, are juxtaposed with a metaphor of war as a tide that devours the earth and ultimately brings a "stream of bloodied boys / and mangled men surg[ing] backward toward [her]" (Thiessen 3). Clare's description is clear and visually traumatic: "Broken bones and blindness. Gas and gangrene. / Shrapnel and shredded flesh. Shell shock and shaken" (Thiessen 3). Her refusal to glorify the war does represent a break with traditional war narratives that highlight valour and sacrifice – but not in as dramatic a way as in other contemporary war novels such as Urquhart's *The Underpainter* and Boyden's *Three Day Road*. Furthermore, Thiessen notes in his 'Acknowledgements' that *The War Diary of Clare Gass* was "highly influential" to his work (ix) – and as such, the memoir reflects the perspective of a woman who was a product of her times: dutiful, eager to help, service oriented – perhaps even adventurous. In *Vimy*, Clare exhibits all of these qualities. Moreover, Thiessen's Clare is often the listener – she witnesses the catastrophic results of war through her care of the injured soldiers. Clare, like Leah, is the interlocutor; she asks questions that allow the soldiers to find healing through the narration of their personal stories of home, family, guilt, and tragedy. Even when she and her boyfriend Laurie are together in Montreal, she tells him: "I want to hear the story of this place, not how tall it is.... What's in its heart. What does it remember" (Thiessen 30). Clare's desire to connect with memory and with the heart of a place is confirmed throughout the play as she and her soldier patients continue to

recall fond memories of home and the Canadian landscape. Later, when she asks Laurie, “How is it. Where you are” (Thiessen 64), he recognizes that she wants to hear the “*story of Vimy*” (Thiessen 63). However, when he sarcastically and bitterly describes some of the horrors he has seen, she no longer wants to hear. Laurie refuses to let Clare end her role as the listener: “You wanted a story, didn’t ya?” he asks. “... you better know this. You’re not just getting me. You’re getting all the [...] mess what’s inside me now. And it ain’t never going to leave, Clare. Never” (Thiessen 65). Clare’s reluctant willingness to listen to Laurie’s story of pain and trauma speaks to her sense of duty as a nurse as well as her role as a lover. Finally, the play ends with Clare pleading with the ghost of Laurie to take her back to Canada; she wants to imagine them there together. Poignantly, there seems to be no healing for Clare as she stands alone in the landscape of war and memory, with the guns thundering around her; the war is not over, and Clare will continue to do the duty to which she is called.

In effect, this discussion ends with the same question that it begins – are these representations of Canadian Great War nurses reflective of the historical record, or rather, do they add to or alter our understanding of the meta-narrative that Jonathan Vance describes as a national “myth” (8)? In all cases, I argue that these nurses present a more nuanced, complex depiction of over three thousand Canadian women who served as nursing sisters in WWI.<sup>5</sup> However, these depictions range in their willingness to move beyond the traditional to a more speculative or altered view of nurses and their responses to the national military system. While Kate in *The Danger Tree* and Clare in *Vimy* both conform in certain ways to the image of the dutiful, efficient nurse who is primarily motivated by her devotion to serve her country and its citizens, Poole’s depiction of Leah Jamison as a rebellious and an anti-authoritative young woman who challenges the mores and ethics of her social class is more indicative of a historical text that has been “altered or added to” (Grace 59) or has been “in dialogue with the public historical record” (*Speaking* 4). Has Poole pushed his depiction beyond what is known about these public servants? Probably, based on the lack of historical documentation that is collected thus far. Is his depiction believable? Less so. However, ultimately these depictions remind modern readers that our understanding of the role of nurses in war time deserves more research, and additional attention. We, as literary scholars, are also called to duty: to research the history of those whose stories have been elided from the national meta-narrative.

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<sup>5</sup> According to Veterans Affairs Canada, “By 1917, the Canadian Army Nursing Service included 2,030 nurses (1,886 overseas) with 203 on reserve. In total, 3,141 Canadian nurses volunteered their services” (6).

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**DREAMING AND HAUNTING IN *MARY'S WEDDING*  
BY STEPHEN MASSICOTTE**

**Abstract**

*Mary's Wedding* by the Canadian playwright – Stephen Massicotte – premiered in 2002 by Alberta Theatre Projects in Calgary has been described as one of the most frequently produced Canadian plays of the recent decade. Inviting the audience to participate in the rite of collective remembrance, the play performs a séance of raising the dead in a dream as an act of symbolic exorcism. The article sets out to examine the interactions between memory and imagination as well as the function of both in the process of coming to terms with death and forgetting. The play's disturbed temporal and spatial structure is interpreted in the context of hauntology, as a feature of the haunted text. The play's paradoxes and temporal disturbances mostly refer to the "posthumous" letter written by the historical Lieutenant Flowerdew, addressed to his mother and posted on the day of his death. Reaching the addressee after the soldier's death, the letter becomes a travesty of the spectral voice.

**Keywords:** haunting, WW1, memory, Canadian drama, master narratives

**Résumé**

*Mary's Wedding* écrit par un dramaturge canadien, Stephen Massicotte, et dont la première a eu lieu en 2002 à Alberta Theatre Projects de Calgary, est considéré comme l'une des pièces canadiennes le plus souvent représentées sur scène dans la dernière décennie. Invitant les spectateurs à prendre part au rite d'une collective remémoration, la pièce présente une séance de ressusciter les morts dans un rêve comme acte d'un exorcisme symbolique. L'article vise à examiner les interactions entre la mémoire et l'imagination ainsi que la fonction de celles-ci dans le processus d'une progressive acceptation de la mort et de l'oubli. La structure temporelle et spatiale de la pièce est perturbée ce qui est interprété, dans le contexte de l'hantologie, comme le trait caractéristique du texte hanté. Les paradoxes de la pièce et les perturbations temporelles renvoient principalement à la lettre « posthume »



écrite par le fameux Lieutenant Flowerdew, adressée à sa mère et postée le jour de sa mort. Une fois parvenue, après la mort du soldat, à la destinataire, la lettre devient un travestissement de la voix spectrale.

**Mots-clés :** hantise, Grande Guerre, mémoire, théâtre canadien, grands récits

## Introduction

According to Calgary Herald, *Mary's Wedding* by Stephen Massicotte – with its seventy five productions over ten years since its premiere in 2002 by Alberta Theatre Projects (Calgary) – can be described as “[l]ikely the most performed – certainly most widely performed – Canadian play of the past decade” (Clark). In an interview, the author attributes the play’s popularity to its anti-war message, gaining importance in face of “current hostilities”; he was referring to the impact exerted upon him and other Canadians by the Tarnac Farm incident, in which four soldiers lost their lives and eight were injured in American ‘friendly fire’ in Afghanistan (Adcock). However, as the author reports in one of his interviews, many viewers saw the play as primarily relating to individual experience of the First World War which was so common that many people believed that Mary’s story could be in fact their mother’s or grandmother’s (Antonio).

*Mary's Wedding* by Stephen Massicotte in general terms can be read as an anti-war play. It attempts to deconstruct the myths of the First World War by showing to what extent they are based on the nineteenth century notions of heroism and sacrifice. It could be assumed that the decision to present the war from the woman’s anti-war perspective can effectively expose the critical and sceptical attitude to the war. However, for the same reason the play could be read as an apologia for the soldiers’ determination to fight the war and an apology for those who were against it. While making the female character enact the role of the war officer can be considered as disruptive, it simultaneously includes her in the mythical narrative of war from which she was originally absent. These and other contradictions<sup>1</sup> heighten the uncertainty

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<sup>1</sup> The play’s contradictory structure is based, among others, on the conflict between the criticism of war and the homage paid to the people involved in it. Massicotte’s play is not the first one to remain contradictory in its meaning in an attempt to present the anti-war stance and preserve a reverential attitude to the soldiers fighting it (cf. *Oh, What a Lovely War* by Theatre Workshop). This attitude could be linked with the author’s declaration reported in one of *Mary's Wedding* reviews where he admits having “positive feelings about warriors and negative feelings about war” (Adcock). Such a stance is visible, according to the critic, in how the performance “fuses Massicotte’s fondness for the

of how to read the text that refers to traumatic events with a sense of beauty and tranquillity. In her introduction to the play in the drama anthology *Canada and the Theatre of War*, Donna Coates describes Massicotte's vision of the war as "imaginative reconstruction" that "at times bears little resemblance to its actualities": "His [Massicotte's] more balanced, perhaps even sanitized view of war, thus taps into the national myths which enable contemporary audiences to reconstruct the war as they perceive it ought to have been" (108). My objective in this article is to examine some of different contradictions that appear in the act of haunting and dreaming and their role in the process of forgetting which is supposed to follow them. I will primarily employ selected concepts related to memory and forgetting in the theories of hauntology and the phantom, Jacques Derrida and Nicolas Abraham, respectively, as well as the general framework of trauma theory by Cathy Caruth.

Featuring only two actors, the performance primarily establishes a very intimate space between young lovers in a repeated scene of their first meeting during a storm before the First World War. This intimate space is torn apart when scenes from the First World War are enacted by the young man and the female lover. The young woman performs the role of the young soldier's captain with the poetic albeit real name of Flowers/Flowerdew. Through his participation in the war incidents the journey of the soldiers from Canada to Europe and the experience of the frontline, mostly focusing on the Battle of Moreuil Wood (30 March 1918), in which the Canadian soldiers played a major part, are presented. It is significant that, while acting a living character in the play, Mary also enacts the historical figure of Lieutenant Gordon Muriel Flowerdew, who was awarded the Victoria Cross for his courageous contribution in the battle and heroic death thereafter. The events are presented in what seems largely a random order, overlapping with one another, merging in different time and place. Some fragments of the dialogue or actions are repeated in different or the same contexts. Events, words, phrases and images move in between fragments of memories and imagination in the ways typical for a dream – fluid, fragmentary, disconnected or merged. It is into this unstable world of the dream, intimate and displaced, that the audience is invited to join the couple in the process of dreaming.

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military and his distaste for wars" (Adcock). On the symbolic level the war is dreamt as a heroic narrative, yet the play's critical potential derives from the exposure of the dream's fictionality and idealization as well as its confrontation with other narratives.

## Remembering, Dreaming and Haunting

One of the crucial processes presented in the play is the act of remembering, performed paradoxically in order to forget and be able to go on living. In a sense the play in its structure can be compared to an act of symbolic exorcism in which the ghosts of the dead are awakened in a dream only to come to terms with their death. Haunting in *Mary's Wedding* happens on several levels. Its primary level signifies the impossibility to erase war from memory and the necessity to go through the trauma – acting out its traumatic accident – in order to be able to start to forget the past. The mode that makes haunting and the act of exorcism believable and in a sense psychologically safe is the one of dreaming. At the beginning of the performance the actor playing Charlie, speaking both in and out of character, addresses the audience in a metatheatrical comment, encouraging them to join the characters in this emotional journey of coming to terms with death and loss:

**Charlie:** Hello, out there. Thank you for coming. Before we begin there is something I have to tell you. [...] So, tomorrow is Mary's wedding, tonight is just a dream. I ask you to remember that. It begins at the end and ends at the beginning. There are sad parts.  
Don't let that stop you from dreaming it, too (Massicotte 115).

When the dream is about to end, both characters repeat the phrase about the need to remember but “a little less”, enough to be able to survive:

**Charlie:** Don't forget. Just let go.  
**Mary:** I'm trying to. It's just you're in everything. All the time.  
**Charlie:** Let me be in everything. Just a little less maybe (Massicotte 156).

In the final part of the play, just before awakening, Charlie reassures Mary that the process of “forgetting enough” is completed: “You'll never dream this again. In a little while you are going to wake up and I will have been lying under the grass for nearly two years now. You are going to wake up and you will never have this dream again” (Massicotte 157), which sounds almost like treatment by hypnosis. Mary's description of the effect of her treatment contains both aspects of remembering and forgetting but without really voicing the latter:

**Mary:** I still think of him.  
I see him on horses. I see him running with them, in dreams, in waking, in forests, in evenings and in mornings. I hear him laughing and riding swiftly through fields. I hear him in church bells. I see white dresses, flowers and little babies and Charlie is there in all of it. Only now a little less. Only now a little less. And that will be enough (Massicotte 157-158).

It seems that the act of forgetting cannot be addressed explicitly because of the cultural and personal obligations and interdictions. The dream séance is equivalent to mourning rituals that need to be completed to be able to relinquish the loved one and accept the loss. However, the horror of parting with the lost lover prevents the character from voicing the very act of forgetting, which is supposed to follow the mourning and healing process.

One of the crucial aspects of the haunting process described in the play is contained in the direct inspiration to the author – the “posthumous” letter written by the historical Lieutenant Flowerdew, addressed to his mother and posted, according to the historical note preceding the play and written by Massicotte, on the day of his death. It was received four days after his demise, but the letter contains no reference to his wounds or suffering, mentioning instead “the most wonderful experiences” that he has had (Massicotte 110-111). Because of the delay in its delivery, the letter is in a sense a message from a deceased person, a ghostly report from the world of the dead. While being deeply ironic in the new circumstances, the letter seems to refer to some other reality since it is almost impossible to expect that the soldier’s experience could be described as “wonderful”. The letter thus displaces itself through its incongruity with the war, being a “ghost-written” message from the other non-existent world. The paradox contained in the letter is a false testimony to the beauty of war and the soldier’s ongoing presence among the living. Massicotte’s play is built around the letter’s paradoxes: its belatedness, posthumousness, irrelevant beauty, false testimony and incongruity. The denial of death and loss associated with the early stages of mourning is embodied in the play in the imagined – “dreamt” – continuity of life. The “sanitized” picture of the war thus on a personal level is a commentary on the peculiarity of the archival document; on the symbolic level, it points to the impossibility of remembering the dead as dead, of confronting the horror of their pastness and speechlessness.

The temporal confusion brought about by the ghostly letter written by Lieutenant Flowerdew is translated in the play into the fluidity of time and space. This, in turn, can be associated with the concept of the haunted text in which the figure of the ghost destabilizes the temporal structure of the text, confusing the past and the future as well as questioning the very possibility of the present time. The opening address in Massicotte’s play metaphorically announces the temporal reversals of the memory séance: of beginning at the end and ending at the beginning. According to Jacques Derrida (6-7, 11), Nicolas Abraham (175) and Julian Wolfreys (5),<sup>2</sup> among others, haunting is

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<sup>2</sup> Derrida associates the spectre with “[a] spectral asymmetry [that] de-synchronizes” and “recalls us to anachrony” (6-7) as well as repetition (11). According to Wolfreys, “the spectral is [...] a matter of recognizing what is disorderly within an apparently straight-

signified by anachrony, lack of logical order and disturbance of the time structure. It thus throws into doubt the possibility of narrating uniform, coherent stories with a proper sense of a beginning and ending. It further questions the very possibility of the present time. According to Derrida, “[i]f there is something like spectrality, there are reasons to doubt this reassuring order of presents and, especially, the border between the present, the actual or present reality of the present, and everything that can be opposed to it: absence, non-presence, non-effectivity, inactuality, virtuality, or even the simulacrum in general, and so forth” (48). Massicotte’s play in a way seems to expose the absence of the present time, with the reality suspended between yesterday and tomorrow, and represented by a dream/memory. Its outer framework is that of prolepsis – of the event that will take place “tomorrow” – the wedding, while its inner texture consists of analepsis built out of memories, letters and imaginary projections of the past. The only reality of the present in the play is metatheatrical and presentational.

The function of metatheatre in the play is to involve the audience in the therapeutic co-dreaming, to go beyond the individual story and see remembering together with forgetting as a collective experience. On the social level Massicotte’s play presents the situation which can be connected with the psychoanalytic concept of the social phantom. In Nicolas Abraham’s psychoanalytic theory, certain shared phantoms, related to such events and conditions as wars, exile or other traumatic events, can be transformed into social practices, becoming, as Abraham puts it, a kind of “exorcism, an attempt, that is, to relieve the unconscious by placing the effects of the phantom in the social realm” (Abraham 176). The suppression of the aspects of, for example, “shameful past” can become visible in historical memory and in social phenomena that seem to be paradoxically out of place or disconnected from their immediate context, and affect individuals, whole groups or even nations (Rand 169). The primary unspeakable secret that seems to trouble both the characters and the audiences is the wish to forget, which is necessary to go on living but which seems to be suppressed by a sense of duty and responsibility for the war heroes. This, in turn, is connected to the guilt and regret the characters feel for their selfish and ideologically biased decisions.

The act of dreaming/haunting proceeds simultaneously in two directions and processes. Both characters in the play confront a sense of guilt, leading to the moment where their transgression can be forgiven or forgotten. However,

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forward temporal framework” (5). Abraham connects the phantom with the disturbance of coherence and logical sequence (175). For my earlier discussion of the temporal disturbances involved in haunting as problematized by Derrida, Wolfreys, and Abraham, see *Hauntology and Intertextuality in Contemporary British Drama by Women Playwrights* (37-38).

it is the guilt felt by Mary that is explicitly articulated – of refusing to see Charlie when he decided to go to war and abstaining from trying to persuade him to stay. She re-dreams the past in two adjacent realities of the frontline experience and the alternative peace time story in which they meet on ordinary occasions. Charlie also projects the images of Mary when fighting in war and their separate dreams cohere sometimes in unexpected moments, but it seems that the reason is never properly spelled out – for regretting to have volunteered, since the personal regret of having lost his lover would be seen as an act of cowardice. Despite its emotional intensity, the play exposes the extent to which Charlie's loss is suppressed in order to avoid the implications of the war's futility.

The split narrative in the play develops around two traumatic stories: one of the war dead and one of the war survivor. The two stories can be connected with the concept of “double telling”, which Cathy Caruth employs in her study of trauma representation. Double-telling is based on “the oscillation between a crisis of death and the correlative crisis of life: between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival” (Caruth 7). The structure of *Mary's Wedding* is built around those two unbearable stories. To come to terms with her survival and to accept the possibility of starting a new life, Mary seems to undergo the process in which she acts out in her dream the war trauma experienced by Charlie. Her aim is to be able to forget it. She enacts Charlie's war experiences which she knows only from Charlie's letters as if reversing the working-through action of letter writing. In this process the war trauma becomes manageable and is translated into the story that can be safely remembered but will not cause psychological harm to the survivor. The trauma of death is confronted with the trauma of life and loss; it seems that the lost one is regained in the substitution of the war companion with the lover and this process is mutual as the play is built around two absences – Mary's in war and Charlie's in peace.

### **Ghosts, Rites of Passage and Master Narratives**

Apart from the haunting aspects of trauma and memory discussed so far, the belated letter written by Flowerdew problematizes the questions of representation: of how to put the war experience into words. The total erasure of the war from the letter raises questions of whether it is possible to address the trauma of war in comprehensible terms, whether any attempt at describing it will be futile and misguided. And perhaps even more importantly, the incongruity – the absurdity – of the image created by the letter in a sense parodies the ideological manipulation and falsifying political narratives of war. However, the falseness of the letter also reflects an attempt to present

being a soldier as a conscious and mature decision due to no better alternative. All these implications relate to other discourses directly activated or implied in Massicotte's play.

One of the frequently quoted texts commenting on Canadian identity – “Can. Lit.” by Earle Birney – employs the metaphor of haunting in a paradox of being haunted by a “lack of ghosts”; its final lines: “No wounded lying about, no Whitman wanted / It's only by our lack of ghosts we're haunted” (Birney) have been variously interpreted for their implications about the significance of the past in Canadian identity. In his essay entitled “Tales from the Canadian Crypt”, Joel Baetz interprets the final line of the poem as referring “to a longstanding literary and cultural tradition that sees Canada as a blank space, either crippled by our lack of exciting and eccentric national symbols, traditions, and myths, or liberated by the absence of domineering master-narratives” (Baetz).<sup>3</sup> Both of these meanings are significant in the discussion of *Mary's Wedding* and will be dealt with below, but I will start with the quote's topographical implications. The poem fragment seems to suggest that a kind of spatial adjacency should be preserved between haunting and the place of death or suffering. In the case of the First World War, the ghosts are in a way mostly absent because they have been left behind in another land. In this sense Massicotte's play is about cross-Atlantic haunting that is tied to various aspects of rites of passage from fear to courage, from innocence to experience, life to death and the geographical passage from Europe to Canada and from Canada to Europe and back. The aspects of this cross-ocean haunting are contained in figures of displacement and bi-location. Some of the lines spoken by characters are out of place because they were uttered in different time and place while some lines are meaningful in both locations – at home and at the front. One of such situations happens when the letter depicting the soldiers' running to take the position in machine gun fire is read and enacted by the characters. Charlie gives a detailed description of what is happening:

Charlie: We ran through the piles of the killed and wounded the 5th Battalion. We ran through the piles of the killed and wounded 5th Battalion. Strwn out there like old blankets. Heaped on top of each other. Beside each other. One behind the other. Screaming and grabbing at our legs as we ran by them Over them. Tripping us up (Massicotte 135).

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<sup>3</sup> Baetz goes on to emphasize that Canadian identity has been often defined by the tropes of “[a]bsence, innocence, silence, emptiness, negation, deficiency, belatedness, and blankness” (Baetz). This reading would suggest either the absence of crucial tragic events to which Canadian writers could refer or the essential containment of the past in its absence. Such reading would be much in tune with the notions of trauma and haunting as well as the aspects of absence that testify to trauma and denial.

When Charlie reaches the post (in France) it turns out that he has managed to get to the place (in Canada), where he is supposed to meet Mary. She greets him, saying “Charlie, you made it. I’m so relieved” (Masicotte 135), which conveys both her impatience to meet him in peace time and the danger of the war manoeuvre he has just completed. The two contexts superimposed on each other reinforce the rite of passage and coming-of-age narratives. The scene seems to suggest that in order to reach his girlfriend the boy has to pass through the battlefield to prove his worth and courage. This is a significant aspect in Charlie and Mary’s relationship because it starts with an imbalance; Mary is introduced as more experienced and courageous; in contrast to Charlie, she has seen the ocean, crossed it, travelled into a different continent, she is not afraid of thunder and storm and she can remember “The Charge of the Light Brigade” by Tennyson correctly. To Charlie the journey across the ocean seems like the trip made and adventure experienced by European settlers. Thus on the individual scale Charlie illustrates what was described as coming of age rhetoric related to the First World War, according to which the war was postulated to function as a form of rite of passage in the formation of Canadian identity. In his study of Canadian early war fiction, Zachary Abram refers to the persistent image of the war as “a national rite of passage”, in which certain distinctive features of Canadians were exhibited and reinforced (Davey qtd. in Abram 145). The coming of age rhetoric was used, according to Pierre Berton, to justify the atrocities of war: “Because of Vimy, we told ourselves, Canada came of age; because of Vimy our country found its manhood” (qtd. in Grace 2-3). This is the rhetoric which Charlie embraces with all enthusiasm and lack of criticism and which Mary rejects as immature and childish.

The implications of Birney’s poem concerning either the lack of master narratives or/and the absence of native literary tradition are valid for the discussion of *Mary’s Wedding* and the conflict of discourses presented therein. The play refers to the literary tradition that belongs to a different place and time – to Victorian poetry; it builds its visual and conceptual fabric out of the poems by Alfred Tennyson, “The Charge of the Light Brigade” and “The Lady of Shallot”, referring to them as two conflicting texts devoted to different forms of sacrifice.<sup>4</sup> The conflict between the two is verbalized in an argument

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<sup>4</sup> This use of an earlier type of literary diction by the generation who was to experience the events of The First World War was described by Fussell in his *The Great War and Modern Memory*. Fussell mentions boys books, male-romances, pseudo-medieval romances and the Arthurian poems of Tennyson (21). These instances are used to argue that the language which The First World War generation was taught to use was inadequate to deal with the war experience. A similar form of “innocent” diction is employed by Charlie, with the exception of the very description of the battlefield.



between Charlie and Mary concerning Charlie's decision to enlist. Both characters try to defend their different points of view by referring to myths and ideals contained in the 19th century literature, each aware of the other's inadequacy:

**Charlie:** I want to join the cavalry. I've always wanted to. Like in "The Charge of the Light Brigade".

**Mary:** Like in "The Charge of the Light Brigade"? Do you listen to yourself when you speak it. "Not tho' the soldier knew some one had blunder'd? Into the jaws of Death? Into the mouth of hell?"

**Charlie:** "But when can their glory fade? Honour the charge they made!":

**Mary:** That's poetry, Charlie, not real life (Massicotte 148).

which is reversed in the following exchange, referring to the figure of the lady of Shallot and her tragic/artistic death:

**Mary:** I thought that it was us. I thought it was us the wind and the sky, faster and louder than the hooves. If you don't come home I'll die of heartbreak.

**Charlie:** That's poetry, Mary, not real life (Massicotte 148).

Later Mary again describes her condition after having lost her lover as that of the lady of Shallot: "I nearly die of heartache. I swear, for months I can't move. For months I float down the river with my name on the prow" (Massicotte 156). The play thus confronts two romanticized versions of love and death; they are based on the belief in the necessity of sacrifice and the purposefulness of death and are ostensibly presented as anachronistic yet seductive.

*Mary's Wedding* exposes the chasm between the expectations and preconceptions created in the Victorian poetry of love and heroic death and the experience of the First World War. It refrains from formulating its own concept of the war, but attempts to locate its meaning in the conflict of different historical and ideological representations. The play can be regarded as conservative in sympathising with certain myths of the First World War. It presents a positive image of enchantment with the heroic myths of manhood and brotherhood, as well as the youthful fascination with adventure, novelty and grandeur of the British Empire. The main protagonist is modelled on the ideal of the innocent, authentic, healthy young farmer, volunteering for the heroic war – an image employed in propaganda to promote positive associations with the Canadian contribution to the war.<sup>5</sup> However, *Mary's Wedding* uses a number of strategies to deconstruct ideological certainties of

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<sup>5</sup> For the discussion of this and other myths and how they failed to correspond to the social and economic reality see Anna Branach-Kallas, *The Trauma of Survival* (40).

the war myths. These strategies primarily involve the superimposition of two different perspectives and stories, which alienate each other. Charlie tends to understand war in clearly predictable and ideologically saturated categories, encapsulated in the self-denial, sacrifice, and glory of the Light Brigade in Balaklava during the Crimean War, depicted by Tennyson. His perspective is ridiculed by Mary, who reads the same text not as a tribute or glorification but as a testimony to naivety and ignorance. In his seminal book *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Fussell suggests that “The Great War was perhaps the last to be conceived as taking place within seamless, purposeful ‘history’ involving the coherent stream of time running from past through present to future” (21). Charlie seems to embody this conservative – Victorian – attitude. As a dream and a ghost figure, from the posthumous perspective, Charlie tries to make sense of the sacrifice involved in the Battle of Moreuil Wood, which bears many similarities to the Battle of Balaclava, by highlighting the ideological justifications of the waste of human lives.

### Conclusion

The closing lines of the play once again problematize one of the central questions of war literature – how to address the war experience in words/images? Referring to the incongruity and irrelevance of Flowerdew’s letter, the play seems to undermine and question its own means of addressing the theme of war. Despite the general mood of celebrating and honouring the war heroes and the ritual participation in the acts of remembering, the play ostensibly inscribes the images from the war into the framework that is too beautiful to be true. The final comment in the stage directions says “*All of this is very pretty*” (Massicotte 158), which seems again contradictory – both ironic and straightforward. It is an equivalent, in its implication, to the reference made by Flowerdew in his letter to having “the most wonderful experience[...].” (Massicotte 110-111) in war. It seems as if both the message of letter and the imagery of the play have been ostentatiously self-censored, either to expose ideological manipulations or to reveal the impossibility of matching the war experience with any relevant form of representation.

In his book on the First World War and modern memory, Fussell highlighted the problem of finding a proper language to address the experience of war:

But what was needed was exactly the clinical – or even obscene – language the literary Aitken regards as “weak”. It would take still another war, and an even worse one, before such language would force itself up from below and propose itself for use. It was a matter of leaving, finally, the nineteenth century behind (Fussell 174).

The language that Massicotte employs has a certain deconstructive potential primarily manifested in anachrony, juxtaposition, repetition, fragmentation and fluidity of texts, events and orders of existence. However, in many other respects, despite making references to the unspeakable frontline experience, encapsulated in the repetition of “Mud...mud...mud” (Massicotte 132),<sup>6</sup> the play concentrates on depicting Charlie doing his best to “keep the brave face for the girl” (Massicotte 132-133) and trying to show his endurance even in the most drastic circumstances. The clinical language of which Fussell writes surfaces in several passages describing the attack, yet it is quickly subsumed under the coming of age narrative. While the “clinical” language tends to open the wound to inspection rather than wrap it in bandages, the play’s finale tries to offer consolation by freezing the flashback just before the shells reach the soldier and Mary is woken to the future time. In this way the tragic moment of death is omitted in representation, bridging memory and the dream of the future. At the same time, it is Mary who insists on telling Charlie what happened in the battle, making him aware of how he died. By doing this, Mary acknowledges Charlie’s death or in a sense metaphorically repeats the act of killing him, ready to move into tomorrow, symbolically leaving behind the mourning period. This fictional individual process offers a safe passage through memory and pain into the future re-integration into society also to the play’s audiences. If we look at *Mary's Wedding* as a response to current wars and conflicts, the reference to the First World War is a way of confronting contemporary reality. In his article on war zones, Adam Piette comments on how war writing is always built on the previous experiences of war which come back as an echo: “war writing is always implicitly a matter of painful recall, of repetition of other wars dramatized as a guilty working through, repression of, and struggle with the terrible deaths of other past combatants” (43). Massicotte’s play both enacts and describes a form of the working through process based on the ability to confront and then repress memory through displacement and substitution of dictions and discourses. Taking into consideration the play’s popularity, it seems that the play has managed to find the theatrical diction in which to effectively address contemporary war themes – by performing final funeral rites to memory.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Santanu Das’ discussion on the conceptual and factual implications of mud in the First World War. Apart from the physical risk it caused to the soldiers, in metaphorical and psychological terms mud signifies chaos, shapelessness, disintegration, and runs contrary to the narratives of heroic death (Das 35-38).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Neta Gordon’s discussion of the inadequacy of the elegiac form for the representation of the First World War because of the “temporal gap” between the present audiences and the historical events and because “it is no longer socially productive within our present ideological attitude toward the war and its horrors” (46).

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**‘A WAR OF WORLDS’ –  
TIMOTHY FINDLEY’S *THE WARS***

**Abstract**

Timothy Findley is a recognized Canadian writer whose numerous novels examine the nature of violence, fascism and totalitarianism in its various forms. His fiction frequently offers an alternative perspective on well-known historical events. In his formally complex 1977 novel *The Wars* (1977) Findley re/imagines and re/constructs the Great War (1914-1918) from an unusual angle. The text simultaneously supports and subverts Canadian cultural and literary myths, such as the importance of World War I as a nation-forming factor and Canadian sympathetic identification with the animal kingdom. At the time of the novel's publication, both of these concepts were perceived as potent aspects of Canadian cultural nationalism. Focusing on the sensitive Canadian soldier Robert Ross, his war experiences and descent into apparent madness, Findley portrays in heroic dimensions a conflict among man, civilization and nature. As such, the novel becomes a site of numerous struggles and battles –between Robert's personal needs and external expectations, between individual freedom and institutional enslavement, between innocence and experience, and also between humanity and nature. Findley's protagonist, his experiences and his identification with the Other, become a vehicle to deconstruct the myths of the Great War, as well as the preconceptions of any war or the legitimization of any form of violence, and to rebel against authorities which deny or disrespect the elemental communion of humanity with the natural realm. In this way, *The Wars* transcends the Canadian context and can be read as an allegory about the biological and psychological connection between humans and the other beings with whom they share the earth.

**Keywords:** The Great War, humans and animals, civilization vs. nature, the Other

**Résumé**

Timothy Findley, un écrivain canadien reconnu, analyse dans sa prose la nature de la violence, du fascisme et du totalitarisme dans leurs diverses manifestations. Sa prose

offre souvent au lecteur un regard alternatif sur les événements historiques bien connus. Dans son fameux roman *Les Guerres* (1977), ayant la forme bien complexe, Findley reconstitue et crée à la fois une image de la Grande Guerre (1914-1918), proposant un point de vue bien spécifique. En même temps, il veut renforcer et nier les mythes canadiens culturels et littéraires relatifs à cet événement, tels que l'importance de la Première Guerre mondiale dans le processus de formation de l'État canadien ou l'identification des Canadiens avec le royaume des animaux. Lors de la création du roman, les deux narrations ont été considérées comme éléments importants du nationalisme culturel au Canada. En suivant les épreuves d'un sensible soldat canadien, Robert Frost, ainsi que ses expériences de guerre et sa chute progressive dans la folie, Findley montre le conflit entre l'homme, la civilisation et la nature. Le roman devient ainsi une arène de lutte de différentes forces – des batailles entre les désirs individuels de Robert et les attentes du monde extérieur, la liberté de l'individu et l'asservissement par des institutions, l'innocence et l'expérience, enfin, entre l'humanité et la nature. Le héros de Findley, son expérience et son identification avec l'Autre deviennent un outil de déconstruction des mythes de la Grande Guerre, des hypothèses concernant toutes les guerres et du bien-fondé de toute forme de violence. Le roman est une sorte de rébellion contre toute autorité qui contredit ou ne respecte pas l'union élémentaire de l'humanité avec le monde naturel. De cette façon, *Les Guerres* dépasse le contexte canadien. Par conséquent, le roman peut être perçu comme une allégorie sur les liens biologiques et psychologiques de l'homme avec d'autres êtres qui partagent avec lui la Terre.

**Mots-clés :** La Grande Guerre, l'homme et les animaux, civilisation vs. nature, l'Autre

## Introduction

In Margret Atwood's seminal novel *Surfacing* (1972) one of the characters, David, famously states that Canada is a country built upon dead animals: "Do you realize [...] that this country is founded on the bodies of dead animals? Dead fish, dead seals, and historically dead beavers, the beaver is to this country what the black man is to the United States" (Atwood 43). Reflecting on Canadian history and its literary past, it can be definitely stated that animals, both alive and dead, have literally 'made' Canada and have contributed to its unique literary character (Sandlos, Atwood, *Survival*, Fiamengo). In Canada, as elsewhere, animals have been perceived as biological creatures of flesh and blood driven by instincts as well as imaginative creatures capable of moral reasoning (Berger, Sandlos 77, DeMello). However, in the period of Canada's fervent nationalism of the 1970s, animals assumed a new importance in Canadian literature and culture when they served as national icons, becoming potent metaphors for victimized



Canadians hunted and killed, if only culturally, by Canada's powerful neighbour: the United States of America. The animal victim epitomized Canadians in Margaret Atwood's thematic guide to Canada's letters *Survival* (1972). The motif of the dying animal in Canadian literature of the 1970s reflected the ever-growing awareness of speciesism and the concerns of developing animal rights movement, and also reminded readers of potential ecological disasters caused by the abuse of natural resources and an exploitative attitude towards the natural world.

Timothy Findley's *The Wars* (1977) refers to the above images of animals, but transcends Canadian literary confines or national myths. Presenting a version of the Great War, an event which is thought to be the "National myth of origins that Canadians might otherwise lack" (Williams 271) and during which "a number of Canadian values were forged" (Gordon 4), *The Wars* clearly alludes to the issues raised by Canadian thematic critics in its presentation of animal beings. In the novel military animals, together with Canadian soldiers, help to pave the way for Canada's maturity as a nation, sacrificing their lives in the process. As such, like Atwood's protagonist in *Surfacing*, Findley's novel appears to endorse the view that Canada is "founded on the bodies of dead animals" (Atwood, *Surfacing* 43). For several decades before the appearance of new Canadian First World War literature *The Wars* was regarded as "the alpha and omega of Canadian First War writing" (Gordon 7). The novel was thought to be responsible for awakening critical interest in the subject of Canadian Great War literature as well as the texts created immediately after World War I. Surprisingly enough, however, *The Wars*, an apparent model of Canadian war literature, does not uphold or support some Canadian values which, as Gordon believes, were results of the war (Gordon 4,15).<sup>1</sup> While novels envisioning the First World War written in the last two decades present the war as an epochal event which was Canada's collective "coming of age" and which forged Canada both on the battlefield and on the home front (Gordon 25), *The Wars*, though written in the years of Canada's enthusiastic nationalism, seems to question this idea. The conflict that the novel presents is devoid of any creative potential but is rather an apocalyptic event which destroys both humanity and wildlife and which

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<sup>1</sup> These are, for example, a sense of duty for the right cause, a sense of pride due to the fact that Canadian soldiers are reliable on the battlefield though they are first and foremost dedicated to peace, or a sceptical attitude to the war despite recognizing its cultural significance (Gordon 4, 15). However Krause underlines the fact that the novel transcendent prevailing Canadian literary imagining of the Great War as she examines various critics' positioning Findley's novel within the British rather than Canadian Great War literary tradition (53).

violates the natural order.<sup>2</sup> Regarded as one of the best First World War novels ever written (Novak, Palmeteer Penne, Webb, Gordon), *The Wars* offers an uncommon assessment of the effects that the Great War had on the natural environment and wildlife (Frye 616, Webb 231, Heubener). Furthermore, it also provides a commentary on the relationship between human and animal beings. Therefore, although *The Wars* focuses on the sympathetic identification of Canadians with animals, it also reaches beyond national borders and the constraints of Canadian thematic criticism which were prevalent at the time of its publication. In this formally complex novel that re/imagines and re/constructs the First World War, Findley simultaneously supports and subverts Canadian cultural and literary myths which are perceived as potent elements of Canadian cultural nationalism. Focusing on the sensitive Canadian soldier Robert Ross, his war experiences and his descent into apparent madness Findley portrays in heroic dimensions a conflict between man, civilization and nature. In this way, the novel becomes a site of numerous struggles and battles: between Robert's personal needs and external expectations, between individual freedom and institutional enslavement, between innocence and experience, as well as between humanity and nature. Findley's protagonist, his experiences and his identification with the Other, become a vehicle for deconstructing the myths of the Great War, the preconceptions of any war or the legitimization of any form of violence. The novel portrays a rebellion against authorities that deny or disrespect the elemental communion of humanity with the natural realm which becomes disrupted, not only in times of war but also throughout the ages due to human civilization and technological development. In this way, *The Wars'* focus on ecological concerns transcends the Canadian context and the historical frame to be read as an allegory about the biological and psychological connection between humans and animals with whom they share the earth.

### **Robert Ross as an Element of Nature and a Borderline Entity**

In his essay "Why Look at Animals" (1977) John Berger describes the changes in the relationship between humans and animals caused by the development of human civilisation. Berger points to an ever-growing marginalisation as well as to a gradual erasure of animals from the surface of the earth, which results in the loneliness of the human species. According to Berger, this process began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was accomplished a century later due to the development of

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<sup>2</sup> To a certain extent, however, Robert Ross can be read as an embodiment of Canada who, just like the nation, undergoes a rite of passage – on several levels – during the war (Palmeteer Penne).

capitalism which severed traditional links between the human and animal worlds. In the past, as Berger states, animals were always in the very vicinity of man and men's survival depended upon animals: "They were with man at the center of his world" (Berger 3). Before the domestication – and, also, the ab/use, animals were assigned important functions in the human imagination because they served as messengers and promises. In this way the beings were located in two worlds simultaneously: the symbolic and eternal domain of imagination as well as the earthly sphere. As Berger puts it: "They belonged *there* and *here*. Likewise they were mortal and immortal. [...] [T]he first existential dualism [...] was reflected in the treatment of animals. They were subjected *and* worshipped, bred *and* sacrificed" (7, emphasis in original). The human capacity for symbolic thought is believed to separate people from the kingdom of animals, but, at the same time, paradoxically, as Berger explains, man used animals as symbols. Paradoxically, the separateness of the two worlds resulted from their interconnectedness. Until the 19<sup>th</sup> century this particular relation was expressed in anthropomorphism but due to the changes in the relationship between people and animals which have taken place during the last two centuries, as a result of, especially, the erasure of animals from the lives of modern man, nowadays "anthropomorphism makes us doubly uneasy" (Berger 11).

Such a change in the human perspective on animals has worked to promote human civilisation. Since animals are believed to be devoid of souls it is convenient to reduce them to machines. Humans, on the other hand, have been attempting to deny as well as to transcend this mechanical – animal – element in themselves. The denial has frequently led people to inflict suffering upon animals. The view of animals as mindless and emotionless automata has justified their status as goods and commodities. Animals were used as machines at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution and later they were commodified as well as objectified (Berger 13). This cultural marginalisation of animals has not been matched by the physical one due to the former's complexity, since animals remain important matter of language, dreams, or entertainment, to mention just a few. Still, the physical role of animals has been mostly reduced to that of the family and the spectacle (Berger 15). Due to the changes, animals, according to Berger, have assumed a role as passive agents, subjects of knowledge, always observed, or found out about. The distance between man and his/her object of scientific research has been continuously extending, and animals' power of observing or ability to look at man has become insignificant while man's knowledge about animals has been a source of power (16-17). Such transformations of the human-animal relationship have resulted in a certain feeling of nostalgia for lost innocence, comfort and safety. Referring to Lukacs' *History and Class Consciousness*, which claims that nature can be treated as a value concept and embodies natural aspects of human inwardness, while society deprives man of "natural

essence” and inhibits him/her, Berger believes that the existence of a wild animal functions as an ideal, “an ideal internalised as a feeling surrounding a repressed desire, [...] the starting point of a daydream.” (17)

Civilisation has erected various borders between human and non-human realms, a detailed discussion of the reasons and effects of which is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, the present examination of *The Wars* mobilises Berger’s metaphor of the “lost look” between man and animals. Undoubtedly, animals both resemble and differ from men and are an essential element of the human world even after their marginalisation. Animals’ presence, according to Berger, helps humans to become conscious of themselves: “[B]y no other species except man will the animal’s look be recognised as familiar. Other animals are held by the look. Man becomes aware of himself returning the look” (Berger 4). Yet, the man and the animal will always be divided by space of incomprehension. Man will invariably recognise in the animal ignorance and fear: a conventional form of communication between them is impossible due to the animal’s inability to use the human language. Therefore, “no animal confirms man either positively or negatively [...]. But always its lack of common language, its silence, guarantees its distance, its distinctness, its exclusion, from and of man” (Berger 5, 6). The animal’s life parallels, but is not to be confused with, human life rather, the unity and the convergence of these lives is possible only in death. This unique connection between humans and animals makes the latter, as Berger believes, matchless companionship: “different from any offered by human exchange. Different because it is a companionship offered to the loneliness of man as a species” (Berger 6).

Findley’s central protagonist of *The Wars*, whose life the archivist strives to reconstruct, is located on the borderline between the human and the animal kingdoms. His strong connections with nature, his extraordinary communion with animals, his siding with the Other, the inferior, the enslaved or the ab/used, make Robert Ross identify or even transform into one of the animals whom he grows to prefer to people. Due to his non-European understanding of human-animal relationships Robert opposes the selective speciesism practised in and out of wartime, and gradually estranges himself from humanity to look for shelter, both literal and metaphorical, in nature. Finally, he totally identifies with animals which though frequently presented as helpless and passive victims of war, also become potent agents of the protagonist’s moral victory and spiritual liberation. Other characters who Findley’s central protagonist feels closeness to and for whom the war is also unnatural, such as Harris, Rodwell or Mrs Ross, share, or even heighten (Huebener 187), his

perspective on human relations with the natural world.<sup>3</sup> Civilisation as envisioned in *The Wars* is contrasted with nature, and presented as permanently in conflict with it, imagined as an overwhelming and annihilating force which destroys the lives of both humans and animals, for the purpose of artificial national divisions, political aims or absurd military rules. The natural world, both organic and non-organic, provides Robert and his friends with a necessary refuge, if only momentarily, and symbolizes their desire for freedom from the constraints of masculinity, heterosexuality and speciesism as well as omnipresent death.

When Robert dies at the end of the novel due to wounds inflicted in a fire of the barn that he sheltered in with freed horses six years before, Julia d'Orsay, his friend and caretaker, inscribes the following words on his gravestone: "EARTH AND AIR AND FIRE AND WATER" (Findley, *The Wars* 190). This inscription offers the summary of, and a conclusion to, Robert's life. *The Wars* presents Robert as one of these natural elements, as a part of the nature which, in its different forms, he feels communion with. This unity with the world of nature is frequently referred to in the novel. Therefore, Robert is repeatedly located amid natural objects – organic and non-organic parts of the natural world, set in changing landscapes and varying weather conditions, with celestial bodies in the background. Firstly, Robert's subsequent death by fire at the climax of the novel is signalled recurrently from the beginning before the whole series of events which ultimately leads to his decease is revealed to the reader. Robert is defined by fire before the reader learns that he "was consumed by fire" (Findley, *The Wars* 11). The protagonist's image is described as "fiery" (Findley, *The Wars* 13) by the archivist researching his life and he 'rides' "a 'fire horse'" (Findley, *The Wars* 18) when he enlists. On the battlefield he witnesses the deaths by fire of people as well as animals and he is himself almost devoured by this element, which comes to contain him and his legend, during the novel's climax. Secondly, water and soil mixed with water, namely mud, define him too, especially during his life at the front in France. The mud is overwhelmingly omnipresent there: "The mud. There are no good similes. Mud must be a Flemish word. Mud was invented here. Mudland might have been its name. The ground is the colour of steel. Over most of the plain there isn't a trace of topsoil: only sand and clay" (Findley, *The Wars* 72). Sludge, contaminated with human and animal corpses, makes it almost impossible for the soldiers to live and move. Soldiers and horses "waded to the front". Men and horses sank from sight. They drowned in mud. Their graves [...] just dug themselves and

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<sup>3</sup> Webb (238) includes also Taffler and Swede into this group, but excludes Mrs. Ross. I am going to exclude the first two but refer also to Robert's mother's identification with the natural world as a form of longing for and a communion with her son.

pulled them down” (Findley, *The Wars* 72). Robert, too, repeatedly sinks in this mixture of earth, water and debris. He also fears death by drowning in the mud (Findley, *The Wars* 80-81) and swims across a river with his horse, almost dying in the process (Findley, *The Wars* 82). In addition, it is liquid, his urine, which saves him together with his comrades during a gas attack. His life in the trenches is conditioned by air, obviously, but it is also endangered by the lack of it, since Robert survives several gas attacks, loses his way in fog created by poisonous gases, and witnesses people as well as animals dying of toxic vapours.

Apart from this physical closeness of natural elements, the novel also foregrounds Robert’s psychological affinity with wildlife and stresses his subjectification of animals. At various points in the novel Robert is presented as a member of the animal realm whose identity merges with wildlife. His self is positioned on the human-animal border. He possesses what Webb calls a “quasi-animal identity” (237) and has an ability to “take on animalistic identities” (238).<sup>4</sup> The protagonist’s animalistic nature emerges in the opening image of the novel, which is also the culmination of his life, when Robert sitting “on his haunches” (Findley, *The Wars* 9), appears with a black mare and a dog. This identity also surfaces during his chase with a coyote when, having completed the peculiar race with the animal, Robert “sat like that, on his haunches, with his hands dangling down” (Findley, *The Wars* 31). Later, when he is looking through Rodwell’s sketchbooks, the protagonist notices a picture entitled “Robert” amid drawings devoted exclusively to animals. The picture presents him as yet another animal:

The likeness was good. Unnerving. But the shading was not quite human. There was another quality [...] Robert could not decipher what that quality was – until he’d finished leafing through the book and glanced through the others [...]. In all of them – on every page, the drawing were of animals. Of maybe a hundred sketches, Robert’s was the only human form. Modified and mutated – he was one with the others (Findley, *The Wars* 138).<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, when Robert is living in the trenches, his instinct urges him to use the animal elements in him to survive: “Sleep was dangerous. The animal memory in you knew that. [...] All he wanted was a dream. Escape. But nobody dreams on a battle field. There isn’t any sleep that long. Dreams and

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<sup>4</sup> Such a transformation is known as theriomorphism and is a reversal of anthropocentrism (Webb 238). Webb notices, that in *The Wars* Findley deliberately avoids anthropomorphism but even without pseudo-humanizing animals their suffering evokes sympathy from the reader (230).

<sup>5</sup> Huebener claims, that to belong to animals Robert has to undergo an “unnatural” transformation (181). He reads the change as a sign of speciesism.

distance are the same" (Findley, *The Wars* 93). Moreover, recurrently throughout the novel Robert subjectifies animals by referring to them as persons rather than objects. In its final part, when Robert rebels against the army and the whole of humankind, he recognizes animals as subjects and his identity assumes an animal quality merging with those of the horses abandoned in a carriage. When the black mare he is riding informs him about the confined animals and whines "other horses answered from the car. "All right," Robert said. "Then we shall all go together"" (Findley, *The Wars* 10, 183). The objectified animals become, just like Ross, subjects "in their own right" (Heubener 177). Also later, while protecting horses in a barn from Major Mickle and his soldiers after his desertion, Robert again transforms into one of animals when he declares: "We shall not be taken" (Findley, *The Wars* 185). This is misleading for Robert's pursuers, who cannot decipher the meaning of his use of the pronoun, which ultimately brings about his death.

### Regaining the "Look"

Thus, Robert has an extraordinary connection with the natural world and with animals. He can interpret, feel empathy for and communicate with the animal kingdom. This bond with wildlife is the basis of his relationship with most important people in his life: with Harris as well as Rodwell, and, indirectly, with his mother, Mrs. Ross. In this way, the relation between Robert and non-human animals is not confined only to the military sphere but is visible in the domestic sphere, too. The connection functions as the source of Robert's momentary periods of liberation and also becomes the ultimate cause of both his spiritual triumph and, as others perceive it, his downfall, or demoralization (Frye 616). Consequently, the communion with animals and interspecies communication repeatedly offers Robert spiritual revelation and freedom. To employ Berger's phrase and metaphor of "the look," throughout the novel Robert, due to his ex-centric and marginal position, restores or regains "the look" with animals. Lacking faith in human exceptionalism and obstinately refusing to participate in the specist practices that he witnesses on and outside the battlefield, the protagonist never treats animals in an anthropomorphic way, projecting human characteristics onto them, but rather gains an "access to the intended world of the other" (Shapiro 191).<sup>6</sup>

Robert's sympathy for the marginalized and discriminated against creatures, and his identification with them, is embodied in the event responsible for the protagonist's enlisting. The death of Robert's sister and the immediate

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<sup>6</sup> Brydon calls Findley's affection for animals "the creative effort of identification with the Other" (72).

events after the fall foreshadow the rest of the novel and the climax of the book (Webb, Huebner). Rowena, a hydrocephalic, dies by accident in a barn, among horses. Robert, her most devoted caretaker, feels guilty of neglect and enlists the next day. Rowena's death in the stables establishes a connection between her passing and the future deaths of horses and other animals, as well as his decease by fire years after the accident. The first act of violence ensuing from Rowena's death and the one that Robert assumes responsibility for – the killing of Rowena's ten rabbits which Mrs Ross insists on "because they were [Rowena's]" (Findley, *The Wars* 22) becomes a kind of primordial ritual during which an owner's animals had to die with her (DeMello 39). Robert has to inflict death on the helpless pets: "*It must be here and he must do it. 'Why?' 'BECAUSE HE LOVED HER'.*" (Findley, *The Wars* 24). Webb sees this resolution as Mrs. Ross's desire to annihilate her daughter's identity completely, because, according to him, Rowena's rabbits function as signifiers of the mother's attitude towards her daughter's handicapped state (235). The decision leads to intense suffering for Robert but it also establishes his attitude towards the inferior, the victimized and the marginalized which is evident in the rest of the novel. In addition, for the external world Robert's carrying out of the killing constitutes a test of his manliness. The main protagonist's protests that he would like to keep the rabbits are met with his mother's protests: "Don't be ridiculous, Robert. Gracious! You're a grown up man" (Findley, *The Wars* 23). Traditionally, keeping pets has been considered a feminine activity. Therefore, the protagonist's suggestion is seen as an effeminising act of empathy which is unsuitable for a young man to express (DeMello 152). When Teddy Budge is called in to kill the rabbits Robert attacks the man, risking his life to save the animals.<sup>7</sup> Inspired by feelings of anger against senseless human laws, this peculiar act of heroism resonates throughout the novel and fuels final desperation.

The first extraordinary encounter with animals after Robert joins the army involves a coyote which he chases one night during his training in Alberta.<sup>8</sup> The coyote runs ahead of him, as if ignoring or unaware of his presence. Robert decides to follow it, observing the animal and adjusting his step to the changing speed of the creature. Both seem to be enjoying the unusual race. The coyote leads the soldier to a valley with a lake and starts to drink while the protagonist becomes aware of an extraordinary communion with the animal amid the surrounding prairie:

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<sup>7</sup> For Huebner, Teddy Budge is "a civilian version of a stereotyped military soldier" who carries out orders without questioning them (181).

<sup>8</sup> Webb links the coyote with Aboriginal trickster figures and believes that in different forms it reappears in the novel (237).



The sound of the coyote lapping at the water crossed the distance between them and the sound seemed to satisfy his own thirst. [...] The sun was shining on his face. He could feel that it was gold and red – just as he could feel the grass was green. His face was a mirror to the sun. [...] The coyote shook itself, [...] turned around, [...] threw its back and howled. Then it looked directly at him – right at Robert, with its tail slightly lowered – and barked. Then the tail began to wag. The coyote had known he was there the whole time: maybe the whole of their run across the prairie. Now it was telling Robert the valley was vacant: safe – and that Robert could proceed to the water's edge to drink. It barked three times – a precise announcement it was leaving (Findley, *The Wars* 31- 32).

Because of the encounter Robert is late and confined to the barracks for two weeks, during which he observes the prairie “wishing that *someone* would howl” (Findley, *The Wars* 32, emphasis mine). Another example of such “kinaesthetic empathy”, during which the protagonist empathizes with animals and tries to comprehend their bodily experience (Shapiro, DeMello 20), takes place when Robert races with horses during his stay with the d’Orsay family in the English countryside. In her diary entry Julia d’Orsay is aware of Robert’s unusual interaction with the animals: “He was running in the paddock. [...] Robert was running with the horses. [...] He was even in his bare feet. The horses seemed to love the race. They won – but Robert didn’t mind. The running was what he wanted. You could tell by the way he smiled” (Findley, *The Wars* 153).

As mentioned above, Robert’s soulmates perceive a continuum between humans, animals and the entire natural world too. Sensitivity as well as empathy for the Other, or awareness of natural surroundings, also in the form of various weather conditions, are factors responsible for Robert’s relationship with Harris and his closeness to Rodwell, but they also let Mrs. Ross indirectly share her son’s experience, although she remains in Canada. In addition, the attitude towards the animal kingdom divides the protagonists of the novel into moral and immoral ones and stimulates the reader’s sympathy or antipathy towards them (Webb 239).<sup>9</sup> One such character is the young soldier Harris who becomes Robert’s closest friend during their voyage across the Atlantic. Harris introduces him into the world of military horses when Robert becomes involved in caring for these animals due to Harris’s illness. Later, when Harris is on his death bed Robert visits him in hospital and listens to his friend’s visions concerning interactions between the dying man and the natural world. The dreams depict an aquatic domain in which there is no distinction between the human and the animal worlds: where people coexist with animals. In this domain men may turn into animals if they desire to. Such

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<sup>9</sup> Webb believes that various protagonists’ names are symbolic and reflect their attitudes towards animals (239).

a realm constitutes an opposition to the real world with its divisions and speciesism:

Where I swam, there was a shelf. I used to walk to the edge of the shelf and sit with my legs dangling down. I've no idea how deep it was. Sitting on the shelf at low tide, my head was just above the water. Out of my world into theirs. And I'd stay there hours. Or so it seems. I'd think: *I never have to breathe again*. I've changed. It changes you. But the thing was – I could do it. Change – and be one of them. They aren't any friendlier, you know. But they accept you there. As if you might belong, if you wanted to. It's not like here. It's not like here at all (Findley, *The Wars* 95).

Harris tells Robert stories about swimming with fish, of being ushered into the water world by its dwellers: "In that place – there – in that element – somehow I was safe" (Findley, *The Wars* 96). Water, Harris tries to convince Robert, is the origin of all species, the element uniting the human and the non-human animal, a proof of the elemental communion of all creatures. In a poetic vision, he convinces his listener that this connection can still be detected since the ocean has not ceased to exist in human bodies: "*Everyone who's born has come from the sea. Your mother's womb is just the sea in small. And birds come out of seas in eggs. Horses lie in the sea before they're born. The placenta is the sea. And your blood is the sea continued in your veins. We are the ocean – walking on the land*" (Findley, *The Wars* 105-106). After Harris's death Robert fulfils his friend's wish to become part of the aquatic domain when he returns his friend's ashes to the place of his origin saying: "*Go [...] in peace. And sing with the whales*" (Findley, *The Wars* 107).<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, Rodwell, who befriends Robert in the trenches, feels an extreme empathy for animals and cannot accept the appalling cruelty of people toward them. On the battlefield he wishes to preserve whatever has been left of the natural world. Therefore, in the adapted fragment of a trench called the Stained Glass Dugout, Rodwell starts an animal hospital. Living with the men in the confined space of the trench, the animals – "Birds. Rabbits. Hedgehogs. Toads and things..." (Findley, *The Wars* 88) – become wartime pets as they recover from various wounds in their separate cages, though they are finally (with the exception of the toad) gassed during one of the attacks.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, the creatures become immortalized in Rodwell's sketchbooks, which Robert presents to young Julia d'Orsay. Military activities at the front

<sup>10</sup> Harris's ashes are scattered at the place where General Wolfe died; thus, there is established a connection between the individual death and the national cause (Findley, *The Wars* 108).

<sup>11</sup> The toad survives the gas attack because it remains the whole time in water. Water, as Harris believes, functions as a peculiar shelter.

destroy the dugout, the “cocoon- like environment” (Webb 235), while the psychological effects of exposure to war result in Rodwell’s suicide. This illustrator of children’s books and animal lover commits suicide after witnessing the torture of animals by insane soldiers. When he is assigned to a group of men who survived a gas attack in the trenches, he observes the impact of constant wartime stress on their mental health. The soldiers, perhaps as an irrational act of revenge on creatures weaker than and inferior to them who, just like them, have become pawns in somebody’s hands, ruthlessly slaughter every living creature that they encounter: rats, mice and a cat. The Helpless Rodwell, who cannot stop the killings or hide his compassion for the creatures, is also tormented just like the animals by being forced to observe slaying of a cat. Soon afterwards, overwhelmed by the violence done to the creatures he himself has been trying to salvage amid the massacre of both men and animals, Rodwell, in *No Man’s Land*, decides to end his life (Findley, *The Wars* 134). In a letter that he leaves for his daughter, Rodwell convinces the child that the cycle of life never ends and that one existence transforms into another, ceaselessly: “I am alive in everything I touch. Touch these pages and you have me in your fingertips. We survive in one another. Everything lives forever. Believe it. Nothing dies” (Findley, *The Wars* 135). His is, like Robert’s and Harris’s, a non-European and non-Christian understanding of the relationship between men, animals and the elements.

Similarly, a peculiar communion with nature creates a link between Robert and his mother. Mrs. Ross who cannot prevent her son from joining the army because she recognizes his freedom of choice and autonomy, virtually shares his experiences in Europe by deliberately exposing herself to the various weather conditions which her son has to endure while living in the trenches. Such behaviour is her protest against the war and also her form of grieving (York 39). Referring to her son’s feelings of guilt after his sister’s death on the night before his departure, she informs him: “no one belongs to anyone. We’re all cut off at birth with a knife and left at the mercy of strangers. You hear that? *Strangers*. I know what you want to do. I know you’re going to go away and be a soldier. Well – you can go to hell. I’m not responsible. I’m just another stranger. Birth I can give you – but life I cannot. I can’t keep anyone alive. Not any more” (Findley, *The Wars* 28). Soon, however, she forges an extraordinary connection with her son in a futile attempt to reclaim him and to empathize with him. First, she rebels, like her son later on, against the war and against patriotic as well as religious celebrations of young men’s certain deaths. She is unable to comprehend why people consent to send their children to the battlefields of Europe:

Why were they standing here in this snow, in these black, black clothes and blowing veils, listening to the wailing pipes and nodding at one another – shaking

one another's hands as if to congratulate themselves that all their sons had gone away to die? Half the people here – or more – had sons like hers who were on those ships that had left St John the day before (Findley, *The Wars* 53).

Therefore, when the service in a local cathedral that she attends focuses on the war she leaves in protest: "I do not understand. I don't. I won't. I can't. Why is this happening to us, [...] ? What does it mean – *to kill your children?* Kill them and then... go in there and sing about it! What does that mean? [...] All those soldiers, sitting in there and smiling at their parents. Thank God and Jesus Robert didn't smile at me before he left – I couldn't have born it!" (Findley, *The Wars* 54) She never meets her son again after he enlists, even when she has an opportunity to do so, because, on those rare occasions, she is paralysed by fear or confined by her alcoholism. Still, she is able to forge a connection of sorts with him through natural elements. Thus, Mrs. Ross becomes, what York calls (33), "a domestic soldier in crisis" whose battles resemble her son's. Consequently, Mrs. Ross seeks out storms and walks in all types of weather as if the experience of, and the inconvenience caused by, meteorological conditions is a form of communion with her absent son: "Mrs. Ross took pleasure in the rain and snow. She pushed her veiling back and let them beat against her face. She never spoke to anyone she met" (Findley, *The Wars* 135). Furthermore, just like her son, Mrs. Ross walks in mud during windy weather as if trying to challenge the complacency of those who remain at home while their children are fighting on the battlefields of Europe: "In March, when the wind blew down the ravine in gales, Mrs. Ross put on the gardener's rubber boots and walked in the mud. If the wind was particularly strong, she turned around and walked against it backward all the way to the river" (Findley, *The Wars* 136). When she learns that her son is missing in action, Mrs. Ross refuses to dress or drink, but nature that she has sought refuge in becomes indifferent: "out beyond the windows, the robins sang and the sun shone and the lilacs were still in bloom" (Findley, *The Wars* 179).

### **The First World War as an Ecological Disaster**

In Canada natural life flourishes while, in Europe, the soldiers, including Mrs. Ross's son, have been destroying it during their military activities. The war as presented in Findley's novel not only annihilates thousands of people on both sides of No Man's Land but also destroys the natural world and frequently violates the natural order. Consequently, the war-torn fields of France are turned into a desert which substitutes the pre-war landscape: "Houses, trees and fields of flax once flourished here. Summers had been blue with flowers.

Now it was a shallow sea of stinking grey from end to end. And this is where you fought the war” (Findley, *The Wars* 72). Gas or bomb attacks often reverse natural processes. Day and night become indistinguishable. The nights become bright, lit up with fire throwers, while the days are covered in smoke. Natural processes are reversed as “water burned and snow went up in smoke” (Findley, *The Wars* 132). In certain areas of the frontline, modern technology destroys all forms of life so that “Nothing remained. It was virtual attrition” (Findley, *The Wars* 132). Such is the result of, for example, fire throwers which are used for the first time on 29<sup>th</sup> February 1916:

Fire storms raged along the front. Men exploded where they stood – blown apart by combustion. Winds with the velocity of cyclones tore the guns from their emplacements and flung them like toys. Horses fell with their bones on fire. Men went blind in the heat. Blood ran out of noses, ears and mouths. Wells and springs of water were plugged and stopped by the bodies of men and mules and dogs who had gone there for safety. The storms might last for hours – until the clay was baked and the earth was seared and sealed fire (Findley, *The Wars* 132).

Furthermore, large areas of the battlefield are saturated with poisonous gases which, when evaporating, create dangerous fog. The omnipresent mud and water also become contaminated by excrement, wreckage and the bodies of dead soldiers. Instead of birds the sky is full of machines, “the air alive with planes” (Findley, *The Wars* 173). Birds, on the other hand, reside on the earth, feeding upon the dead floating in the mud: “Crows. They’d been crows all along – with wings as long as arms. [T]he whole field was filled with floating shapes. The only sounds were the sounds of feeding and of wings. And of rafts” (Findley, *The Wars* 81-82). While during peace people consume birds, in wartime it is the birds that devour people. In addition the instinct to survive which people share with animals is thwarted as deserters, young and healthy people escaping death, are killed by the Military Police just because of a very natural thing – their survival instinct. Further, unnatural divisions between nations or peoples are emphasised in order to propel and justify the war machine, as Julia d’Orsay notices: “[T]he greatest mistake we made was to imagine something magical separated us from Lundendorff and Kitchener and Foch” (Findley, *The Wars* 17).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> According to Webb (241), *The Wars* demonstrates, too, that nature cannot be obliterated by civilisation and that despite wartime destruction of the environment and annihilation of millions of people, nature and wildlife continue to thrive.

### Robert as a Proto-Animal Rights Activist

Due to the fact that an affinity with the natural world and the realm of animals is immensely important in Robert Ross's life, his repeated witnessing of the objectification, and abuse of animals results in his insubordination as well as desertion. Other First World War literary visions concentrate on the anguish of people, but *The Wars*, while not ignoring the suffering of humans, foregrounds, instead, the destruction of the natural world. Consequently, it is the deaths of animals which are described in detail so that the overlooked, the ex-centric and the neglected aspects of the First World War history are reconstructed (Webb 233-234). Findley's novel highlights the army's selective speciesism. The war machine objectifies animals, perceiving them as part of the military equipment or as necessary ingredients of the war machine. Yet, occasionally, animals are treated as non-human soldiers, almost equal to their human counterparts. Robert becomes aware of the terrible fate of army animals, namely horses, when he is assigned to take care of those animals during the passage across the Atlantic on the S.S. Massanabie. Before the voyage starts, the horses are transported on board like inanimate objects: "Each horse was lifted in a harness by a gigantic crane and lowered into the hold like cargo. Robert had never seen such a sight. A hundred and forty horses were brought on aboard this way. High in the air, each horse lifted its head and cried aloud. Just once. And this was the only sound they made" (Findley, *The Wars* 50). The embarking proves to be the entrance to hell created for the animals on board the ship. Both for the 240 men living in airless quarters underdeck and for the animals cramped in the holds below, the voyage to Europe is tedious and problematic. When Robert assumes care of the horses he is initially terrified by the shocking conditions in which the animals live during the sea passage and then his horror turns to anger. The horses are kept in holds full of flies, sea bilge and manure in which innumerable flies multiply and rats proliferate.<sup>13</sup> Although Robert attempts to improve the conditions by organising a proper manure disposal and getting a permission to shorten the soldiers' shifts he faces his superiors' speciesism. Therefore, instead of receiving help, he encounters indifference, annoyance and a lack of cooperation. For the Battalion C.O, who believes in human exceptionalism, and to whom Robert turns for help, transporting animals and people together endangers the latter's dignity and life: "Those damn beasts shouldn't even be on this ship! [...] And when we get to England – I mean to have my say about that. Transporting men and animals in the same vessel! Barbarous! *Barbarous!* [...] [T]he fewer men involved with those damned

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<sup>13</sup> The conditions resemble those from *Not Wanted on the Voyage* in which animals lived throughout the Great Flood reimagined by Timothy Findley.

horses the better. I don't want my soldiers coming down with any barnyard diseases..." (Findley, *The Wars* 60, 61). Paradoxically, it is in the horses' section of the ship that helpless Robert finds relief from the crowded human quarters. The protagonist perceives the animals as matchless companions and a cure for seasickness:

He became intrigued with this world of horses, rats and bilge that had been consigned to his care. It took on a life entirely on its own – presided over by the booming B.S.M. and watched from its towers of hay by the pale and looming faces of the pickets in their masks. Robert soon became completely disengaged from the other life on the upper decks. He even went below off duty (Findley, *The Wars* 61).

When, as a result of human carelessness during a storm, one of the horses breaks its leg the creature has to be euthanized. Robert is singled out to perform this act, which takes an emotional toll on him, as, instead of being a protector of horses he becomes their killer. The situation echoes the event which made Robert join the army; his sister's death and his being forced to slay her pets. It is his feeling of guilt after having neglected Rowena and his inability to kill her rabbits which make Ross desire the army to teach him how to inflict death. During his early days in the army he is seeking an idol: "[H]e wanted a model. Someone who could teach him, by example, how to kill. Robert had never aimed a gun at anything. It was a foreign state of mind. So what he wanted was someone else who had acquired that state of mind: who killed as an exercise of the will" (Findley, *The Wars* 28). When he faces the wounded animal on board the ship, however, Robert has no model to follow. Just before he executes the horse, the creature and the killer exchange looks: "the horse's gaze was turned in their direction – white with alarm in the lantern light" (Findley, *The Wars* 64). Later, after an unsuccessful attempt at finishing the animal's suffering, Robert puts a gun behind its ear: "The horse looked back at him, lifting its head and rolling its eyes in Robert's direction" (Findley, *The Wars* 65). The protagonist realizes that he is about to turn into an animal murderer, much like Teddy Budge, called to kill his sister's rabbits after her death. However, this time there is no 'Robert' to stop him: "Why didn't someone come and jump on his back and make him stop?" (Findley, *The Wars* 65) When the first shots leave the animal alive, Robert fires repeatedly at his target until he falls into a shooting frenzy and has to be dragged away. The other horses become extremely anxious as if sympathising with the dead one and foreseeing their deaths on the European battlefields, so they almost trample Robert's helper, Private Regis. Interestingly, when the men and the animals are allowed to disembark, the "barbarous beasts," as the Battalion Commanding Officer calls them, turn miraculously into nonhuman soldiers, mythical animals embodying freedom and liberty. Swimming

desperately towards the land, they are greeted by the shouts of joy of the townsfolk on the English shore as “[E]verybody [was] holding their hands and faces under the sheets of dazzling rain that shook and shimmered off the horses’ backs in the sunlight” (Findley, *The Wars* 68).<sup>14</sup>

In Europe Robert’s life is likewise linked with those of mules and horses, the convoys of which he supervises. Findley deliberately draws the reader’s attention to animal deaths in *The Wars* (Webb 234) while human losses are frequently mentioned without the inclusion of disturbing details. Military animals share the fate of humans on the battlefield, when they sink into the mud, are killed by falling bombs, or panic during shell attacks (Findley, *The Wars* 173). They are sometimes neglected by soldiers who have to advance or retreat from the battlefield. Occasionally, however, non-human soldiers are deliberately abandoned when no longer useful. For example, during the army retreat described towards the conclusion of the novel, injured animals become a tiresome burden: “[T]he fallen animals were dragged, still living, to the ditches where unavoidably they burned or were drowned. There were no acts of mercy. There was no ammunition to be spared” (Findley, *The Wars* 181). Nonetheless, it is at times animals who, in contrast to humans, are presented as having not been desensitized to wartime atrocities, as in the case of a horse that Robert is riding which refuses to proceed over a human corpse (Findley, *The Wars* 176).

Ultimately, having witnessed the torments and deaths of both animals and people, and having been betrayed even by his own fellow soldiers who treat him like an objectified, ab/used and discarded animal victim when they rape him, Robert adamantly refuses to belong to the human species. He prefers an alliance with animals to an affinity with people (Branach-Kallas 7). In this way, in Findley’s novel, animals, through their innocence and helplessness amid the wartime atrocities, become agents of Robert’s liberation and moral victory offering him total acceptance and safety, albeit momentarily. When on the seventh day of his return to the front in France a new supply of horses and mules arrives at Battalion Signals and a barrage on human as well as animal quarters lasts for fourteen hours, Robert asks Captain Leather for permission to save the animals from certain death. He is refused on the pretext of weakening the army’s morale: “‘What would it look like? [...]’ ‘We should never live it down’” (Findley, *The Wars* 176). Nonetheless, when the shells start falling in the barnyard Robert declares Captain Leather insane, mutinies and decides to free the endangered animals, with the help of another soldier. During two attacks, most of the animals are killed or wounded and the barn is burned. It is at this

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<sup>14</sup> In his analysis of *The Wars* Webb discusses the mythical connotations of animals in Findley’s novel as well as comments on the use and role of horses in the British army during the First World War (232-233).



precise moment that Robert experiences an epiphany; realizing again the utter insanity of the war and his own institutional enslavement he decides to look at people and treat them in the way that people look at and treat animals (Frye 616). The protagonist starts to act in accordance with his own sense of justice: "He stood where the gate had been and thought: 'If an animal had done this – we would call it mad and shoot it' and at that precise moment Captain Leather rose to his knees and began to struggle to his feet. Robert shot him between the eyes. It took him half-an-hour to kill the mules and horses. Then he tore the lapels from his uniform and left the battlefield" (Findley, *The Wars* 178). Pursued for killing Captain Leather and then Private Cassles, Robert is found in deserted barns with 130 horses freed from an abandoned train car, a black mare and a dog. He is adamant about not surrendering. Forming an alliance with the animals, he bravely declares: "'We shall not be taken'" (Findley, *The Wars* 185). Having been tricked into leaving the sheds when they are set fire to, and unable to open the gates, Robert is heavily burned while most of the horses he has been defending die. Leaving the blazing barn Robert appears to turn into one of the elements which defines him. He becomes fire: "There were flames all around him and his clothing was on fire" (Findley, *The Wars* 186). Disfigured, speechless and blind, but spiritually liberated despite the condemnation of the external world, he lives for six years afterwards. In a photograph taken a year before his death, in which he appears with Julia d'Orsay, he smiles. His apparent failure as a soldier can be comprehended as a moral victory, a final anti-war statement, a declaration of the superiority of natural life over artificial war and human civilisation, built upon the subjugation of nature, and responsible for such conflicts. What is perceived as a crime in human eyes, becomes, in Findley's novel, an act of triumph, and is interpreted as such by numerous critics despite the violence towards other humans which is involved (Branach-Kallas 7-8). As Julia d'Orsay states in her taped confession, your life is a response to the times you live in: "The thing is not to make excuses for the way you behaved – not to take refuge in tragedy – but to clarify who you are through your response to when you lived. If you can't do that, then you haven't made your contribution to the future. [...] Any great man's or woman's greatness lies in their response to that moment" (Findley, *The Wars* 103-104). Robert in this way, is contained in his deed.

## Conclusion

Despite its historical setting and the evident preconditions of its creation, the perspective of Findley's *The Wars* is universal, still vital and extremely contemporary. Having offered a vision of the First World War that highlights the violence inflicted upon helpless animal victims, Findley offers a

commentary on the present-day relationship between man and nature, human and non-human animals. By constructing a heroic figure of a proto-animal rights activist in Robert Ross, a sensitive animal lover implicated in one of the most cruel human military conflicts ever, Findley not only challenges Canadian myths about the importance of the Great War for gaining national maturity by focusing almost exclusively on personal experience and ignoring the national dimension of the war; he also stresses that the achieved international status of Canada as a consequence of the war has been constructed not only on dead people but also on dead animals. In Findley's conception, the war did not merely involve a conflict among artificially divided human beings but also between humans and animals, and between humans and nature. The novel focuses on the disastrous effects that human warfare has had on the environment and criticises the short-sightedness as well as the alleged superiority of people who objectify, use and misuse the natural world, severing the primordial link with nature and animals. Yet, the military and the domestic spheres interrelate in this novel so that *The Wars* does not only offer the reader a glimpse of the military animals' fate, but also comments on the troubled relationship between people and animals throughout history. If animals had been subjectified and not objectified, had been central to human life and not marginalized, and if "the 'look'" between people and animals had not been lost, then they would not have become silent victims of human violence, during peace or war. With its fixation on the war of two worlds, *The Wars* stresses a necessity of communion with the realm of animals while also suggesting that nature is more powerful than man. As such, the novel may be read as a deeply ecological text with a message which is still potent forty years after its publication, but also as a peculiar jeremiad for lost innocence, comfort and safety as well as a powerful warning.

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## **A ‘WHITE MAN’S WAR’? CANADIAN BLACKS’ CONTRIBUTION TO CANADA’S EFFORT IN THE GREAT WAR**

### **Abstract**

The role of the Black Canadian community in the country’s WWI effort is a peculiar case. The Blacks volunteered for enlistment in large numbers and were willing to serve the King and the country. On the other hand, until 1916, they were, almost automatically, rejected – mainly on the racial grounds. Those who did serve, however, left a record of courage, dedication, discipline and fighting spirit. That, combined with the Black contribution on the home front, proved the Canadian Black minority contributed to the war effort on a similar level to the other Canadian racial or ethnic groups. Still, in bare numbers, as Blacks constituted a fraction of the Canadian society, their participation in the Canadian armed forces was hardly visible. That led to either belittling their sacrifice or overdone comments on the unfairly low interest of the scholars in the Black soldiers. The paper sets out to analyse the enlistment, training and service of the Black soldiers, their motives and hopes connected with the service. Simultaneously, the article attempts at providing the right perspective to the contribution of the Blacks in a larger perspective of the Canadian Expeditionary Force and – more broadly – all the Canadian armed forces during the WWI.

**Keywords:** Blacks, enlistment, WWI, soldier, minority

### **Résumé**

Le rôle des Canadiens Noirs dans l’effort guerrier du Canada pendant les années 1914-1918 est une question assez particulière. Dès le début de la Première Guerre mondiale, ils se présentaient en grand nombre dans des points de recrutement, en voulant servir le Roi et la Patrie. Pourtant, jusqu’en 1916, les Noirs se voyaient systématiquement refuser l’accès à l’armée, surtout pour des raisons de race. Ceux qui ont été recrutés, se sont avérés des soldats courageux, dévoués, disciplinés et vaillants. Compte tenu de la participation des Canadiens Noirs à la production de

guerre et à l'appui des soldats dans le pays, cette minorité a accordé le soutien de guerre au même niveau que les autres groupes ethniques du Canada. Néanmoins, vu que les Noirs ne constituaient qu'une fraction de la société canadienne, leur présence, exprimée en chiffres, aux forces armées est passée presque inaperçue. En conséquence, d'un côté, le rôle de leur participation a été minoré et, de l'autre, il est apparu des commentaires, souvent exagérés, concernant un intérêt injustement faible des chercheurs pour la participation des soldats Noirs du Canada. Le présent article analyse les questions de recrutement, formation et service des Noirs ainsi que leurs motivations et espoirs liés au service. En même temps, il constitue une tentative de présenter ces questions du point de vue du Corps expéditionnaire canadien et, plus largement, des Forces canadiennes pendant la Première Guerre mondiale.

**Mots-clés :** Canadiens Noirs, Première Guerre mondiale, soldat, minorité

## Introduction

Throughout the whole WWI, Britain, France and other belligerents made use of the representatives of their minorities, be it racial, religious or ethnic. Canada was no exception in this respect. Apart from obvious similarities in the treatment of the minorities, there were a number of differences as well. First, in numbers and national proportions, the minorities' contribution to the Canadian war effort was hardly visible. It stemmed from the fact the numbers of Blacks, Aboriginal people or Asians in Canada were low.<sup>1</sup> Second, contrary to numerous French or British units, where the service was compulsory or soldiers were tempted with wages and/or loot, the Canadian Blacks and other minorities enlisted voluntarily; often, against all odds. Third, the Canadian minorities' military traditions had proved they were potentially worthwhile soldiers, similarly to the Mauritians in the French Foreign Legion or Indians in the British Army. Nevertheless, the Canadian Blacks were treated with mistrust, contempt and disregard by the military and political authorities.

The British declaration of war on Germany of 4th August 1914 meant war for all the British colonies and dominions (Granatstein 1-2). Hence, Canada – automatically – found herself at war with Germany and Austro-Hungary. Yet, it was the federal government in Ottawa to decide on the Dominion's commitment and engagement in the war effort as well as on the ways and

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<sup>1</sup> The most significant minority representatives at the draft stations were the Aboriginals. They constituted the largest Coloured minority – estimated at approx. 140,000 (including Indians, Inuit and Metis). The Blacks and the Asians were considerably smaller, around 17,000 and 1,900 respectively. *Historica Canada: Population*, DOA: 5 May 2016, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/population/>.

means of the involvement in the conflict, including the potential enlistment of the Blacks. Hence, whatever regulations concerning minority soldiers there existed in the British Army, they were not binding for Ottawa at all.

### **Legal Justification for the Blacks in the Canadian Military**

To legally and officially regulate the wartime functioning of the country and manage the Dominion's war effort, the "War Measures Act" was passed on 22 August 1914 (Brown & Prang 146-147). The document was of fundamental significance since it regulated Canada's wartime functioning in numerous respects. It was to influence the life of all the Canadians. For the Blacks, specifically, one of the cardinal provisions of the Act, or its interpretation, was a chance to get to the armed forces. Section 6 read:

The Governor in Council may do and authorize such acts and things, and make [...] such orders and regulations, as he may [...] deem necessary or advisable for the security, defence, peace, order and welfare of Canada; and for greater certainty, [...] it is hereby declared the powers of the Governor in Council shall extend to all matters coming within the classes of subjects hereinafter enumerated ("War Measures Act" 394).

The above declaration could be interpreted in the following way – even if the Blacks had not originally been expected to join the Canadian armed forces (Walker, "Race", *Rights* 132) – the authorities had the power to make it possible in a single and swift regulation. As the Blacks were indeed not considered for enlistment, such interpretations were necessary to legitimise their right to enlist. Yet, there was another provision of the act that – at least theoretically – even strengthened their chances to become Canadian soldiers:

12. Section 3 of the Immigration Act, chapter 27 of the statutes of 1910, is amended by adding [...] subsection: "2. No resident of Canada, whether he is a Canadian citizen or not, and whether he has a Canadian domicile or not, who leaves Canada to perform any military or other service for any country [...] at war with His Majesty, or for the purpose of aiding or abetting in any way His Majesty's enemies, shall be permitted to land in Canada, or remain therein, [...]" ("War Measures Act" 394).

The above fragment seems unclear. Theoretically, all the inhabitants of Canada were British subjects. Yet, in 1914, only the white males enjoyed the full citizen's rights, including the right to vote. Thus, the term *residents* may be applied to those British subjects residing in Canada, still, not enjoying full rights, e.g. electoral rights on provincial or federal level. It may be assumed

the “War Measures Act” was deliberately constructed that way not to overrule any eventuality in case of emergency.

However, the above point reads about *residents*, not necessarily *citizens* (and numerous Coloured in Canada were not citizens in the full sense – e.g. voting rights). The residents were banned to serve in enemy armies or those supporting the UK’s enemies. By a reversed analogy, the above stipulation meant that Canadian residents, including Black Canadians, might be enlisted to the Canadian forces or the British Army. Thus, from the beginning of the war, there existed a possibility to engage the Blacks in the military once there appeared the political will or necessity.

### **Black Military Traditions**

Another argument for the enlistment of the Blacks was their quite proud tradition of military service. First, the Blacks took part, on the British side, in the American War of Independence (1775-1783) as the so-called Black Loyalists. With their owners, they moved to Canada from the rebelled American colonies. Promised freedom, the Blacks bravely fought alongside the British, forming their own units, such as the Black Pioneers (Ruck, *Canada’s* 2).

Then, Blacks were engaged in the War of 1812. The “Company of Coloured Men”, the Glengarry Light Infantry and the 104<sup>th</sup> Regiment on Foot took part in the battles of Queenston Heights and Lundy’s Lane (Ruck, *Canada’s* 2). Black Militia troops assisted in protecting Upper Canada against the American raids. In 1837-1839, supporting the federal authorities, approximately 1,000 Black militiamen, formed in five companies, were involved in putting out the Upper Canadian Rebellion, participating – among others – in the Battle of Toronto.

The migration of around 600 Blacks from western California to Vancouver in 1858 provided the opportunity to form there an all-Black unit (50 soldiers) known as the *African Rifles* (formed in 1861). Although disbanded in 1865, it was the first ever officially authorised militia unit in the West Coast colony (Pitt 127). Afterwards, some Blacks managed to enlist for the South African War in 1899-1902 (Veterans). The actual term “a white man’s war” was coined there and then. Although the Blacks were eager to serve, neither the British nor the Boers were willing to use them in combat (Ruck, *Canada’s* 6).



The brief presentation illustrates the fact the Blacks had proved their loyalty and dedication, let alone courage. Therefore, in 1914, the authorities had no *real* justification to question either the combat value or the devotion of the Blacks.

### **Attempt One: Black Enlistees? No, Thank You**

Nonetheless, all that was past and theory. In practice, at the beginning of World War I, the draft stations were not interested in the Black recruits whatsoever. In 1914, all the Black Canadian enlistees were rejected throughout Canada. The only exception was Nova Scotia, where some Blacks were commissioned for 112<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Pittman 2; Ruck, *Submission*). However, the initial refusal to accept the Blacks was due to the enthusiastic wave of the white enlistees who flocked at the draft stations. There simply was no need – yet – to look for every available recruitment source. Nevertheless, by the end of 1915, the situation started to change. Owing to the mounting and massive losses on the battlefields of Europe, the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) constantly needed new recruits. The famous appeal of British Marshall Douglas Haig for more soldiers (1916) was a chance for the Blacks, already approaching the enlistment stations for two years. Additionally, as the war had not turned out a brief and relatively safe adventure, the initial white volunteer enthusiasm started waning (Morton 130-131).

In such a situation, the enlistment stations began to report to the authorities a growing number of Blacks, as well as Aboriginals and Asians, enquiring about the possibility to enlist (Lackenbauer *et al.* 121, Alexander). The authorities, both federal and provincial, were in two minds about the issue. On the one hand, the army needed new recruits; on the other, the perspective of accepting Black soldiers and letting them serve, fight and live alongside the whites was considerably uncomfortable (Pittman 15; Alexander). In a longer perspective, it might lead to the growing discouragement of the white enlistees, the make-up of the CEF, who would have to serve in mixed, white-coloured units (Walker, *Race and* 3). The reluctance to mingle white soldiers with Blacks was a serious matter. The whites felt superior and hardly any cooperation was possible; the authorities realised such an attitude would be fatal on the battlefield. Theoretically, forming all-Black units might be a solution. However, the famous declaration of Sir Sam Hughes, the Canadian Minister of Militia and Defence, that there would be no ethnic units in the Canadian military made the option hardly feasible. Hence, the Blacks felt as if in a vicious circle of rejection.

The main motive the Blacks had to enlist for the military was common for most Canadians, be it white or Coloured; it was economy. The bad economic

condition of the country made numerous men decide to enlist to improve their financial situation (Story 15, Lackenbauer *et al.* 120). They were frequently jobless, in debt and struggling with poverty. Hence, their hope to improve their status and living conditions (Walker, *Race and* 5). Interestingly enough, apart from those mundane reasons for enlistment, numerous Blacks demonstrated as much patriotic attitudes towards the King and Britain as the white enlistees. A hope that the loyal and potentially courageous service would upgrade the Blacks and promote them within the society was also the case (Walker, *Race and* 7). Some Blacks realised that Canadian soldiers – by definition – enjoyed the full scope of the civic rights as Canadian citizens, including the right to vote. For many, that was yet another incentive, which history proved fallacious (Pittman 32-35).

Since the Blacks particularly, and the Coloured in general, constituted only a slim margin of the Canadian society, the decision makers in both Ottawa and the provinces did not consider them seriously as a remedy to the shrinking supply of recruits. That was the main obstacle for the Blacks and the source of all sorts of problems and difficulties on their way to the armed forces. They were not vital for the Canadian war effort. As long as the conflict was generally perceived as “a white man’s war,” the Blacks had few chances to change the negative attitude of the enlistment officials (Ruck, *Canada’s* 12). To make the matters worse, the Blacks became openly discriminated against on the grounds of race. Curiously, some light-complexioned Blacks managed to enlist in the white or aboriginal units (Lackenbauer *et al.* 122-123; Ruck, *Submission* 15).

However, much as the First Nations were perceived as warrior-like, thus, potentially useful on the battlefield, the Blacks were seen as ineffective, lacking independent thinking skills and of little military value. Therefore, even though – by 1916 – in more and more desperate need for recruits, Prime Minister Robert Borden’s cabinet was reluctant to enlist the Blacks. The system of recruitment started mounting obstacles of administrative nature for the Black volunteers. Unlike other minorities, to join the army, a Black Canadian needed permission from the local regiment’s commanding officer, a document which – obviously – was sparingly granted (Walker, *Race and* 6). When the Blacks appeared in North America as slaves and farmhands, their owners – for centuries – had been doing whatever they could to eradicate the warlike instincts in the Black community (Walker, *The Black* XX-XXIII). In a sense, such ‘pacification’ of the Blacks’ nature proved somehow effective. Canadian Blacks themselves did not press for the direct participation in the combat as such.

Simultaneously, the alleged lack of the Indian-like warrior culture among the Blacks made the decision makers develop their perception of the Black recruits as largely inappropriate for the combat or – more generally – front

service (Pittman 14). The most commonly known document voicing such attitudes is undoubtedly the – hugely contradictory in its nature – *Memorandum of the Chief of the General Staff*, General Gwatkin:

1. [...] The civilized negro is vain and imitative; [...] he is not being impelled to enlist by a high sense of duty; in the trenches he is not likely to make a good fighter; [...] average white man will not associate with him on terms of equality. Not a single commanding officer [...] is willing to accept a coloured platoon as part of his battalion (H.Q. 297-1-29).

2. [...], in the firing line, there is no place for a black battalion, C.E.F. It would be eyed askance; [...] crowd out a white battalion; and [...] would be difficult to reinforce.

3. Nor could it be left in England and used as a draft-giving depot; for there would be trouble if Negroes were sent to the front for the purpose of reinforcing white battalions; and, if they are any good at all, they would resent being kept in Canada for the purpose of finding guards, etc. (Gwatkin).

Nonetheless, paradoxically, the same document officially opened the military for the Blacks. Section 4 of the above Memorandum read:

4. It seems, therefore, that three courses are practicable:
- a) As at present, to allow negroes to enlist, individually, into white battalions at the discretion of commanding officers.
  - b) To allow them to form one or more labour battalions. Negroes from Nova Scotia, for example, would not be unsuitable for the purpose (Gwatkin).

General Gwatkin's recommendation was a result of the lobbying from the Blacks, their petitions and letters to Sam Hughes and other officials as well as Black grass-root initiatives to form Black units. Several pro-Black enlistment activists, e.g. J. R. B. Whitney, offered to recruit and raise an all-Black platoon or company (Ruck, *Canada's* 6, 112; Alexander; Armstrong; Richards; *Enlistment*). Black leaders, and their few white supporters, made the rejection of Black enlistees a matter of national concern and importance (Ruck *Submission*). Newspapers, e.g. *Atlantic Advocate* or *Canadian Observer*, published articles touching the issue and making it a loud case (Pittman 17).

### **Attempt Two: Blacks in the Army? We Will Consider That**

Obviously, the decision on the enlistment of the Blacks had been made above Gwatkin. Prior to his memorandum, on 25 November 1915, in a private letter

to John T. Richards, Sam Hughes informed his recipient: "I have given instructions that coloured are to be permitted to enlist in any battalion" (*Sam Hughes* 109). However, the catch was the Blacks could only be enlisted to those battalions the Commanding Officers of which were ready to accept them (*Memorandum* 114, Ruck, *Canada's* 13). On the federal government's part, it was a typical attempt to avoid direct responsibility for the political decisions. Ottawa realised the Commanding Officers would hate to have racial issues in their troops (Pittman 18); consequently, they would turn down Black volunteers. Therefore, the rejections were supposed to remain the direct responsibility of the line officers and not the federal government officials.

That way, by May 1916, the – initially gloomy – perspectives concerning the Black volunteers had improved a little. The breakthrough was the decision of the British War Office, which informed the Governor General of its approval to form a Black unit. On 5th July 1916, the Number 2 Construction Battalion was formed in Pictou, Nova Scotia. The province had already become the most dynamic Black enlistment centre in Canada. It was largely due to Nova Scotia's most dynamic movement for the enlistment of the Blacks. The time for the formation of the unit was ripe:

The fact that the battalion was authorized in July 1916 in the midst of a recruiting crisis, shortly after Prime Minister Robert Borden had promised that Canada would provide 500,000 volunteers for active service overseas, demonstrates that those in charge of the CEF were determined to reach the promised number of recruits. Since the supply of willing volunteers had essentially dried up at this point, recruiters could no longer afford to be selective in their recruiting process. For that reason, they began to turn to African Canadians whom they had originally identified as second-class citizens who would not make adequate soldiers (Pittman 4).

The battalion was to consist of approximately 600 Black soldiers, recruited all over the country. Although the make-up of the battalion constituted the Blacks from Nova Scotia (approx. 180), also enlistees from Ontario, New Brunswick and the west of Canada were recruited to improve the figures (Pittman 2). The enlistment problem stemmed from the fact that Blacks were employed in strategic branches of industry, such as oil refining or coal mining, and, therefore, were not eligible for enlistment. Interestingly, around 165 Black soldiers for No. 2 Battalion came from the United States. They crossed the border specifically to join the troops; in the economic sense, their reasons were identical to those of Black Canadians. It deserves notice that the American and Canadian officials cooperated to facilitate the American Blacks joining the No. 2 Battalion as the US was still formally neutral (Ruck, *Submission* 19). By 28 March 1917, the unit had reached its operational capacity and was sent to Liverpool in Britain (Walker, *Race and* 9; cf. Gwatkin, *Memo to the Naval*). The distrust and

reluctance towards the Black soldiers was so intense there appeared a suggestion to transport them to Europe in a separate, escorted shipment (Ruck, *Submission* 21). It fully illustrates to what extent the white Canada was unready for an all-Black CEF unit.

From the beginning, the unit was to be commanded by white officers, which turned out a challenge in itself. A number of white officers refused to take the command; they perceived it as a downgrade in their careers rather than a promotion. Finally, on PM Robert Borden's suggestion, Lt. Col. Daniel H. Sutherland was appointed the commander. All the remaining officers but one were white, too (Hunt 149). The Chaplain, Honorary Captain (Rev.) William A. White, was the first (and only) Black Commissioned Officer in the No. 2 Construction Battalion, Canadian Armed Forces and in the whole British Armed Forces throughout the WWI (Pitt 132). The issue of the Black battalion received a certain publicity in the media, which contributed to propagating the Black enlistment nation-wide (Abbott 569; Ruck, *Canada's* 6). Undoubtedly, popularisation of the case added to the Black enlistment.

### **Black CEF Soldiers in France**

Owing to the fact it was undermanned – 506 soldiers and 10 officers (Hunt 150), shortly after the battalion's arrival in the UK, the unit was downgraded. A company now – Number 2 Construction Company (Pittman 62) – it was included in the Canadian Forestry Corps to operate in the French Jura Mountains (Hunt 154). The unit's main task was wood production and road repairs. Few unit's Blacks saw combat; yet, some soldiers lost lives during accidents on duty or from the enemy canon fire and gases. Although the command had its reservations, the Blacks proved valuable and meritorious servicemen: "The men and boys (some were only 15 and 16 years of age) carried out their assigned tasks willingly and without question, [...] as in previous wars, they were prepared to serve in any capacity" (Ruck, *Submission* 25). Such a record of service should have assured the military and political officials no change had happened in the Blacks' attitude to their country and resulting duties since 1775. Still, the decision makers saw things otherwise.

The living conditions of the Black soldiers were unfavourable indeed. As if the war realities were not enough, segregation was complete. The Blacks were appointed a separate wing in the hospital; those infringing on the regulations or law ended up in a separate jail for Blacks (Pittman 79). Even graveyards of the Black soldiers, e.g. at the Camp Hill Cemetery in Halifax, were separated from those of the white soldiers (Pitt 132; cf. Ruck, *Submission* 32). The unit came back to Canada in January 1919; the soldiers

were demobilised in September 1919 (Hunt 1920:151). Throughout the service, the soldiers proved their value, diligence and competence in the front duties. They created a well-operating, effective non-combat construction unit favourably reported in the official front correspondence (Pittman 42).

### **The Black Enlistment Continues**

The remaining Black Canadian enlistees – about 2000 volunteers – were spread all over the CEF, e.g. 106<sup>th</sup> Battalion Nova Scotia Rifles, Royal Canadian Regiment or 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion (cf. Ruck *Canada's* 33; Veterans). Yet, wherever they were allocated, the Blacks were commonly mistreated and banned on assimilation; the white units and their commanders continued to refuse admittance of the Blacks in their troops, which remained the main hindrance in enlistment. Some of the justifications for refusal were unbelievable: “Lieutenant Walter Hamilton Bruce, the Commanding Officer of the 173<sup>rd</sup> Battalion (Canadian Highlanders), stated: “Sorry we cannot see our way to accept [African Canadians] as these men would not look good in Kilts” (Pittman 18).

On the top of that, certain animosities among the minorities themselves fuelled the racial disparities. For instance, First Nations’ representatives – feeling superior to Blacks – were reluctant to serve with them (Story 2015: 14). Some Indian leaders, such as Chief Thunderwater of the Great Council of the Tribes, explicitly voiced their opinion in that matter:

The Chief took up the Indians’ case, claiming “natural dislike of association with negroes on the part of Indians.” The adjutant general in Ottawa and General Logie in Toronto had to become involved [...] and the Indians could be moved to the 256<sup>th</sup> Railway Construction Battalion, which had a large Indian component. Chief Thunderwater admonished the adjutant general that “you so arrange that Indians and negroes are kept from the same Battalions” (Lackenbauer *et al.* 129-130).

Some Black soldiers were determined enough to get commission to the combat units. Curley Christian, James Grant, Roy Fells, Seymour Tyler and Jeremiah Jones are the most prominent examples. As usually is the case with the mocked, underestimated, disrespected and disregarded, in order to gain respect, the Black soldiers had to demonstrate much higher merits and talents than the rest.

Christian, a veteran who lost both legs and arms, proved how independent in his post-war life a seriously handicapped ex-soldier could be. After the rehabilitation and war, he became a symbol and an icon for numerous Canadian handicapped victims of war regardless of race. Jones, a too-old-on-

enlistment recruit (47) managed to destroy a machine gun nest, take a number of German POWs and make them carry the machine gun back to his lines. The soldier was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal and – posthumously – granted the Canadian Forces Distinguished Service Medallion (*A "D.C.M."* 121-122). Tyler served bravely throughout both WWI and WWII and was awarded the British War Medal and Victory Medal (*Profiles of Courage*). Those but a few examples prove how valuable the Black soldiers could be and what a loss (waste?) it actually was for the CEF to ban the Blacks on enlistment.

On 29 August 1917, the *Military Service Act* was introduced and conscription became the law. Paradoxically, the Blacks who had been rejected before, now were found perfectly able to serve in the Canadian armed forces and sent to training camps, e.g. to Camp Aldershot in Nova Scotia (Pittman, 45; Ruck, *Canada's* 38-40). Interestingly, once there, the Black conscripts received training alongside the white recruits. However, having arrived in France or Britain, the whites and Blacks were instantly segregated. The former were sent to combat units and the latter appointed mundane, drudging duties (Ruck, *Canada's* 38).

### **Blacks on the Home Front**

Apart from the enlistment, the Blacks in Canada contributed to the home front, too. Many of them worked in factories, took active part in propaganda rallies and marches or organised fundraising for the war effort (Pittman 20). They energetically engaged in all sorts of activities contributing to the victory in an indirect way through social campaigns, lobbying and support actions.

It is also important to remember the Black response to the call of duty was complete. Not only Black men served the country; Black women also tried to join the armed forces; still, they were sternly rejected. Thus, to have their share in the war and help the wounded and injured soldiers, the women tried to join the armed forces as nursing staff; later on, several Black Canadian women joined the Black Cross Nurses, largely modelled on the Red Cross (Duncan 135). Numerous women were active in their local Black communities; they provided medical assistance (e.g. first aid) and childcare. Women were also employed in ammunition plants. In many instances, Black women were appointed the most dangerous or dirtiest duties (*Black Cross*).

The size of the Canadian armed forces was around 619,636 men and women. Additional 8,500 served in the British and Canadian Navy. Approximately 424,589 were formed into the CEF and sent overseas. In the light of the above statistics, around 2000-2600 Blacks seem to constitute a slim margin (hardly 0.4% of the Canadian armed forces altogether).

Still, considering the proportions, it appears the sacrifice, responsibility and dutifulness of the Blacks were significant. The 1911 census in Canada reported 16, 877 Blacks; therefore, the volunteers constituted over 15% of the Black population. Adding the Black home front support and the sacrifice of women, the overall, proportionate contribution of the Blacks was much more significant than the mere numbers of the uniformed recruits. It is safe to assume the overall contribution may have been around 30% of the Black population. That would mean their part was fully comparable to the share of the whites – in much harsher conditions though. What remains an open question, however, is how many more soldiers the Black community could have generated provided their treatment in the armed forces had been more decent (Bumsted 124-126; 175-178).

### **Conclusions**

In the sense of enlistment, throughout the war, the situation, status and approach to the Blacks were neither uniform nor stable. Initially excluded and rejected “by definition”, they had to lobby until 1916 to join the Canadian armed forces (Walker, *Race and* 9). Nonetheless, even then, the enlistment was secured with a number of checks, e.g. a permission to serve or Commanding Officers’ will to accept Black recruits to their units. The Blacks were primarily appointed non-combat duties, which they performed to the best standards. Additionally, they were employed on the home front in factories and on farms catering for the army. Their diligence and serious attitude cannot be questioned. Few Blacks saw the battlefield; yet, those rare exceptions proved excellent soldiers, resourceful and assiduous warriors and brave individuals.

The prejudice and unfair treatment Black Canadian soldiers frequently faced, be it during their training in Canada or in Europe, was quite characteristic. The white Canada’s attitude towards them directly reflected the general western stance in that matter at the break of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It was both inexplicable and unfounded a treatment; the Canadian military experiences with the Black servicemen had proved African Canadians did not deserve the disparagement, distrust and underestimation they experienced. Unfortunately, the white-dominated Canadian society of 1914-1918 was completely unprepared to acknowledge and accept the mere facts.

The fact that few Black soldiers served up to non-commissioned officer ranks (not to mention the commissioned ones) speaks volumes about how little acknowledged and respected they were. Nevertheless, several were decorated and covered in the local and national press. Regrettably, with time, the Black’s war effort was forgotten, belittled and ignored. For instance, Duguid’s official



history of the Canadian armed forces does not mention Black contribution whatsoever, commenting it with a brief remark: "Coloured volunteers were refused" (Duguid 49). In addition, the *Report of the Ministry Overseas Military Forces of Canada 1918* contains just one mention; listing the engineering troops, the authors – having written: "*No. 2 Construction Company*" added bracketed "coloured" (60). It appears reasonable to agree with the opinion:

White Canadians participated in the Western ideology of racism [...] in [...] sense of accepting white superiority. Canadian history should have suggested the contrary [...] but the stereotypes derived from Britain and the United States were more powerful than the domestic experience. Canada's war effort was impeded by prejudices for which there were no Canadian foundation (Lackenbauer *et al.* 128).

The Black war veterans were stripped of any recognition whatsoever. Having come home, they struggled to find a job; most ended up as farmhands or sleeping car porters. Official histories of the WWI even omitted the war records of the No. 2 Construction Battalion (Duguid). Moreover, the Blacks' hopes for any post-war social promotion or life standard improvement did not happen. They had to wait another 20 years and participate in another war to make a difference to the matters.

However, it needs to be stated that the bare numbers of Blacks engaged in the Canadian war effort constituted a mere fraction of one per cent. Thus, the attention, research and treatment the Blacks have been receiving in the respect of their participation in the WWI have to be marginal if compared with the attention the CEF has enjoyed. It has nothing to do with racial attitudes, distrust or dislike towards the brave Black men and women of the wartime era. In this case, the statistics are completely unfavourable and the change for the better seems doubtful.

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## **ACTIONS FOR INDEPENDENCE OF POLAND TAKEN IN CANADA DURING WORLD WAR ONE**

### **Abstract**

The article presents examples which illustrate the impact of World War I on Polish immigrants in Canada, the position of the Polish ethnic group in this country and the efforts of individuals of Polish descent to recruit the Polish army in Northern America. Poles who were subjects of Germany or the Austro-Hungarian Empire were treated as enemy aliens. Those people were forced to register and report to the police on a regular basis and some of them were interned in labour camps during the war. Some were released from the camps after an intervention of Polish organizations and priests. Soldiers of Polish descent, volunteers and recruits also fought in the Canadian Expeditionary Forces in Europe. Over 20,000 Polish volunteers from the US (including over 200 from Canada) enrolled in a training camp formed in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, on the border with the US. The problems with the organization and functioning of the camp, and opinions on Polish volunteers shaped numerous Canadians' attitude towards the Polish diaspora and the newly established Polish State.

**Keywords:** World War I, Polish diaspora in Canada, Niagara-on-the-Lake camp, Polish army, Colonel LePan

### **Résumé**

L'article montre quelques exemples représentant l'impact des événements de la Première Guerre mondiale sur les immigrants polonais vivant au Canada, ainsi que sur la position de ce groupe ethnique polonais dans le pays et sur l'activité des personnes d'origine polonaise favorables à la conscription dans l'armée polonaise en Amérique du Nord. En tant que sujets de l'Allemagne ou de l'empire austro-hongrois, les Polonais étaient traités comme des alliés ennemis. Ils ont été forcés à se présenter régulièrement à la police et certains d'entre eux ont été internés dans des camps de travail créés pendant la guerre. Certains ont été libérés des camps après l'intervention

des organisations et des prêtres polonais. Les soldats d'origine polonaise, des volontaires et des conscrits, se sont aussi retrouvés dans les services du Corps expéditionnaire canadien combattant en Europe. Plus de vingt mille de volontaires polonais des États-Unis (dont plus de deux cents du Canada) se sont également présentés dans un camp de formation créé à Niagara-on-the-Lake, en Ontario, à la frontière avec les États-Unis. Les problèmes organisationnels et fonctionnels de ce camp ainsi que les opinions sur les volontaires polonais façonnaient l'attitude de plusieurs Canadiens envers le groupe ethnique polonais et la Pologne, pays nouvellement créé.

**Mots-clés :** la Première Guerre mondiale, le groupe ethnique polonais, un camp à Niagara-on-the-Lake, l'armée polonaise, le colonel LePan

It is common knowledge that the First World War has had a great impact on the history of both Poland and Canada. However little is known about Polish-Canadian cooperation in that period, Canadians' help and involvement in Polish affairs, as well as actions taken by the Polish diaspora in Canada to train volunteers who would fight for the independence of Poland. Source materials that have been preserved are scarce. Divisions existing during wartime among Polish immigrants and elites, along with those in the newly restored Polish State, complicate the situation even further. The merits of persons and political options which found themselves outside the governing body after the war were marginalized. They were documented selectively and not much importance was attached by the Polish side to the actions taken in distant Canada or to the impact they had on Canadian society. A hundred years later they are even more difficult to reconstruct. The available materials are extremely dispersed and occasionally inconsistent. They allow the researchers to reconstruct only the most significant actions.

The war, in Canada called the Great War, revealed a lot of ethnic tension existing in this country. There is no statistical data illustrating the ethnic structure of Canadian Expeditionary Forces dispatched to Europe. Even the most recent historical analyses contain contradictory opinions. Johnathan F. Vance, for instance, asserts that "the first wave of recruits were primarily British-born. [...] [I]t changed later in the war as more Canadian-born men joined the ranks (Vance 45). Nevertheless, the authors of the publication synthesizing the topic, entitled *Journeys: A History of Canada*, write that soldiers of British descent constituted barely 25% of the first Canadian volunteer units sent to Europe (Francis and Jones 372-3). In Nova Scotia, after overcoming the opposition from the authorities, a 600-men battalion composed of Afro-Canadians was formed and sent to France. During the four years of war, about 3,500 representatives of First Nations, a few thousand Metis and a considerable number of soldiers from mainland European

countries (for instance, Danes organized their own battalion) were dispatched to fight in Europe. Among the volunteers there were also French-Canadians although they constituted only 3.5% of the Canadian Expeditionary Forces that reached England before March 1915. In the following months no increase in the number of the French-speaking volunteers was noted, and, consequently, only one French-speaking battalion was formed in Canada. This situation resulted mainly from the fact that English was the sole language of instruction and that French Canadians were rarely promoted to officer ranks. Introducing conscription in 1917 additionally exacerbated the relations between Canada's two major ethnic groups. The analyses of source materials prove that as many as 68% of young Canadians who refused to submit to conscription lived in Quebec. The tension between Canadian Francophones and Anglophones eventually led to street riots in April (Easter) of 1918 over arresting a conscript in Quebec. Four people were killed and several were wounded in these riots (Durflinger). Interestingly, the press in France gave information about a larger number of casualties.

The wartime atmosphere, the passing by the parliament of the War Measures Act in April 1914, the news coming in from the front, conscription and, primarily, the war propaganda in the newspapers, cinemas and even churches, caused war hysteria and fueled the atmosphere of xenophobia. Initially, stereotypes caused the exclusion, and in a later stage of the war, restrictions on the enrolment in Canadian Forces of Canadian residents of Native, Afro-Canadian, Chinese or Japanese descent (Walker 1-26). Another indication of this was the changing of the name of Berlin, a town in Ontario, into Kitchener in 1916. At the onset of the war, Germans, previously considered ideal immigrants, began to be perceived as unreliable and dangerous *enemy aliens*. Within this category Canadians also included the immigrants from Austria-Hungary. Before the war, they were generally called "Galicians" regardless of their ethnicity. However, in wartime, the loyalty of the entire group towards Canada was questioned. The Ukrainian community itself provided arguments for suspicion when on July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1914, a few days before the outbreak of the war, Nikita Budka, a Ruthenian Greek-Catholic bishop in Canada, addressed a Pastoral Letter to his congregation in Canada. In this letter, he naively called the Ukrainian immigrants who were Austrian reservists to return to Galicia and protect their homeland against Russians. The bishop, aspiring to the role of a spiritual leader of a considerable part of the Ukrainians living in Canada, did not foresee how soon the British Empire, including Canada, would become a military ally of Russia. On August 6<sup>th</sup>, Budka issued another letter explaining the change of the situation to the congregation. He emphasized the immigrants' duties to their country of residence, which was Canada, and the necessity to support its military efforts. However, the bishop's opponents, mainly a group of young Ukrainian anti-

clerical professionals, had already managed to publicize his first letter. They, and the Canadian authorities likewise, took advantage of the statements in Bishop Budka's letter to question his loyalty and the loyalty of his co-religionists and the entire Ukrainian group (Hryniuk 157-8; Shykula and Korchinski 58-60). This certainly was only one of the determinants why the Ukrainians constituted a considerable part of the 80,000 persons classified as *enemy aliens* in Canada. Between 1914 and 1920, they were obliged to regularly report to the police. Ukrainians also preponderated among *enemy aliens* in 24 internment camps situated far from settlements. The residents of these camps lived under harsh conditions and worked for minimal wage felling forests and constructing roads. Between 1916 and 1917, among the 8,579 interned, there were as many as 5,964 subjects of Austria-Hungary, including approximately 5,000 Ukrainians ("Internment").

It was Austrian Galicia and the German Reich where the majority of Polish immigrants to Canada came from. In his diary, Jan Samulski, resident of Cobalt, Ont., active in the local team of the Polish Gymnastic Association "Sokół" ["Falcon"], recounted the attitude of his neighbours in the following words: "When the war started, the town folk regarded us as enemies, as we almost all were from the region of Poznań, and at that time, it was under German rule. So we were then seen as Germans. People of different nationalities thought we were training to help Germans in this war when opportunities arose" (Samulski 88). Among *enemy aliens* sent to internment camps there were also Poles. However, they were relatively few. They were also released relatively early for good behaviour, frequently after the interventions and guarantees of Catholic priests. Paradoxically, among the few priests speaking Polish and working with Polish immigrants in Canada, mainly Oblate fathers, most were Silesian from the German Reich. They often acted as representatives of the Polish community and occasionally as its leaders. *Gazeta Katolicka* published by the Oblates in Winnipeg systematically and earnestly informed its readers about the hostilities in Europe. Numerous articles focused on the events on the Polish soil and hopes that Poles had of the ongoing battles. The immigrants also considered taking action in exile but, presumably influenced by the problems experienced by Canadian Ukrainians, they laid particular emphasis on the loyalty to their country of residence. A good example can be found in an article published in *Gazeta Katolicka* in August 12<sup>th</sup>, 1914: "War. Horns of battle were blown in the old country. Europe is faced with events that may bring about a complete revolution [...]. What are we to do here in exile? [...] We do not owe any of the partitioners anything and it would be unreasonable to go back to fight for them. As Poles we have one [...] duty – deliverance of our Homeland. We still are on English soil, we accepted this land's citizenship, swearing allegiance to this country. Our goal is Poland free and independent, next England for which, as her



citizens, we should stand up and we will if the need be [...]. Ready, we have to be” (“Wojna” 4). It is worth noting that the declarations quoted above referred to the English homeland, and not the Dominion of Canada. It is rather doubtful if in August 1914 numerous Polish immigrants held British citizenship, the obtaining of which required a lot of efforts and was not easy. The majority of Poles residing in Canada presumably had Canadian domicile, that is permanent residence status in the Dominion. The author of the above-cited article may either have been unaware of this, or, most probably, deliberately and opportunistically used the expressions, which were evaluated higher by the authorities and wartime censorship.

*Gazeta Katolicka* is a valuable source of information about the wartime history of the Polish communities in Canada and their relations with Canadians. On June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1915, *Gazeta* published, for instance, an appeal of Poles to the Canadian government. It expressed their gratitude for the formation of the Canadian Committee for the Polish Relief Fund raising funds to help Polish refugees in Russia. A prayer for the benefactors was offered, but at the same time, Polish workers’ contribution to the “economic development of the Dominion of Canada” was brought out. Furthermore, it was mentioned that frequently “the English-speaking employers do not make distinction between a Pole, and German or an Austrian [and] prefer to engage the service of people of other nationalities than German and Austrian” (“Odezwa” 1). The authors addressed the petition formally to the governor of Manitoba. They asked the governor to use his influence “so that at least the authorities differentiate rightly among Poles, Germans and Austrians” (1). They had hopes that this would play a role in the changing of other Canadian residents’ approach, especially the employers of the Polish people. The Polish version of the petition was not quite an exact translation of the English text. For instance, it contained a subtitle stating that the purpose of the document was the endorsement of the “righteous” (meaning lawful) standpoint of the Polish people. Also, only in the Polish version, below the names of the four people who signed the petition, there was a note that they represented the “Board of Polish Catholic Immigration Societies in Canada” (“Odezwa” 1). No sources confirm the existence of such an organization. Therefore, it can be presumed that it was one of the examples of not quite formalized activities of the Polish community abroad in wartime.

In the Archives of Manitoba, however, we find a letter from the Polish Relief Fund stating its main goals and making an appeal for financial support of these goals. The headed notepaper alone is interesting. It lists the members of the Canadian Committee of the Fund, including important and influential figures from Manitoba, among them the Prime Minister of the province Tobias Crawford, the Catholic bishop of Saint Boniface Arthur Béliveau and Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada Samuel P. Matheson. Also, the design of

the notepaper, very much in the spirit of the period, is interesting. It depicts Poland as a young woman leaning against a strong man representing Canada.<sup>1</sup>

In the middle of 1916, in Winnipeg, there appeared an initiative to form in this city a Polish battalion which would be incorporated into the Canadian army. This news was propagated by the Polish-language *Dziennik Związkowy* (published in Chicago), which cited the Polish immigrant newspaper *Czas* from Winnipeg. What is more, *Dziennik Związkowy* maintained that the authorities in Ottawa “had recognized Poles as a separate nationality group aspiring for homeland – a free and independent one” (*Czyn zbrojny* 256-7), and that it had been agreed that a battalion would be formed under the command of Colonel Hastings, former Manitoba Attorney<sup>2</sup> and with Polish officers. The information turned out to be an initiative of several local activists who had not had any authority, or even support from the Polish organizations from Winnipeg. The idea to form a Polish battalion faded away, and the local “nest” no 377 of the Polish Falcon Association issued a resolution expressing their sympathies for the Allies and hope for obtaining guarantees for independent Poland. At the same time, they were calling members to join the Canadian army and to perform their duties to the new homeland (*Czyn zbrojny* 278-9).

The Canadian army generally relied on volunteers. It was not until late August 1917 that Canada, having overcome many arguments and controversies, accepted the Military Service Act introducing conscription. Among the volunteers and recruits, alongside Anglophones and Francophones, there were Natives, Afro-Canadians and immigrants including Ukrainians, Poles and Romanians (“The Canadian”). No ethnic statistics were kept, but the representatives of groups other than English-speaking were treated with distrust. On the one hand, there was fear of linguistic problems, and on the other hand, serious doubts existed as to their commitment to Canada; this especially concerned soldiers descending from the countries with which the Allies were in the state of war. One of the frequently used arguments was, for instance, data from the 1916 Prairie census, which indicated that 7.8% of the local population were born on the territory of enemy countries (Granatstein and Hitsman 48). The founder of Polish scouting Andrzej Małkowski, who was active in the Falcons of America during 1915 and 1916, citing “persons associated with the Canadian Ministry of War”, claimed that approximately ten thousand Poles served in different battalions of the Canadian army in 1917 (*Czyn zbrojny* 288). Unfortunately, these estimates have not been confirmed in any documents. However, it is beyond doubt that Polish soldiers did fight in the Canadian army. On the Vimy Rige memorial commemorating Canadian

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<sup>1</sup> “Polish Relief Committee of Canada”. Letter. 14 Dec.1915. Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg, T.C. Noris Correspondence and Papers, G.528, Box 1:309-10.

<sup>2</sup> Probably George Hasting Palmer.

soldiers who were killed in a bloody battle in April of 1917 and those who lost their lives in France during the First World War, Polish names are also found.<sup>3</sup> It is not known whether these soldiers were volunteers or conscripts in the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

Undoubtedly, problems with recruitment of volunteers and the shortage of soldiers who would substitute those who perished on the front lines, helped the Canadian military authorities overcome some of the barriers resulting from ethnic prejudice. The first step in conscription, introduced in Canada in 1917, was the registration of persons subject to compulsory military service. The information about enlistment entitled “Wezwanie do Armii” [“Call for the Army”] was published by *Gazeta Katolicka* on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 1917 (3). Most likely, it was an announcement from the government evidently quite mechanically translated into Polish by someone who had difficulties with the Polish syntax and was not familiar with military terms. The interest in the military increased in *Gazeta Katolicka*, and also in the wider circles of the Polish diaspora, when a training camp for Poles was established in Canada. At the end of the war, the Poles were incorporated into the so called Blue Army formed in France under the command of General Józef Haller. The role of Canada in this unit’s history is hardly known and quite underestimated in Poland.

It is worth noting that the idea of training Polish volunteers in Canada to fight alongside the Allies first arose among Polish immigrants in the US as early as in 1914. Neutrality of the US, France’s and Great Britain’s fears for the reaction of their Russian ally [Imperial Russia] along with political divisions among Poles and the Polish Diaspora shattered those plans at that time. The situation was altered by the protracted war, casualties on the fronts and the confluence of numerous actions undertaken by Polish immigrant communities. The famous Polish pianist I. J. Paderewski was particularly politically influential and so were his actions among the Polish Diaspora in the US. There are indications that the Polish immigrants were also helped by coincidence. Crossing the Windsor-Detroit border at the end of 1916, Andrzej Małkowski and Wincenty Skarzyński, two leading activists of the Polish Falcon Association (in Polish Sokół – a popular gymnastic association), met a man who introduced them to his father. This man turned out to be Sir William Price, an influential businessman from Quebec who had a good relationship with Canadian Prime Minister Richard Borden (Merritt, *Training* 160). In Ottawa, Price facilitated contact of the Poles with Sir Sam Hughes, Canadian Minister of Militia and Defence as well as the Chief of the General Staff, Major General Sir Willoughby Gwatkin.<sup>4</sup> After these meetings the Canadian

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<sup>3</sup> For example, F.J. Wojcieszuk, J. Kusnierz, and the Cybulski brothers (“14 września 2014”).

<sup>4</sup> Professor H. Radecki called Gwatkin the Godfather of the Polish Army (Radecki).

authorities gave their consent to train the future Polish battalion, planned as part of the Canadian Expeditionary Forces. The first group of 23 Polish volunteers secretly reached Toronto by the end of December 1916 and enrolled in the Canadian School of Infantry, at that time functioning at the University of Toronto. By mid-1917, initially in Toronto, and then in Camp Borden, Canadians trained two more groups, 230 persons in total, of Polish Sokols – candidates for officers (Merritt, *Training* 161). In his memoirs Witold Trawiński, one of the participants in those courses, mentioned that Skarzyński had welcomed the volunteers at the station in Toronto wearing “a new elegant uniform of a Canadian lieutenant” (103).

The author also recounted the atmosphere of war in the city: there were many servicemen in the streets and dinner in the hotel was very modest because of wartime restrictions. Trawiński attributed this to “cleaning Canada out of food for war supplies” (103). The author was astonished by the fact that the toast to the king was raised with a wine glass filled with water. It was not until later that he linked that fact with prohibition. The first lecture for the officers was devoted to maintaining strict secrecy. The participants were prohibited to disclose information to the press, as well as to correspond about details of the training, its organisation and the moods in the camp (104).

In 1917, after February Revolution in Russia and the declaration of war by the US in April, President Raymond Poincare signed a decree on the formation of the Polish Army in France on June 4th. It took a lot of diplomacy, the details of which are not entirely known today, in which a significant role was allegedly played by Jan Maria Horodyski, a British intelligence agent, close to Roman Dmowski,<sup>5</sup> who obtained American President Woodrow Wilson’s consent for recruitment of Polish volunteers in the US (no subject to American conscription), while France undertook the financing of their training in a camp in Canada (Merritt, *Training* 106). The camp, officially named The Tadeusz Kościuszko Polish Army Training Camp, after Tadeusz Kościuszko, a Polish and American national hero, a participant of American Revolutionary War, was called *Polish Camp* by Canadians, and *Obóz Kościuszki* [Kosciuszko’s Camp] by Poles. Its organization began in late September 1917 in Niagara-on-the-Lake on the American border. Canadians managed its organization, maintenance and training of the volunteers. In practice, they provided their uniforms, equipment and supplies on credit.

23-year-old Colonel Arthur D'Orr LePan was appointed Commandant of the Polish camp. He was an engineer by education, of Irish-French descent, who earlier had conducted training of the first candidates for Polish officers. He

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<sup>5</sup> Roman Dmowski was a Polish activist for independence and a propagator of fight for autonomy and later independence of Poland pursuant to alliance with Russia and Entente (“Dmowski”).

wrote in his memoirs that initially he had been quite startled upon receiving such instructions from the headquarters (Skrzeszewski 7). In H. Trawiński's opinion, LePan "was a strict and solemn character" but was held in high regard by both officers and soldiers (Trawiński 120). Despite his reserve, the commandant took great care of his Polish subordinates. He appreciated their enthusiasm, dedication in training, the progress they were making and their perseverance as well as devotion to their homeland. LePan, 28 Canadian officers<sup>6</sup> and 180 newly trained Polish officers together with non-commissioned officers arrived in Niagara-on-the-Lake on September 28, 1917. During the next few days, the camp infrastructure was prepared and tens of eight-person canvas camp tents were set up. On October 3rd, the first group from Buffalo reached the camp. In the next few days the camp welcomed up to 300 volunteers a day. There were 43 recruitment centres in the US and 4 in Canada, in Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal and Vilnius, Ont.). During 18 months 22,395 volunteers received training in the camp, and 20,720 of them (including about 221 from Canada) were dispatched to France (Merritt, *On the Common...* 141; Biskupski 377). H. Radecki reports that 62% of the volunteers came from under Russian rule, 31,5% from under Austrian rule and 3% from under Prussian rule. There were also women volunteers in the camp. Forty young women were trained to work as nurses in field hospitals. Most of them left for France together with Polish units (Radecki).

Besides their everyday duties in the camp, as part of their training the volunteers were routinely drilled and went on long marches. They were trained in martial arts, weapons and bayonet handling, and also, to a limited extent, in heavy artillery and grenades. The latter were to be mastered later in France. The volunteers were obliged to observe French regulations, but the orders were given in English, French and Polish. Thus, to communicate, Canadian instructors had to learn basic commands and expressions in Polish as well as to how to pronounce difficult Polish names. Soldier's pay was counted at French rate (5 cents a day for volunteers and \$1.12 for officers). Each Polish volunteer was moreover entitled to a bonus of \$150 annually (Merritt, *On the Common* 136). Regarding uniforms, some of the soldiers wore Canadian uniforms, khaki in colour. When these were no longer available, a stock of uniforms (mainly red, but also blue and white) of the Canadian militia and interior troops was used. Polish volunteers were distinguished by four-cornered hats with a Polish eagle. In the camp and during parades outside the camp, Polish banners were hanged out. On the few remaining photographs they are, however, red and white (Merritt, *Training* 183).

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<sup>6</sup> Many of them had served in the Boer War, and one Native of the Six Nations Reserve fought in France; after the War he returned to the reservation and became a chief (Merit, *Training*, 174).

On the day after the camp was established, the construction of four one-story tarpaper-covered bunkhouses, each with a capacity for 300 people began. Only three of them were completed by the onset of winter and some volunteers, despite very low temperatures, had to spend the winter in tents. Therefore, one of the newly formed units was transferred to St. Johns, Que., now Saint-Jean-sir Richelieu, and another, temporarily, to the old Fort Niagara across the American border. In most bitter cold approximately two thousand Polish volunteers found temporary refuge in a nearby town. The town residents responded to the commandant's appeal and offered them, numerous free of charge, not only vacancies in hotels but also summer houses, barns, garages, empty storages, a canning factory, schools, fire department buildings and even public baths, City Hall and Masonic Hall (Merritt, *On the Common* 136). All this proves the residents' candidness and kindness towards the Polish volunteers.

Niagara-on-the-Lake was a small provincial town with an English-speaking population. Canadian training camps had been organized in its suburbs since 1812. At the onset of World War I, there was only a summer camp there and it was not as large as the Polish camp. The residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake were understandably sceptical and even fearful of the "invasion of foreigners" (Radecki). The prejudices, however, were soon overcome. The town made considerable profit from supplying the camp, and local small businesses, workshops, restaurants and patisseries, revived. The officers would rent summer houses in the area, and the three local hotels were fully booked. One of them even changed its name from *The Lake View Hotel* to *Hotel Kościuszko*. In Niagara-on-the-Lake and nearby St. Catherines, balls for officers and teas were organized. To provide rest and entertainment for the soldiers, YMCA constructed a huge tent with a reading room which stored books in the Polish language, but also in English and French, a letter-writing corner and a little snack as well as drink shop. In the town, three 'motion pictures houses' were opened, where silent movies and propaganda materials were shown. In the local theatre building, park and even in the Masonic Hall, concerts for the soldiers, vocal performances and vaudeville performances were organized. Most of these attractions were also open to the public. The Polish camp had two army bands and one trumpeters' unit. They participated in local parties, parades and religious ceremonies, including Protestant ones. Visits of Poles with famous names to Niagara-on-the-Lake received much attention from Canadians. These included Richard Ordynski, the stage director of the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, novelist Waław Gąsiorowski, painter Sigismund de Ivanowski, Laura Gozdawa Turczynowicz, a Canadian singer involved in the recruitment who was married to a Polish aristocrat and spent the beginning of the war in Galicia, Alfred Korzybski, an engineer, a mathematician and philosopher, with his wife – Mira Edgerly, an American painter of portrait miniatures. Ignacy Paderewski visited Niagara-on-the-Lake

on several occasions (Marritt, *Traning* 177-186). Each of these persons' stay was a memorable event in the small provincial town's life. It was reported in the local daily *St. Catherines Standard* published in a neighbouring town. The correspondent in Niagara-on-the-Lake was its resident Elizabeth Ascher. She had her own column, where one can find a lot of news concerning the Polish camp, its achievements, problems and significant events. The author described the soldiers' everyday life without getting involved in politics. She published short accessible information pieces about Poles and their efforts to regain the independence of Poland. Ms Ascher also advised the inhabitants on how to act towards the Polish soldiers. In addition to journalism she was involved in actions and charity collections for the camp. After the camp was closed down, she helped send parcels to the Polish soldiers in Europe, and took part in collecting shoes and clothes for the civilians on the Polish soil organized by the Polish White Cross (Skrzeszewski 4-5).

The picture of the Polish camp would not be complete without mentioning the problems it endured. The most dramatic were two epidemics of Spanish flu. In the autumn of 1918 and spring of 1919, a few hundred volunteers were taken ill. Forty one of them and two Canadian instructors perished. The majority of flu casualties were buried in the Roman Catholic parish cemetery of St. Vincent de Paul (Merritt, *On the Common...* 142). Another problem had emerged earlier. Following the heavy rains in the autumn of 1917, the area around the tents became muddy. It turned out that Polish volunteers lacked suitable footwear to withstand these conditions and the forthcoming winter. The French, however, refused to finance the boots. The tension among the soldiers on the verge of a revolt was finally relieved after they were given out boots from Canadian supplies (Trawiński 144-151).

In some accounts, it is suggested that the volunteers were visited by "girls from Boston" – Polish Falkon women activists (Radecki; Skrzeszewski 19, 33, 46). There is no evidence that officers or any of the nineteen camp chaplains from the US counteracted it in any way. Most Polish volunteers were strongly attached to the Catholic Church and regularly attended the masses as well as religious ceremonies.

The priests supported the Polish camp in another, unconventional way. Six of them from the Polish parish in nearby St. Catherines were authorized by Canadians to run an office issuing Polish passports with Canadian visas. Such documents practically legalized residence in Canada. They were issued to persons who were considered enemies because they did not have American citizenship and came from Germany and Austria – countries at war with the Allies. Documents describing how they were able to reach St. Catherines are missing. It is also unknown on what grounds their Polish nationality was confirmed by the priests and how much they had to pay for Polish passports. Henry Radecki claims that 443 of these were issued in St. Catherines

(Radecki). All this is a proof of great confidence of the Canadian authorities in a group of Polish priests. It is worth emphasizing that the documents then issued were most probably the first Polish passports.

The described example indicates that actions related to the functioning of the Polish camp were not limited to Niagara-on-the-Lake. Another Canadian town, where in November of 1917, one of the battalions was sent (2,400 Polish volunteers), was St. Johns in Quebec, as has been mentioned before. It was visited by Witold Trawiński who vividly described his trip and new barracks in the former vinegar factory. By his account, the building was warm while it was freezing cold outside with ever more snow and snowbanks. The author humorously called this region “Canadian refrigerator” (Trawiński 161). He noted that the residents, apart from several families, spoke exclusively French and were initially suspicious about Poles. Rumour had it, as he reported, that Polish volunteers had been brought over by Anglophones: “against Francophones [...] as opponents to defence of France which parted ways with the Church” (Trawiński 161). Trawiński attributed this atmosphere to the fact that “the French from Quebec, being ardent Catholics, boycotted voluntary enlistment in the Canadian army and opposed conscription, which was on the cards when enlistment became scarce” (161). The relations of Poles with residents of St. Johns improved considerably only after the volunteers joined putting out a local fire by building snow walls (Trawiński 161).

The lack of room in the camp in Niagara-on-the-Lake and, according to M. Biskupski “a combination of French parsimony, British priorities in shipping, and American neglect” (Biskupski 372) restricted recruitment in the US at the end of 1917 and delayed the dispatch of the first volunteers to Europe. This led to disorientation and frustration among Polish units. The situation only improved in 1918, to a great extent, under pressure from Canadian diplomats and members of the military, especially the enormous commitment of Colonel LePan. The majority of Polish volunteers were dispatched to France by May 1918, but the camp still functioned until February 1919 (Biskupski 377-380). In Niagara-on-the-Lake, Polish soldiers were remembered as exceptionally calm and disciplined. The cemetery, where twenty five casualties of Spanish flu and the former chaplain Reverend Jan Józef Dekowski, deceased in 1949, were buried, has been until now a place of annual patriotic celebrations organized by representatives of the Polish diaspora from Canada and the US. After the war, Colonel LePan and the journalist Elisabeth Ascher were awarded the highest Polish military decoration – Commander’s Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta.

The presence and training of thousands of volunteers from a country which did not exist on the map of the world is a unique occurrence in Canada’s history to this day. The friendliness towards and commitment for Poles and Poland encountered in Niagara-on-the-Lake cannot be treated as representative



for the majority of Canadians. The functioning of the Polish recruitment camp, charity collections and informative actions conducted among large populations of Polish immigrants in Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton, Toronto and Montreal, records of which have mainly not survived, have had an impact on the Canadian society. They have contributed to destroying some negative stereotypes about Poles and have made Canadians aware of the necessity to differentiate Poles from Ukrainians and Germans. The history of the Polish recruitment camp in Niagara-on-the-Lake remains an important element in Polish-Canadian relations, which is worth knowing and which should be remembered.

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**THE SECOND WORLD WAR  
AND OTHER WARS  
IN CANADIAN LITERATURE**

**LA SECONDE GUERRE MONDIALE  
ET D'AUTRES GUERRES DANS  
LA LITTÉRATURE CANADIENNE**



Robert Dion

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**LE CANADA ET AUSCHWITZ : ENQUÊTE ET FICTION  
DANS *LE CŒUR D'AUSCHWITZ* ET *ARTÉFACT*  
DE CARL LEBLANC<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract**

Critics agree that Canada's participation in various wars overseas throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century has left few imprints on Québécois literature. That said, with the flourishing of "migrant literatures" on the one hand, and the spectacular – and ongoing – development of information networks and cyberspace on the other, today's writers, whether they are Québécois, Canadian, or from any Western nation, are exposed to all armed conflicts occurring around the world, most of which are borderless yet global in nature. Narratives around these wars, as they shape the global psyche, are making themselves available to literary interpretations, fictional or otherwise, at various points in time following their occurrence.

This paper focuses on a film and a novel by Carl Leblanc, *Le Cœur d'Auschwitz* (2010) and *Artéfact* (2012), their references to the Holocaust and its impact on the news headlines of the day. It seeks to demonstrate that contrary to what the novel's narrator suggests, Québec and Montréal never removed themselves from the world or from history, but rather remained intimately related to both. In the context of the Second World War, this connection was likely shaped by the aftermath of Auschwitz rather than the impact of armed interventions by Canadian soldiers on the western front. The arrival of 40,000 Jewish immigrants in Québec after 1945 brought the war to us and shaped our collective imagination, without having us seek out the war ourselves.

**Keywords:** Québec literature, documentary film, war, history, Auschwitz

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## Résumé

Les guerres auxquelles le Canada a participé au cours du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, tous les critiques en conviennent, ont laissé peu de traces dans la littérature québécoise. En raison toutefois de l'écllosion des littératures dites « migrantes », d'une part, et du développement spectaculaire des réseaux d'information en continu et du cyberspace, de l'autre, il semble que l'écrivain d'aujourd'hui, qu'il soit Québécois ou Canadien ou plus largement Occidental, est désormais exposé à toutes les guerres du monde – à des guerres « globales » plutôt que mondiales... – et que celles-ci participent, pour ainsi dire, d'un imaginaire mondialisé qui les rend disponibles pour une saisie littéraire, fictionnelle ou non, à distance variable de l'événement.

Dans la présente contribution, je m'attache à un film et à un roman de Carl Leblanc, *Le Cœur d'Auschwitz* (2010) et *Artéfact* (2012), et à leurs évocations de la Shoah (et de ses répercussions sur l'actualité). Il s'agit de montrer que, contrairement à ce que le narrateur du roman laisse entendre, le Québec et Montréal ne sont pas retirés du monde et de l'histoire, mais y sont plutôt étroitement reliés et, en ce qui concerne la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, sans doute plus par les conséquences d'Auschwitz que par les faits d'armes des soldats canadiens sur le front ouest. Ainsi, avec les 40 000 émigrants juifs que le Québec a accueillis après 1945, la guerre est venue à nous, s'est lovée dans notre imaginaire, bien davantage au fond que nous ne sommes allés à elle.

**Mots-clés :** littérature québécoise, cinéma documentaire, guerre, histoire, Auschwitz

Si la Deuxième Guerre mondiale a représenté, dans l'histoire du Canada et du Québec, un important facteur de modernisation sociale, culturelle et économique, on ne peut pas dire qu'elle ait eu une influence déterminante, tout au moins dans l'immédiat et du point de vue de l'élaboration d'une thématique guerrière, sur la production littéraire québécoise<sup>2</sup>. Des chercheurs comme Marc Benson et Élisabeth Nardout-Lafarge l'ont noté, la récolte de « romans de guerre » suscités par ce grand conflit est « maigre » (Benson 76)<sup>3</sup> et l'inscription de cette thématique demeure « assez marginale » durant la

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<sup>2</sup> En ce qui concerne la dimension strictement économique, la guerre a eu en revanche des répercussions notables et immédiates : l'édition québécoise a profité de l'exil d'une partie de l'édition française outre-mer et les revenus liés à cette activité ont été partiellement réaffectés à la publication d'œuvres québécoises. Sur cette question, voir Michon (dir.).

<sup>3</sup> Seulement quatre romans selon Benson (76) : Maurice Gagnon, *Les Chasseurs d'ombres* en 1959 ; Jean-Jules Richard, *Neuf Jours de haine* en 1948 ; Bertrand Vac, *Deux portes... une adresse* en 1952 ; Jean Vaillancourt, *Les Canadiens errants* en 1954.

période 1940-1960 (Nardout-Lafarge 44). Même constat du côté de Michel Biron et Olivier Parenteau dans la présentation d'un dossier de la revue *Voix et Images* pourtant consacré à *La Guerre dans la littérature québécoise* : malgré l'élargissement du panorama à toutes les guerres et à tous les genres<sup>4</sup>, le conflit armé reste une présence spectrale dans cette littérature, il est en général associé aux autres – sinon à l'Autre, Anglais ou Canadien anglais – et s'insère mal dans « le discours de l'enracinement » dominant (Biron et Parenteau 9). Néanmoins, après 1945, l'évocation de la Deuxième Guerre constituerait, selon les deux auteurs, un puissant facteur de déterritorialisation ayant pour effet de « déplace[r] le grand texte national » (9). Dans une perspective un peu différente, Nardout-Lafarge propose pour sa part de voir comment la présence, ou l'absence, de la guerre dans la fiction entre « dans un processus plus vaste de redéfinition identitaire » (44) amorcé à partir de 1940. Dans un cas comme dans l'autre, qu'il s'agisse de sortir de la problématique de l'identité ou de la poser autrement par la mise en relief d'un corpus négligé, on se situe dans une optique de décentrement devenue commune dans l'historiographie littéraire québécoise de la dernière décennie<sup>5</sup>.

Les années 1990 marquent un changement de contexte historique et social qui se répercute bien évidemment sur la production littéraire. À l'échelle locale, l'éclosion des écritures dites « migrantes », c'est-à-dire la (relative) prise en charge par l'institution littéraire québécoise – édition et critique, tout particulièrement – des œuvres produites par des écrivains issus de l'immigration, va favoriser l'introduction de divers récits de guerre au sein du corpus national : songeons, entre autres, à l'œuvre de Wajdi Mouawad sur la guerre civile libanaise, à celle d'Aki Shimazaki sur les conséquences du deuxième conflit mondial au Japon ou encore au roman de David Homel, *L'Analyste* (2003), sur la faillite cataclysmique de l'ex-Yougoslavie. À l'échelle internationale, la chute du Mur de Berlin et l'effritement du glacie communisme, loin de marquer une « fin de l'histoire » comme l'avait prédit Francis Fukuyama (1992), ont plutôt suscité une résurgence des nationalismes et des guerres en périphérie de l'ex-bloc de l'Est (Balkans, Tchétchénie, Géorgie, Afghanistan, Ukraine, etc.), puis dans un rayon plus large, là où la rupture des conditions géopolitiques héritées de la séparation du monde en deux blocs compacts a laissé libre cours à l'expression de tensions et de

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<sup>4</sup> Parenteau signe notamment un article sur la guerre chez les poètes de l'Hexagone (2012) et Lucie Robert, sur les guerres – guerre de Sept Ans, insurrection de 1837-1838 et Deuxième Guerre mondiale – dans le théâtre d'André Ricard (2012).

<sup>5</sup> Optique qui trouve son expression paradigmatique dans la cinquième partie, « Le décentrement de la littérature (depuis 1980) », de *l'Histoire de la littérature québécoise* (Biron, Dumont et Nardout-Lafarge 529-626).

rivalités plus fragmentées et moins prévisibles qu'autrefois (Irak, Lybie, Yémen, Syrie, etc.). Le repli de la censure (ou ses ratés), d'une part, et le développement spectaculaire des réseaux d'information en continu et du cyberspace, de l'autre, ont contribué à la diffusion toujours plus rapide de ces conflits sanglants jusqu'au cœur de nos foyers, et souvent sans médiation aucune. De telle sorte que l'écrivain d'aujourd'hui, qu'il soit Québécois ou Canadien ou plus largement Occidental, est désormais exposé à toutes les guerres du monde<sup>6</sup> – à des guerres « globales » plutôt que mondiales... – et que celles-ci participent, pour ainsi dire, d'un imaginaire mondialisé qui les rend disponibles pour une saisie littéraire, fictionnelle ou non, à distance variable de l'événement<sup>7</sup>. Écrire la guerre, de nos jours, ne semble plus réservé à celles et à ceux qui en ont fait l'expérience ou qui en ont vécu les séquelles plus ou moins directement, que ce soit en propre ou par transmission familiale. On aurait ainsi accès à ce que le dramaturge Guillaume Corbeil a appelé une « pornographie de la douleur » :

Si l'objet du peep-show est connu, quel est celui du spectacle de la souffrance ? Quel vide cherchons-nous à combler en consommant les plaies des autres ? C'est cette fascination propre à notre société épargnée – Wajdi Mouawad a même parlé de « pays monstrueusement en paix » – que j'ai voulu questionner avec l'écriture du *Mécanicien* (Corbeil).

Bien sûr, toute évocation des guerres lointaines par la littérature n'est pas par définition « pornographique » ni simplement anecdotique ou « décorative ». Des œuvres québécoises actuelles, irriguées par les circonstances tragiques d'une histoire plus ou moins récente, parviennent ainsi au délicat équilibre qui consiste à en approcher la multiplicité des enjeux humains sans verser dans l'appropriation induite. *Le Ciel de Bay City* de Catherine Mavrikakis ([2008] 2011), par exemple, qui met en scène une narratrice juive issue d'une lignée presque totalement liquidée, exprime bien la hantise contemporaine de la Shoah en décrivant une Amérique industrielle amnésique au-dessus de laquelle plane, bien visible, menaçant, un nuage toxique, mélange fantasmé de pollution et des fumées grises d'Auschwitz. Dans *Plus haut que les flammes* (2010), recueil écrit à la suite d'une visite de ce même camp d'extermination, Louise Dupré relie les millions de morts et la présence fragile de « l'enfant

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<sup>6</sup> Quand elles ne se rendent pas jusqu'à lui sous la forme du terrorisme...

<sup>7</sup> Dans le même ordre d'idées, Marie-Odile André voit les conflits contemporains comme « sujets à un effet de dissémination dans un espace géographique qui, du fait de son élargissement à la planète tout entière, ménage avec eux toutes sortes de rencontres indirectes et différées, comme de hasard » (180).



près de [s]oi »<sup>8</sup> d'une manière absolument prenante ; à cet être qui devra se hisser « plus haut que les flammes » pour que la mémoire et l'histoire redeviennent habitables, la poète confie d'emblée la difficulté à s'approcher de l'infigurable :

la vie est la vie

et l'on apprend à placer  
Auschwitz ou Birkenau  
dans un vers

comme un souffle  
insupportable (14).

Pour quelqu'un d'étranger au drame de la Shoah, il peut en effet paraître difficile d'intégrer « Auschwitz » à un poème quand même le plus grand poète juif survivant, Paul Celan, s'en est soigneusement gardé, écrivant non sur Auschwitz mais depuis ce lieu<sup>9</sup>. Or, pour les contemporains, le point de vue est forcément décalé, toute évocation du génocide des Juifs se situant dorénavant sur le seuil de la mémoire et de la post-mémoire<sup>10</sup> – d'une mémoire transmise, consciemment ou non, par la parole ou par le silence, à la deuxième et à la troisième générations, mais qui risque néanmoins de basculer dans l'histoire, c'est-à-dire de quitter la sphère immédiatement affective pour se muer en un objet d'étude sans rapport direct avec l'expérience<sup>11</sup>. Tant et si bien qu'on pourrait affirmer que, d'une certaine manière, tous nous sommes

<sup>8</sup> Le recueil est dédié à « Maxime, l'enfant près de moi ».

<sup>9</sup> Son poème qui aborde le plus directement le sujet des camps d'extermination, « Todesfuge » (1947), et qui le rendra mondialement célèbre, se verra par la suite peu ou prou désavoué par son auteur qui lui reprochera d'être trop littéral.

<sup>10</sup> Définie par Régine Robin comme la « transmission de traumatismes de la guerre ou du génocide par ceux qui n'ont pas connu la guerre ou qui étaient trop jeunes pour comprendre la gravité des événements » (322). Voir aussi Hirsch (1997).

<sup>11</sup> Selon Paul Ricœur, la conception du rapport entre mémoire et histoire chez Maurice Halbwachs « décrit ainsi une courbe : de l'histoire scolaire, extérieure à la mémoire de l'enfant, on s'est élevé à une mémoire historique qui, idéalement, se fond dans la mémoire collective qu'en échange elle agrandit, et l'on débouche *in fine* sur une histoire universelle qui s'intéresse aux différences d'époque et résorbe les différences de mentalité sous un regard porté de nulle part. L'histoire, ainsi reconsidérée, mérite-t-elle encore le nom de "mémoire historique" ? Mémoire et histoire ne sont-elles pas condamnées à une cohabitation forcée ? » (517). Pour sa part, François Hartog prend acte du fait que, postérieurement aux massacres en série de la seconde moitié du XXe siècle, « dans le duel entre la mémoire et l'histoire, on a rapidement donné l'avantage à la première » (17).

étrangers à Auschwitz, condamnés à conjuguer histoire, mémoire indirecte et imaginaire, et que le roman de Mavrikakis ou le recueil de Dupré, sous ce rapport, sont sans doute aussi légitimes que n'importe quel texte écrit par les descendants de plus en plus lointains des victimes<sup>12</sup>. Cette légitimité est encore accrue par le fait que la Shoah ressortit désormais à une « mémoire cosmopolite », transculturelle, incessamment relayée par les voies médiatiques, au point de constituer un « symbole mnémonique transnational » (Erll 9).

Ces remarques préliminaires m'amènent à mon sujet, les deux œuvres que le cinéaste et écrivain Carl Leblanc a consacrées à des femmes rescapées d'Auschwitz et, plus indirectement, aux prolongements jusqu'à nous de cette guerre livrée par les nazis aux Juifs d'Europe. À la fin des années 1990, alors qu'il faisait des recherches sur un présumé criminel nazi réfugié au Québec, Vladimir Katriuk<sup>13</sup>, Leblanc était tombé, au Centre commémoratif de l'Holocauste de Montréal, sur un petit carnet de souhaits d'anniversaire en forme de cœur fabriqué par des prisonnières d'Auschwitz pour l'une des leurs dont c'était le vingtième anniversaire. Fasciné par cet objet et par le geste fou que ces femmes ont accompli, il décide, dès 2006, de tourner un film documentaire pour, dit-il, « raconter cet objet » (Lessard) : ce sera *Le Cœur d'Auschwitz*, sorti en 2010. Mais faute de financement<sup>14</sup>, le projet tombe d'abord à l'eau, si bien que, changeant son fusil d'épaule, le réalisateur choisit d'écrire plutôt un livre et s'y met dès 2007. La recherche préalable au tournage étant seulement entamée, ce livre ne pouvait prendre la forme d'un récit rigoureusement documenté. Du coup, le recours à la fiction s'est imposé, non pour opérer des variations sur le réel, soutient Leblanc, mais pour

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<sup>12</sup> Dans « Narrations du monde actuel », Pierre Nepveu remarque, dans la littérature en général et au Québec en particulier, la multiplication des pratiques de la mémoire, la mémoire des autres devenant aussi la nôtre, et pas uniquement celle des vainqueurs et des puissants, mais aussi celle « de tous les fragilisés et de tous les marginalisés de l'Histoire » (207). Le monde s'offre ainsi désormais comme un « déluge mémoriel » (208) à accueillir et à, littéralement, « mettre en œuvre ».

<sup>13</sup> Katriuk est le modèle du Krylenko d'*Artéfact*. Arrivé au Canada en 1951, il a figuré parmi les criminels nazis les plus recherchés. Il a été arrêté en 1998, mais, à la différence du Krylenko fictif, n'a été ni extradé ni jugé. Il est mort en mai 2015, à Ormstown en Montérégie, à l'âge de 93 ans.

<sup>14</sup> Le projet ayant été déposé en 2006, au moment de la deuxième guerre du Liban, les instances subventionnaires ont jugé qu'il n'était pas opportun de financer un film sur la Shoah partiellement tourné en Israël ; ils ont donc refusé de le soutenir. Plus tard, la Société Radio-Canada a eu vent du sujet et s'est montrée intéressée. Entretemps, Leblanc avait écrit une première version du roman (communication personnelle de l'auteur, 30 mars 2016).

suppléer les lacunes du savoir, pour imaginer le réel « au plus près »<sup>15</sup>. Quand le projet de film aura enfin débloqué, le roman sera momentanément mis de côté, puis repris après la sortie du long métrage et finalement publié, sous le titre *Artéfact*, en 2012<sup>16</sup>.

Le film articule trois niveaux de récit qui constituent, chacun à sa façon, une modulation d'une même enquête. Le premier niveau, mis en place dès avant le générique, retrace la quête de Sandy Fainer, la fille de cette Fania Landau à qui avait été offert le cœur et qui l'a miraculeusement rapporté d'Auschwitz. Sandy est d'abord évoquée comme cette enfant qui a si peu d'indices de son ascendance qu'à l'instar de Kathy, la petite fille de *Father Knows Best*, elle s'imagine avoir été adoptée et décide de se mettre à la recherche de ses origines. Après ce bref retour sur l'enfance, Leblanc filme la femme adulte résolue à revenir sur l'histoire de sa famille maternelle<sup>17</sup> en allant elle-même à Auschwitz sur les traces du drame fondateur. Le deuxième niveau est celui de l'enquête menée par le réalisateur qui, à partir de l'artéfact que représente le cœur – la seule trace qui relie Fania à son passé –, cherche à comprendre comment cet objet a pu être fabriqué dans d'aussi horribles conditions, pourquoi il l'a été et, surtout, par qui ; à plus de soixante ans de distance, il part donc à la recherche des signataires du carnet, de Tel-Aviv et de Jérusalem à Paris, à Cannes, à Washington, à Buenos Aires et à Bad Arolsen, notamment. Le troisième niveau, enfin, montre une activité pédagogique réalisée à partir du cœur avec des élèves sous l'égide du Centre commémoratif de l'Holocauste ; il s'agit ici de filmer la découverte, par des enfants du primaire, du carnet et des valeurs qu'il représente, des souvenirs douloureux qu'il évoque et de l'histoire dont il témoigne. Cette ligne narrative du film se termine par la rencontre, très émouvante, entre les enfants, Fania et sa fille Sandy ; on y voit en acte, si l'on peut dire, la mise en place d'une post-mémoire de la Shoah, notamment chez une enfant d'ascendance allemande dont le grand-père, opposant au nazisme envoyé dans les camps, a péri au

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<sup>15</sup> Communication personnelle du 30 mars 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Le caractère « double » de la démarche créative de Leblanc, aussi surprenant soit-il, n'est pas un hapax dans sa carrière : à propos de l'enlèvement du diplomate britannique James Richard Cross au moment de la crise d'Octobre 1970, le cinéaste-écrivain avait produit un film, *L'Otage*, et un livre, *Le Personnage secondaire*. Sur ce diptyque, voir Dion (2015).

<sup>17</sup> De la famille paternelle, on ne saura rien. On ne voit que les nombreuses médailles militaires du père avant le générique. C'est que l'histoire d'Aron Fainer, le mari de Fania, est documentée, entre autres dans un témoignage filmé conservé au USC Shoah Foundation Institute (code 6006). Cet homme est un héros de guerre : il a réussi à s'enfuir du ghetto de Varsovie, à rejoindre l'armée russe, il s'est battu au sein d'une légion polonaise intégrée à l'Armée rouge et a participé à la libération de la Pologne.

cours de la même « marche de la mort » qui a mené Fania, avec son carnet caché sous l'aisselle, d'Auschwitz au camp de Ravensbrück<sup>18</sup>.

Le roman – c'est la mention générique qui figure sur la couverture – met aussi en place un dispositif d'enquête, cette fois confié à un seul personnage, François Bélanger, un « journaliste aux affaires juridiques d'un grand quotidien montréalais » (Leblanc, *Artéfact* 11) qui se voit affecté au cas Krylenko, « du nom du vieil Ukrainien soupçonné de crimes de guerre » nazis (*Artéfact* 12) et terré à Montréal. De passage au Musée de l'Holocauste pour des recherches sur le génocide, le journaliste tombe par hasard sur le carnet, un objet qu'il estime d'emblée presque trop admirable. D'ailleurs le récit, en narration hétérodiégétique à la troisième personne, reviendra à plusieurs reprises sur la beauté suspecte de cet épisode du cœur d'Auschwitz, jugé trop édifiant, trop optimiste. Chez Leblanc, la littérature a plus de scrupules que le cinéma à l'égard du caractère sublime de ce carnet<sup>19</sup> et, de manière générale, est plus inquiète quant à « l'usure de cette histoire » de nazisme et de camps de la mort (*Artéfact* 107), histoire soi-disant rabâchée, ancienne déjà, et sans intérêt pour personne<sup>20</sup>. (En réalité, une telle critique semble plutôt appeler la contradiction, puisque le texte ne cesse au contraire de « décroiser » le passé et de faire écho aux multiples prolongements concrets de cet événement jusque dans le présent.)

Toujours est-il que, quasiment malgré lui, le journaliste sera « séduit » par le cœur (*Artéfact* 13) et que, parallèlement à son travail sur Krylenko et les autres affaires criminelles que lui confie son journal, il entreprendra, à l'instar de Leblanc, de retrouver les femmes qui ont signé le carnet et celle à qui il a

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<sup>18</sup> L'équipe ignorait tout de l'histoire de cette enfant d'origine allemande ; elle a surgi au tournage (communication personnelle du 30 mars 2016) ; on voit à l'écran Fania étreindre l'enfant, image très symboliquement chargée mais aucunement « planifiée ».

<sup>19</sup> Le frère de Klara – la transposition de Fania dans le roman –, que le journaliste retrouve aux États-Unis, a ces mots au sujet du carnet : « ces souhaits pour Klara, on dirait une comédie de jeunes filles qui se sont ligüées pour jouer à "l'anniversaire de Klara" » (110) ; et plus loin : « Vous cherchez, et moi aussi, à savoir si ma sœur a survécu, mais ce carnet ne nous aidera pas, et puis c'est une histoire trop belle pour être vraie, vous ne trouvez pas ? » (112).

<sup>20</sup> À la suite du témoignage d'une rescapée lors d'une cérémonie officielle, le narrateur (à la troisième personne) commente : « Puis elle insistait, se fondait dans le récit mille fois répété et désormais dévalué de l'horreur auschwitzienne » (61). La manifestation de Juifs devant l'appartement des Krylenko est ainsi décrite par le père gaspésien du journaliste : « Tiens, regarde les fous de la ville ! [...] Ils vont-y nous laisser tranquilles avec c't'histoire-là ! » (27).

été offert. C'est ici, du reste, que le roman s'écarte le plus du réel<sup>21</sup>, puisque la Klara du livre, contrairement à la Fania réelle qu'on voit dans le film, demeure d'abord introuvable avant que soit confirmé, vers la fin du roman, son décès à Malchōw, un camp annexe de Ravensbrück. À la place de la survivante qu'il a retrouvée et interviewée pour le film, Leblanc invente ainsi une héroïne qui existe surtout « en creux »<sup>22</sup>, dans le discours que les autres tiennent sur elle, et qui se manifeste pour l'essentiel dans un testament que, mourante, elle aurait dicté à une co-détenue pour qu'elle l'inscrive dans le carnet :

*Je tiens à écrire ici que j'ai vécu jusqu'à ce jour. Je veux que mes proches, s'ils sont encore vivants, sachent que j'ai tenu jusqu'à ce 26 avril 1945. Je n'irai pas plus loin. Je veux que l'on sache que j'ai aimé la vie. J'ai aimé vivre. Bénies soient les camarades qui m'ont aidée. Bénie soit ma famille qui reste, béni soit Dieu qui l'a voulu... (59 ; italique dans l'original).*

Ce texte n'étant ni de la main de Klara ni signé, il restera une énigme jusqu'à la fin du livre, jusqu'à ce que le lecteur, au vingt-quatrième et avant-dernier chapitre, en découvre l'auteure<sup>23</sup>. De fait, la mort de Klara – d'autant plus terrible qu'elle survient juste avant la libération des camps – et son testament paradoxalement anonyme ont pour conséquence d'instaurer au sein d'*Artéfact* une atmosphère sombre qui ne se retrouve pas dans *Le Cœur d'Auschwitz*, où l'enquête ne peut déboucher que sur la découverte de quelques signataires du carnet et sur des retrouvailles émouvantes... sinon il n'y aurait pas de film, ou alors un tout autre film<sup>24</sup>. Tandis que le propos du documentaire est essentiellement lumineux – Fania est une adorable vieille dame, marquée

<sup>21</sup> L'auteur nous prévient de tels écarts dans une note signée « C. L. » à la fin du livre : « *L'artéfact dont il est question dans ce roman existe bel et bien et se trouve effectivement au musée de l'Holocauste de Montréal. C'est la seule part de réel qui entre dans cette histoire, sauf certains des souhaits du carnet qui sont authentiques. Au lecteur de deviner lesquels* » (*Artéfact*, s. p.).

<sup>22</sup> Il n'y a guère qu'au chapitre 2, le premier qui plonge dans le passé, que Klara apparaît comme un personnage agissant.

<sup>23</sup> Contrairement au lecteur, Bélanger, lui, restera dans l'ignorance : « Sur la page du treizième texte [le testament de Klara], il remarqua quelques taches de couleur rougeâtre. "Une encre différente", songea-t-il, ne pouvant imaginer qu'il s'agissait du sang de Klara qui avait saisi la main de Dana » (155).

<sup>24</sup> Alors qu'il écrit les premières versions d'*Artéfact*, Leblanc ne sait pas s'il y aura un film. Et même quand le projet cinématographique aura finalement débloqué, il ne saura pas avant un bon moment s'il pourra retrouver une ou des signataires, si son film montrera les retrouvailles de Fania avec les rescapées de la Union Werke ou s'il sera le récit d'un échec, d'une enquête qui n'aboutit pas (communication personnelle du 30 mars 2016).

certaines par son terrible passé, mais résiliente ; Sandy, sa fille, fera peu à peu la paix avec l'histoire de sa lignée maternelle et en comprendra la valeur universelle –, la tonalité du roman est plus violente, plus tragique, inscrivant la mort et le suicide au centre de cette trop belle histoire.

Si le film adopte résolument le point de vue du présent – à part quelques séquences, toutes concentrées dans les premières minutes, tirées de *Father Knows Best* ainsi que de films montrant le camp, des cadavres et des détenus tout juste libérés, il n'y a pas d'images d'archives dans *Le Cœur d'Auschwitz*<sup>25</sup> –, le roman, en revanche, confronte passé et présent, plongeant dans l'un comme dans l'autre. Constitué de 25 courts chapitres, il nous transporte, en alternance, du présent de l'enquête jusqu'aux épisodes de guerre qui, dans le film, ne sont évoqués que dans les témoignages ou à travers les vestiges du passé (quand il y en a<sup>26</sup> : baraques conservées à Auschwitz, ruines de l'usine d'armement de la Union Werke où travaillèrent Fania et ses amies, plaques commémoratives ici et là, etc.). Ainsi, par exemple, après le chapitre inaugural où l'on assiste à la découverte du cœur par le journaliste au Musée de l'Holocauste, le deuxième chapitre nous ramène, comme l'indique son titre, au « 20 décembre 1944 », la veille de l'anniversaire de Klara, alors que cette dernière soigne et reconforte la petite Tchèque Véra, malade, affaiblie, condamnée à la sélection et à l'extermination à brève échéance. Après quelques scènes montrant la beauté qui fleurit sur une terre abjecte – Klara qui partage sa ration avec la petite malade, puis qui, forcée de chanter pour les SS, se retrouve, à l'instar du héros de Friedrich Rückert et de Gustav Mahler, « seule dans son chant »<sup>27</sup> –, le troisième chapitre revient à l'époque actuelle, à l'enquête de Bélanger sur Krylenko. C'est dans cette section du texte que la question du « devoir de mémoire des Juifs » (*Artéfact* 20) et de la pertinence de leur rendre justice après toutes ces décennies est posée de la manière la plus directe. Comme journaliste, François Bélanger sait qu'il écrit dans un contexte de « mémoire saturée », pour reprendre l'expression de Régine Robin (2003) ;

<sup>25</sup> Il y a en outre, également placées tout au début du film, quelques photos de famille, l'image des médailles militaires du père et une vue aérienne du complexe d'Auschwitz-Birkenau.

<sup>26</sup> Ce que montre aussi le film, c'est que beaucoup de traces ont disparu : les environs d'Auschwitz, où marchent Sandy et sa fille Ariadne, ont retrouvé un aspect normal, à Ravensbrück ne subsistent que de discrètes plaques commémoratives, et ainsi de suite.

<sup>27</sup> Ainsi se termine l'un des *Rückert-Lieder* de Mahler, « Ich bin der Welt abhanden bekommen » : « Ich bin gestorben dem Weltgetümmel/Und ruh' in einem stillen Gebiet !/Ich leb' allein in meinem Himmel./In meinem Lieben, in meinem Lied ! ». Je traduis : « Je suis mort au tumulte du monde/Et me repose dans un coin tranquille !/Je vis seul dans mon ciel./Dans mon amour, dans mon chant ! »

il reconnaît par ailleurs les travers du journalisme contemporain, sa « pensée globale » qui s'accommode mal des cas particuliers, sa légèreté coupable, la tendance des chroniqueurs omniscients, omniprésents et omnipuissants à se comporter en acteurs de la discussion plutôt qu'en spectateurs éclairés (*Artéfact* 20-26). Il est également conscient du contexte de réception de son reportage, de la lassitude des lecteurs vis-à-vis des récits de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale et de tel « énième récit de la Shoah » (26), des préventions contre Israël et les Juifs, passés du statut de victimes à celui de bourreaux (20). L'enquête sur Krylenko relatée dans le roman rend compte de cet environnement discursif stratifié et complexe, où le vieil Ukrainien apparaît tour à tour comme un vieillard insignifiant ou comme un monstre, comme un citoyen injustement soumis à un désir de justice revanchard (à une « justice de rue », écrit Bélanger (23)) ou comme un coupable qui se serait volontairement enrôlé dans la *Schutzmannschaft* (la « Schuma »)<sup>28</sup> en 1941 et qui aurait participé à la chasse aux partisans puis à la « Shoah par balles ».

Subitement débarqué, comme ahuri, « en pleine Seconde Guerre mondiale » (*Artéfact* 23), spectateur étonné d'« un rebondissement de la Shoah à Rosemont » (22), comme si la véritable histoire ne devait jamais, en ce pays, percer à travers le fait divers, Bélanger, en journaliste soucieux de « bien raconter, [de] [...] raconter honnêtement, avec tous les détails qui comptent » (12), va essayer de rendre toute l'ambiguïté de l'affaire Krylenko, de cette histoire qu'il semble si difficile de faire nôtre : une « histoire importée d'Europe », dit le texte (42), un « épisode québécois d'une vie ukrainienne » (42). Pourtant, des connections vont s'établir tout naturellement entre Montréal – cet « endroit que la guerre pouvait oublier, cette ville dont on disait qu'elle avait été un “havre pour les rescapés de l'horreur” » (36)<sup>29</sup> –, l'Ukraine et Israël. Mis au courant de l'affaire Krylenko par un cousin montréalais, un Juif de Tel-Aviv va joindre le journaliste afin de corroborer la justesse d'une anecdote que le vieil Ukrainien avait invoquée pour sa défense. Ce Juif, Vilinski, échappé du camp de Baillekoun, confie en effet à Bélanger que, raflé par la Schuma, il doit sa survie à Krylenko, qui l'aurait épargné en souvenir de sa femme juive disparue (81-82). Cette bonne action ne fait pas de l'Ukrainien un héros, ni même un homme juste ; pour Vilinski, celui-ci reste un lâche et un opportuniste, mais néanmoins un personnage complexe, avec ses secrets, ses mensonges, et capable d'un acte de miséricorde, fût-il isolé. Krylenko n'est donc pas cet homme tout noir ou tout blanc dépeint par les

<sup>28</sup> La « Schuma » était une police auxiliaire collaborationniste instaurée en Ukraine par les nazis en 1941.

<sup>29</sup> Plus de 40 000 survivants du génocide se sont établis à Montréal après la guerre, ce qui en fait la troisième ville d'accueil au monde.

journaux. Le témoignage de Vilinski n'est pas non plus sans ambiguïté, puisqu'il ne s'agit pas d'abord pour lui d'une affaire de justice – il ne veut pas innocenter l'Ukrainien –, mais de vérité :

– Je ne veux pas le disculper, mais je ne veux pas l'abandonner non plus. J'ai une conscience. [...]

[J]e n'aurais jamais pointé du doigt l'homme que vous voyez sur cette photo [Krylenko] si je l'avais reconnu soixante ans plus tard. Si d'autres ont cru bon le juger, c'est comme ça. Je crois qu'il est plus important de raconter ce qui s'est passé. La justice, comme vous dites, intéresse peut-être bien des gens, mais la vérité est plus importante. [...] Mais ce qui compte, c'est que l'on sache ce qui a été fait contre tous les Juifs et qu'on sache aussi, vous comprenez, que Krylenko a été autre chose qu'un bourreau (84).

Ce plaidoyer de Vilinski en faveur du récit consonoit tout à fait avec la conception du journalisme de Bélanger, pour qui la seule façon d'« améliorer le monde » (12), on l'a vu, consiste à le raconter avec la plus rigoureuse exactitude. En même temps, et de manière paradoxale, cet épisode donné pour authentique, avec ses rebondissements surprenants, fait naître chez le journaliste l'idée que « l'Histoire est un roman » (85), voire que le XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, avec ses tragédies qui s'estompent à mesure que les témoins disparaissent et que les preuves se raréfient, « était une fiction que d'autres s'affairaient à raconter » (38).

C'est peut-être en vertu de cette assertion du caractère de plus en plus fictionnel avec le temps, c'est-à-dire lointain et étonnant, de la Seconde Grande Guerre et de ses conséquences que Leblanc a pu se convaincre de donner libre cours à ce qu'on pourrait appeler son « imagination conjecturale » à partir du réel attesté. Celle-ci se déploie notamment en ce qui concerne les épisodes qui se sont passés à Auschwitz – ou peu après – et les souhaits qui se trouvent consignés dans le carnet, dont une note en fin de volume (et non au début) nous a avertis que plusieurs étaient faux. Je ne m'arrêterai ici qu'à ces deux aspects de la fiction, distincts de la fiction-cadre du journaliste enquêteur, car ils m'apparaissent particulièrement notables, sinon « osés » : les scènes d'Auschwitz, en effet, même si elles ne sont pas toutes horribles, forcent un tabou que Fania n'avait pas voulu lever dans son témoignage<sup>30</sup> ; quant aux inventions ayant trait aux vœux du carnet, elles trafiquent, pour ainsi dire, un artéfact d'une nature presque « sacrée »...

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<sup>30</sup> Dans le film, tout au moins dans les séquences conservées au montage, Fania est réticente à entrer dans le détail de sa vie au camp ; ce sont des souvenirs qu'elle ne veut pas trop remuer, et elle ne semble pas approuver le projet de sa fille d'entreprendre le voyage à



Outre la scène entre Klara et Vera que j'ai déjà évoquée, le livre raconte l'épisode où Cesia, l'une des signataires du carnet, tente une évasion avec son amant Judl (43-46). Racontée du point de vue de la fugitive, sur le *tempo* haletant de sa course à travers la forêt, cette scène donne une impression d'immédiateté terrible. Le lien est établi avec le carnet quand, au moment d'être pendue « pour l'exemple », elle récite le texte écrit pour Klara : « Pleure quand tu es seule, ris parmi les autres, sois légère quand tu dances, mais jamais dans la vie » (46), texte authentique qui se retrouve dans le carnet réel, à quelques variantes près, sous la signature de Mala<sup>31</sup>. Une autre scène, qui semble explorer un autre destin possible, remonte au « 2 mai 1947 » (117-121). La protagoniste en est Simone, une Française, qui avait écrit dans le carnet : « Ne perds pas espoir. Survivre, ce sera gagner » (50)<sup>32</sup>. Or précisément, pour survivre, Simone se prostitue, et le récit la montre alors qu'elle est avec un client, un militaire américain basé à Toulon, et qu'elle tente d'être ce pur objet, ce vide que l'homme pourra investir à loisir. Après ce qu'elle sait être sa dernière passe, elle songe :

Deux ans que le quotidien est une anomalie. Se prostituer, c'est être au diapason. [...] Elle retire son bracelet qui couvre le numéro tatoué sur son poignet : 23 458. À son arrivée à Auschwitz, il y avait devant elle 23 457 Zlatka, et 23 456 Helena<sup>33</sup>. Elles avaient fraternisé dans l'euphorie de la sélection chanceuse. À gauche. La vie. Elle s'approche de la fenêtre et l'enjambe. Ce soir, elle va à droite (120-121).

À son client américain, elle glisse dans la poche un billet où, après avoir transcrit le souhait d'anniversaire adressé quelques années plus tôt à Klara, elle a ajouté : « Ils ont gagné. Simone » (121). Enfin, une dernière scène, datée du « 21 décembre 1944 » (139-144), déploie en parallèle deux actions simultanées. D'une part, il y a le récit encadrant du survol d'Auschwitz par un avion américain en mission photographique ; les clichés aériens du complexe

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Auschwitz. Les femmes retracées par Leblanc ne s'étendront pas non plus sur la vie à Auschwitz.

<sup>31</sup> Le texte exact, dans sa traduction du polonais au français, est : « Pour Fani L./Ris parmi les gens, pleure en cachette/Sois légère dans la danse, mais jamais dans la vie/Le jour de ton anniversaire, pour se souvenir/Mala/12/XII/1944/Auschwitz ». J'ai corrigé les fautes d'orthographe de la traduction, disponible, avec tous les textes du carnet, à l'adresse URL suivante : [http://www.mhmc.ca/media\\_library/files/5005bb3e90707.pdf](http://www.mhmc.ca/media_library/files/5005bb3e90707.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> Le texte authentique qui s'en rapproche le plus est celui de Tonia et Gücia, originellement écrit en polonais : « Fanieszka!/Ne pleure pas quand tu souffres, ne baisse pas la main/Celui qui est fort gagnera, celui qui est déprimé périra/Tonia et Gücia ».

<sup>33</sup> Toutes deux sont des signataires du carnet.

industriel du camp immortalisent, pure coïncidence agencée par le romancier, Zlatka et une kapo qui reviennent d'un interrogatoire musclé ; à la fin du chapitre, il est mentionné qu'« on peut même apercevoir deux formes humaines le long du mur nord [de l'usine de la Union Werke]. Sur la bande de ces négatifs-là, [le photographe] inscrit à l'intention du labo : “*The heart of Auschwitz*” » (144). Les sens multiples de l'expression se voient ici pleinement activés<sup>34</sup>. D'autre part, le récit encadré concerne ces silhouettes lilliputiennes vues de haut, Zlatka au premier chef, qui a fabriqué le cœur et qui a été violemment battue pour avoir obtenu du tissu au marché noir, et Bronia, Helena et les autres signataires. Leblanc met en scène la fabrication de l'artéfact et les ruses déployées pour réunir les signatures ; surtout, il insiste sur l'attitude de défi, l'inconscience délibérée et revendiquée, la liberté folle et l'indifférence à l'égard de la mort qu'il a fallu à ses femmes pour avoir osé être, à Auschwitz, autre chose que du bétail.

Pour ce qui est des vœux contenus dans le carnet, la plupart sont inventés, à part ceux de la vraie Mala qui, on l'a dit, sont attribués à la Cesia fictive, ceux de la Zlatka du roman – « Liberté, Liberté, Liberté » (*Artéfact* 51)<sup>35</sup> – qui ont été formulés en réalité par une certaine Mania, et ceux des Mina fictive et réelle : « Chère Klara, quand tu seras vieille, prends ce carnet entre tes mains, mets tes lunettes et... à haute voix » (*Artéfact* 58)<sup>36</sup>. Quelques vœux fictifs s'inspirent des vœux réels, tels ceux de Simone que j'évoquais plus haut, ceux d'Irène qui reprennent un extrait de ceux de la vraie Ruth<sup>37</sup> et ceux de la Bronia fictive qui se rapprochent de ceux de la vraie Bronia<sup>38</sup> ; les autres sont de pures inventions. On peut se demander en quoi ces inventions diffèrent des souhaits réellement exprimés et quelle logique les sous-tend. Disons d'abord que les vœux inventés ne sont pas beaucoup plus lourds de signification que les vœux réels ; ces derniers valent avant tout pour le geste et non pour le contenu, et les

<sup>34</sup> Le « cœur d'Auschwitz », c'est bien sûr le carnet, mais aussi l'usine de la Union Werke, qui en est le cœur stratégique. C'est aussi le geste sublime de ces femmes, qui sont comme le cœur battant du camp.

<sup>35</sup> Les vœux de la vraie Zlatka se lisent comme suit dans la traduction du polonais au français : « Dans la vie tout passe comme une vague dans une rivière tumultueuse/Seul le vrai amour reste fidèle pour toujours/Amour/À ma chère Fani/Écrit par Zlatka/Auschwitz/12/XII/1944 ». On comprend que Leblanc ait pu trouver que les vœux de Mania, plus volontaires, plus énergiques, correspondaient davantage au tempérament fougueux de l'instigatrice du carnet.

<sup>36</sup> Le roman ne fait ici que simuler des lacunes dans le texte conservé ; celui-ci se lit comme suit dans le véritable carnet : « Quand tu seras vieille, mets tes lunettes sur ton nez, prends cet album dans ta main et lit ma signature à nouveau, ma chère Fani/Mina ».

<sup>37</sup> « Yeux bleus, lèvres rouges [...] » (*Artéfact* 50).

<sup>38</sup> « Ma belle Klara, souviens-toi : Chance, joie, liberté ! » (58).

souhaits fictifs n'échappent pas à la banalité. Tout au plus énoncent-ils un espoir presque insensé de survie et de maternité que les véritables prisonnières n'ont pas songé à articuler : ici, la fiction se trouve à combler en partie le déficit d'un réel insuffisant<sup>39</sup>. Ces femmes ne sont pas des héroïnes lançant des paroles sublimes sur les tréteaux ; ce sont des femmes ordinaires que les circonstances ont transformées en figures héroïques. Quant au « testament » de Klara, il s'agit bien sûr d'une pure fiction, puisque son modèle réel, Fania, a survécu aux camps. Mais ce testament s'inspire néanmoins de deux textes non signés qui ont été ajoutés au carnet à Ravensbrück, après la « marche de la mort » (l'un des deux est daté de janvier 1945). C'est en ce lieu et juste un peu après, en mars 1945, que Klara aurait dicté son adieu à la vie. Dans les textes réels, il est question des souffrances endurées, de la disparition d'amis, d'espoir de libération ; ce qui les rapproche du testament inventé par Leblanc (cf. *supra*), c'est leur caractère de bilan presque atone, de désespoir placide :

[Texte 1] C'est samedi 26.1.45. Tout [...] Ravensbrück. J'écris ici, sur ce papier parce qu'il n'y a plus d'anniversaires. [...]

[Texte 2] Près de moi sont Zlatka, Fania, Bronia, Hela et beaucoup de personnes que je connais. Bronia est assise et elle pleure. Elle gèle  
Mon cher Dieu, quand est-ce que viendra la fin de tout cela ? Aurons-nous vraiment un meilleur demain ? Nous sommes si jeunes et avons tellement de vie devant nous<sup>40</sup>.

« [I]l n'y a plus d'anniversaires », dit le premier texte. C'est un temps où l'on ne « jou[e] plus à l'anniversaire de Klara », où c'est la dure réalité de la mort qui plane, comme le confiait à Bélanger le frère de la jeune fêtée (*Artéfact* 110). Ainsi, faire semblant d'être simplement humain, dans les camps d'extermination, était une occupation on ne peut plus dangereuse. Entrant en contradiction avec la réalité de la survie de Fania, ce testament inventé vient en quelque sorte neutraliser le caractère exceptionnel de l'anecdote et rappeler que la bravade, la fière rébellion ne pouvaient mener, au camp, qu'à un dénouement tragique – en l'occurrence ici la mort de Klara<sup>41</sup>. À Auschwitz, la mort était la règle et le sublime, l'exception.

<sup>39</sup> C'est la justification de Leblanc (communication personnelle du 30 mars 2016).

<sup>40</sup> Originaux en polonais. Traductions disponibles à l'adresse URL suivante : [http://www.mhmc.ca/media\\_library/files/5005bb3e90707.pdf](http://www.mhmc.ca/media_library/files/5005bb3e90707.pdf).

<sup>41</sup> C'est parce qu'elle a voulu sauver le cœur que Klara aurait été battue à l'issue du transfert d'Auschwitz à Ravensbrück (150). C'est pourquoi le personnage de Dana, qui a récupéré le carnet et qui a pris la dictée du testament de Klara, en parle comme d'un « *objet maudit* » (152), preuve de la témérité coupable et de l'inconscience des signataires. En

Je reviens pour conclure au récit-cadre, celui qui impose d'entrée de jeu son caractère fictif à l'ensemble du livre. La décision de confier l'enquête à un journaliste québécois, plus de six décennies après les faits, présente bien sûr toutes sortes d'avantages pour le romancier<sup>42</sup>. Elle permet de raccrocher le passé au présent, et ainsi de relier les vivants et les morts à travers les rencontres avec les survivants de la Shoah et avec le présumé criminel de guerre Krylenko. Elle permet, de plus, de prendre le pouls de la perception d'un événement historique que l'actualité ne cesse de ramener à l'avant-plan, que ce soit par la traque de criminels de guerre, par la volonté farouche de communier au « devoir de mémoire », par le déclenchement de nouveaux génocides qui ne cessent de ramener au prototype même de l'horreur génocidaire que constitue la Shoah ou par les nouvelles qui nous proviennent régulièrement du Proche-Orient. En montrant un journaliste qui peu à peu s'extirpe de sa position d'objectivité pour se prendre à une histoire qu'il juge pourtant trop belle pour être bien réelle, Leblanc crée une sorte d'*alter ego* plus « libre », qui n'est pas tenu à la même réserve que le documentariste et qui peut même modifier des données de l'histoire réelle pour en assombrir la tonalité<sup>43</sup>. La présence de ce témoin-enquêteur bien enraciné dans le Québec contemporain – il écoute les nouvelles, lit les journaux, suit les affaires criminelles, etc. – lui offre au surplus la possibilité d'ancrer cette histoire dans un cadre sociohistorique précis<sup>44</sup>. Alors que le contexte québécois n'est pas très présent dans le film, il est essentiel dans le roman : c'est le rapport du Québec à la Shoah et à la politique israélienne actuelle qui, à travers l'enquête sur Krylenko et sur le carnet, est mis au jour, ce mélange d'agacement et de lassitude à l'égard d'une histoire trop souvent racontée, et de méfiance vis-à-vis des menées politiques d'un État juif perçu comme l'agresseur, mais cet intérêt aussi, cette curiosité pour l'histoire des survivants d'une communauté

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inventant la mort de Klara, le romancier confère une aura sombre à ce cœur autrement si « solaire ».

<sup>42</sup> Ainsi, comme la littérature française contemporaine, la proposition de Leblanc est « hors témoignage », « se t[ient] *après toutes les guerres* » (Faerber 109).

<sup>43</sup> À l'inverse, la réalité que le réalisateur a découverte lors du tournage a eu pour effet de transformer la fiction. Leblanc m'a indiqué que, dans la première version du roman, François Bélanger ne retrouvait aucune des signataires du carnet, car le cinéaste était convaincu qu'il était impossible, si longtemps après et avec les seuls prénoms pour indice, d'y parvenir. L'enquête menée pour le film lui a donné tort, et il a modifié le roman pour faire en sorte que le journaliste retrouve une de ces femmes (communication personnelle du 30 mars 2016).

<sup>44</sup> Dans le film, c'est le troisième niveau du récit, l'activité pédagogique menée avec les enfants de l'École Lambert-Closse, qui assure un relatif ancrage dans une réalité montréalaise contemporaine.

que l'on côtoie chaque jour à Montréal. Le roman prend acte du fait que la métropole est l'une des grandes villes juives du monde, l'une de celles où les rescapés ont cru pouvoir reprendre une vie normale, mais où ont également été accueillis les bourreaux. Un roman comme *Artéfact* montre que le Québec et Montréal ne sont pas, comme le laisse entendre à un moment le narrateur, retirés du monde et de l'histoire (*Artéfact* 35), mais y sont plutôt étroitement reliés et, en ce qui concerne la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, sans doute plus par les conséquences d'Auschwitz que par les faits d'armes des soldats canadiens sur le front ouest. Ainsi, avec les rescapés, la guerre est venue à nous, s'est lovée dans notre imaginaire, bien davantage au fond que nous ne sommes allés à elle.

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**MONTREAL JEWS, EASTERN EUROPEAN SURVIVORS,  
AND THE INTERGENERATIONAL LEGACY  
OF THE HOLOCAUST IN NANCY RICHLER'S  
*THE IMPOSTER BRIDE***

**Abstract**

Nancy Richler's novel *The Imposter Bride* (2013) portrays a survivor's story against the background of a global conflict, demonstrating how public and private interests are intermingled. The postwar Jewish Montreal offers a fitting backdrop for the discussion about the Canadian exclusionary immigration policy, strong anti-communist sentiments, and anti-Semitism during the 1930s. The conflicts within the Jewish community and the reserved attitude of the Canadian Jews to the Holocaust survivors constitute another tenet of the narrative. The daughter's quest to uncover the truth about her mother's past shifts the focus from public to private. It also provides narrative explorations on the nature of loss, grief, abandonment, and maternal absence. The narrative attention on mother-daughter relationship interrogates the question about individual happiness and family responsibility, rejection and acceptance, in the context of the Holocaust. The juxtaposition of public concerns and the survivors' stories prompts the discussion about history and memory, representation and interpretation, morality and meaning.

**Keywords:** Canadian Jewish literature, postwar Jewish Montreal, the Holocaust survivor, mother-daughter relationship

**Résumé**

Le roman de Nancy Richler *The Imposter Bride* (2013) décrit l'histoire d'une survivante dans le contexte d'un conflit mondial, montrant comment les intérêts publics et privés sont entremêlés. Le Montréal juif d'après-guerre offre une toile de fond propice à la discussion sur la politique d'immigration canadienne, les forts sentiments anticommunistes ainsi que sur l'antisémitisme des années 1930. Les



conflits au sein de la communauté juive et l'attitude réservée des Juifs Canadiens vis-à-vis des survivants de l'Holocauste constituent un autre fil rouge du récit. La quête de la fille pour découvrir la vérité à propos du passé de sa mère déplace le poids de la narration du public vers le privé. Elle fournit également des explorations narratives sur la nature de la perte, du chagrin, de l'abandon et de l'absence maternelle. L'attention portée par le récit à la relation mère-fille pose la question du bonheur individuel et de la responsabilité familiale, du rejet et de l'acceptation, dans le contexte de l'Holocauste. La juxtaposition des affaires publiques et des histoires des survivants alimente la discussion sur l'histoire et la mémoire, la représentation et l'interprétation, la moralité et la signification.

**Mots-clés :** littérature juive canadienne, Montréal juif d'après-guerre, survivants de l'Holocauste, relation mère-fille

## Introduction

Even though Canada was spared the direct trauma of the Holocaust, the genocide's legacy lingered in the stories of refugees and survivors, who arrived in Canada with few belongings but an abundance of haunting memories. Nancy Richler's novel, *The Imposter Bride* (2012), portrays a survivor's story against the background of a global conflict, demonstrating how public and private interests are intermingled. The Jewish Montreal provides a context in which political particularism, the exclusionary immigration policy, strong anti-communist sentiments, and anti-Semitism during the 1930s question the validity of humanitarian considerations and legitimacy of the government's discretionary policies. The 1939 government's rejection to take in the Jewish refugees, which forced the MS St. Louis to head back toward Europe, is echoed in the post-war government's reluctance to admit the Holocaust survivors. According to N. Kelley and M. Trebilcock, "[b]etween 1939 and 1945, while more than 40,000 British nationals, more than 30,000 American citizens, and 15,000 nationals from other countries were admitted to Canada, fewer than 5,000 Jewish refugees were offered sanctuary" (265). The fate of the Jewish refugees reflects a broader trend in Canadian politics, which resulted in a deliberate denial of admission, citizenship, and residence to those applicants who were at odds, on the grounds of race or political sympathies, with the Anglo-Canadian norm. The growing public interest in easing the existing regulations, in accordance with the country's ideals, led to a more limited exercise of discretion in Canadian courts and generated extra attention to the issue of individual liberties.

The daughter's quest to uncover the truth about her mother's past shifts the focus from public to private, revealing the further layers of the narrative which reflect conflicts within the Jewish community. The institutional bias against the Jews is discursively reproduced in the reserved attitude of the Canadian Jews to the Holocaust survivors. As the mother's story unfolds, the massive trauma induced by war finds its representation in the distorted family relations, which affect the next generation represented by the children of the Holocaust survivors. The daughter's need to know the truth about her mother involves the question of memory: individual, collective, and, to recall Marianne Hirsch's concept of "postmemory," inherited. The inability to access her mother's past generates anxiety about the daughter's identity, resulting in the cognitive gap between her own self and the outside world. Richler's novel further complicates the task by removing the figure of the mother altogether from the daughter's life, leaving her to confront the situation through a lens of absence, loss, and muteness. The simultaneity of both wanting to come closer to the mother's past and the urge to detach herself from it informs the daughter's choices. Having a daughter piece together her mother's story forwards the notion of a vicarious perception of trauma, whereas the narrative focus on family relationships stresses the intergenerational nature of the Holocaust legacy. The juxtaposition of public concerns and individual stories allows a narrative background for a discussion about history and memory, representation and interpretation, morality and meaning, all of which are reflected in human choices and their consequences.

Richler's novel, which focuses on the survivor's story, is an example of the major mode of American and Canadian Holocaust fiction. *The Imposter Bride*, however, does not provide extensive detail or contextualization concerning the Holocaust, nor does it aspire to document the very experience in the form of factual writing. In its representation, the author evades direct references to war trauma or graphic depictions of violence, allowing only occasional flashbacks. Instead, her prose is elusive and highly lyrical. Its poetic quality results from the narrative gaps and omissions; likewise, important moments, such as the death of Lily's child or her decision to become a picture bride, are only hinted at, indicating the sites of pain and misery hidden beneath the surface. The two parallel narrative strands, which tell the mother's and daughter's stories, intermingle in a way that suggests continuance and persistence in spite of the past trauma. However, the fact that they seldom meet or coalesce signals the problems with human bonding, which are shared among the Holocaust survivors. The concept of muteness, which to a large extent informs Richler's writing, does not pretend to become its guiding force even if "the Holocaust sometimes seems to demand [it] as the only way of adequately representing it, but which would finally eradicate the catastrophe from history and memory altogether" (Budick xvii). Richler's

novel contributes to the genre of the Holocaust fiction not only by providing a female-centered, transgenerational narrative but also by allowing a fictional entry into the early postwar Montreal Jewish community.

### **The Postwar Jewish Montreal**

*The Imposter Bride* is set in postwar years in Montreal, where a large group of the Holocaust survivors come to seek refuge. It opens in 1946 at a wedding in a Jewish community and introduces the titular bride, Lily Azerov – a refugee from Poland, who comes to Canada via Palestine. The Montreal Jewish community is presented in its richness and variety, representing various walks of life, languages, and geographical spaces. There are Polish Jews, Lily and Ida Pearl's family from Krakow, Russian Jews, Bella and Eisenberg's wife, Belgian Jews, uncle Chaim who is in a diamond business in Antwerp, Israeli Jews such as Ida's sister Sonya, and Canadian Jews such as the Kramers. The diversity of the Jewish community is communicated through languages: the Jews from Eastern Europe speak Polish, Russian and Yiddish, uncle Chaim's family in Antwerp speaks Flemish and Yiddish, and the Canadian Jews speak English, French, and Hebrew. The most important role, however, is assigned to Yiddish, which is understood and spoken only by the older generation. The text is peppered with the Yiddish words, which convey the nostalgia for the past, as they refer to the celebration of the Jewish traditions: khupah, bris, siddur, Torah, Haftarah, Passover Seder, Rosh Hashana, dreidel, tsimmes, l'chaim, kipah, shiva, a gut yor, shul, and family life—Bubby, babkes, tukhes, Nu, tzedekah, and toit. There is a Polish saying: "NIE BYLO NAS, BYL LAS. Nie bedzie nas, bedzie las," (Richler 79) and a word "jojko." The Yiddish and Polish words are evocative both of the culture that is gone and of the thriving Yiddish tradition within Judaism, despite the experiences of dislocation, immigration, and the Holocaust. Yiddish is the language reminiscent of a family home and childhood. Nathan's wedding brings back the memory of Bella's shtetl life in Berdichev: "It was a gloomy way to go to a wedding, Bella couldn't help thinking. She had been danced through the streets to her own wedding. She had heard the singing and clapping of her family and friends from a distance and then growing louder and louder as they approached her parents' home" (Richler 13). Beside happy memories, there are the heart-breaking ones, such as the death of Bella's children from hunger and disease "during the civil war that followed the revolution in Russia" (Richler 145). Nowadays, spoken only by older family members, Yiddish has changed its function of communicating information into obscuring it. For example, Carrie, Ruth's friend, "understood Yiddish because that was the language her parents used between themselves when they wanted to have a

conversation that Carrie and her sisters wouldn't be able to understand" (Richler 89). Carrie's knowledge of Yiddish is fragmentary and passive, she may understand what is being said but she does not need or use it in her daily life. Without her grandparents and parents around, this knowledge will most probably wither in time.

A varying degree of devoutness is another factor that testifies to the heterogeneous nature of the Jewish community. The narrative portrays observant and traditional Jews such as Reuben, Ruth's husband, agnostics despite a religious upbringing such as Ruth and her friend Carrie, and atheists like Nina, who finally finds her place with another woman in France. In Russia, Bella was a socialist, and so was her husband Joseph, who gave up the prayer, which he resumed in Canada. On coming to Canada, Lily sarcastically observes: "Every second Jew she met in Montreal claimed to have been a revolutionary back in Russia... And the richer they were, these Jews in Montreal, the more radical their glorious, revolutionary pasts" (Richler 81-82). An adherence to traditional upbringing can be observed during Lily's wedding when Ida Pearl Krakauer does not approve of mixed dancing but compliments the traditional dress code: "And so my mother put on her hat with the veil that covered half her face, pulled on the long gloves without which she never ventured out into the sun" (Richler 20). Ida's daughter, Elka, in turn, is confused when talking to Sol: "Elka had suddenly become aware that she was alone with a man for the first time in her life, an older man, no less – he had to be twenty-three at the very least – and in a situation that, had she asked her mother, would have been expressly and unambiguously forbidden to her" (Richler 10). There are some families that are more kosher than the Kramers: "cupcakes that Elka had bought specially from the kosher bakery because some of the children in my class were more kosher than we were and wouldn't eat the cupcakes with the pink icing and silver sprinkles from Woolworth's that were my favourite" (Richler 16). The differences in religiousness are not presented as obstacles in contacts among the representatives of various groups, nor are they depicted as the probable causes of their rivalry. The younger generation is also portrayed to exhibit varied degrees of piousness, thus upholding the claim to continuous diversity within Judaism.

The novel explores the relationship between the Montreal Jews and the Holocaust survivors, which shows the hierarchy that validates a lack of respect and scorn towards the newcomers. Since Canada refuses to accept the Jewish Holocaust refugees, those who are determined to come resort to other means, such as the mail-order bride service, which is viewed as a purely financial exchange:

And he, in turn, wasn't expected to love her, just to marry her and stay married for as long as it took to slip her through a crack in Canada's doors, which had not yet reopened to refugees who were Jewish. The marriage, Sol's first, was to be an act of charity. An act of charity for which he'd receive a small payment, a token of appreciation, nothing lavish, just enough to give him the start he'd been needing, the leg up that other young men, through no merit of their own, had received from family or other lucky breaks (Richler 8).

In Israel, Mrs. Zlotnik arranges papers, marriages, jobs and "gets richer with every refugee that she helps" (Richler 38). The prejudiced relationship between the Montreal Jews and the Holocaust survivors can be observed when the two groups meet: Nathan instantly assumes Lily's linguistic ignorance whereas "[h]er English was good, near fluent, in fact. It was her anger at that moment that made her conceal it, sudden anger at his assumption that it was she who was the more ignorant of the two – she who spoke five languages and could get by in several others, who had smuggled lives across borders he wouldn't be able to find on a map" (Richler 5). Sol reveals his own limitations by showing how little he knows about Poland: "'I didn't know they had pansies in Poland,' Sol said, amusing himself, if not Lily, with the cleverness of his double entendre. 'Everything you have here we had,' she said" (Richler 82). As there are many more Holocaust survivors in Montreal like Lily, Nathan has made up his mind about them: "He had met greenhorns before, knew their nodding at wrong moments, their delayed smiles, awkward laughter, baffled eyes" (Richler 6). The condescending tone and haughtiness is typical of an informed insider, who is, on the one hand, curious and sympathetic towards the new immigrants, but on the other hand feels uneasy about their presence. Sol describes a new employee, who is a refugee from Poland, with a similar degree of derision and contempt: "'He doesn't know his ass from his elbow. How to dress. How to speak. Nothing. And I'm supposed to train him in.' To treat him as my equal was the actual instruction he had understood when Eisenberg introduced the man as Sol's new partner" (Richler 81). The newcomers pose an economic threat to the workers since they compete for similar jobs, but being more desperate and inexperienced, they tend to accept disadvantageous working conditions, thus spoiling the labour market. Moreover, they are the living reminders about the trauma that many want to forget since their presence unsettles others who have not gone through the Holocaust. Evoking sympathy and pity, but at the same time guilt and angst, the Holocaust survivors upset the comfort and security of the local Jewish community, which results in their ambiguous treatment.

The similar hostility, which is noticeable between the Montreal Jews and the Holocaust survivors, is demonstrated among other groups. Ida Pearl's life in Canada is marked by the decline of her social position. Her first glimpse at

Canada reveals a land far away from the memory of bustling European cities in which she grew up:

She had come to a wilderness, she realized as the train rolled through an endless monotony of trees, and it was one that had neither the magic of the fairytale forests she had imagined as a child, nor the promise of redemption implicit in the wildernesses of Exodus and other biblical ordeals. There was no magic here, she thought. Certainly no promise of redemption of any sort. There was just forest, trees stretching as far as the eye could see, relieved now and then by outcroppings of rock, forbidding escarpments and the occasional bog or lake (Richler 107).

A marriage to a Montreal native, Arthur Krakauer, ends up in his desertion of a young wife and a baby. Not only does Ida suffer from humiliation when she must face motherhood alone, but her diamond business is dependent on the generosity of her wealthy Antwerp relatives. The memory of the past splendour, however exaggerated, allows her to face the difficulties of her present life. “She thinks no one’s up to our standard, and hasn’t noticed, of course, that we’re not up to it either. Our standard, I mean. That our situation in life, the circumstances in which we find ourselves are not exactly—”(Richler 36), admits her daughter. Sol detects Ida’s pretentiousness and declares: ““So ... your mother’s Belgian, then?” No wonder she was such a snob. They were almost as bad as the German Jews, the Belgians, thinking they were better, more cultured than their Russian and eastern European brethren” (Richler 39). In a similar way, Ida’s sister, Sonya, complains about life in Israel:

They were litanies of complaint, nothing more, about the humid heat in Tel Aviv in the summer, the damp in the winter, and the ailments those conditions produced in Sonya, her husband, Leo, and their ever-growing brood of children; about the lack of culture in Palestine – she’d been a poet back in Poland and had belonged to a literary circle there; about the British, the Arabs, the price of eggs, the growing violence... (Richler 36).

What emerges from the discussion is the stereotypical division between more cultured and assimilated Western Jews and their less sophisticated and more traditional Eastern European brethren. Putting aside cultural differences, the experience of the Holocaust that is a relived and remembered trauma, not merely a communicated fact, further complicates the relationships within the Jewish community.

In the 1950s one can observe a shift, as Canadian Jews become more comfortable financially and socially. Successful members of the Jewish community in Montreal abandon old downtown neighbourhoods and move to modern flats in the western suburbs, proving their viability and access to new social and economic possibilities. It can be seen how through hard work and

persistence Jewish immigrants advance socially, for example, “Sam Eisenberg, the Button King of Montreal” (Richler 6). His success, however, is achieved at the expense of his poorly paid workers: in Russia, Joseph Kramer worked with metal, in Canada he sorted buttons: “That was the first job he found when they disembarked in Montreal, and it was a fine job for a newcomer, as it required neither English nor French and paid almost a living wage to anyone who could stand the hours” (Richler 14). His son, Nathan, does not want to work for Eisenberg anymore and moves to the metal business once he is discharged from the air force:

More and more metals were being released from war production every day. Steel, iron, aluminium – everything that had been in such short supply. And more and more customers were lining up to buy them. It wouldn’t be long before he would need his own truck for deliveries, rather than borrowing and renting as he’d been doing until now. And soon he would also need an office of his own. A rented corner with a desk and telephone wouldn’t do for much longer (Richler 28).

His financial success allows the family to move to a bigger place in the more prestigious suburbs. The children of immigrants obtain a thorough education and become professionals, such as Ruthie, who is a chemist, and her friend Carrie who becomes “the first female among our cohort to graduate McGill law school” (Richler 112). Ruth’s recollections of growing up in Jewish Montreal include only one example of racial discrimination: “‘Well done,’ the girl said. I felt a glow of accomplishment and external approval beginning to warm me. ‘For a couple of Jews,’ she added with smirk” (Richler 44). “We lived in an almost entirely Jewish world. Our school was Jewish, our neighbourhood was Jewish – so much so that some people called it Côte-St-Jew – and I had not encountered that sort of comment before” (Richler 44), explains Ruth. In comparison with the tensions portrayed between groups within the Jewish Canadian diaspora, little narrative insistence on the issue of racial discrimination within the Canadian society may result from a lack of extensive contact with other ethnic groups. Thus, the Montreal Jews are presented as living in close-knit communities built around a distinctive culture that has limited links with the Canadian society at large.

### **The Survivors’ Stories**

Lily Kramer is the imposter bride who in 1944 Poland steals an identity of a dead girl, Lily Azerov, together with “a pair of woollen socks; a notebook filled with dreams and other scribblings; a single frosted stone” (Richler 7). As a sign of respect and her parting gift:

She placed her open hand on the smooth, cold brow, passed it over sightless eyes – greyish blue like her own – and brought down the lids. The eyes would be covered. That was the least and most she felt she could do. She could bring down the lids of the eyes and hold them for a moment. This she did for the girl whose future she was stealing. And then she fled (Richler 7).

Lily Azerov is really Yanna Marissa – a Polish Jew whose family benefited from their closeness to the eastern border; her father and husband smuggle deficient goods and, at the time of war, people. The dead girl, Lily Azerov, is their client, a victim of war circumstances, in which Yanna's husband plays a questionable part. As Yanna loses her baby daughter Tonya together with the rest of her family during World War II, a new identity card (presumably a parting gift from her husband who then disappears from her life) is to help her secure a passage across borders: "And then to move, to join the mass of refugees flooding west in the wake of the liberating army, to fold herself into that mass and begin the life that might, in time, become her own" (Richler 7). Wartime Poland, Palestine, present-day Israel, and post-war Jewish Montreal map the protagonist's escape from the horrors of war and her search for ordinary life and happiness. Her first stop is Palestine, but the place fails to evoke positive feelings in the new immigrant, so Lily/Yanna decides to move to Canada, hence her arranged marriage to Sol Kramer. However, when the relatives of the real Lily Azerov happen to hear about their cousin's wedding, the imposter must decide what to do with her new life.

Assuming a new name in the wake of a trauma is not uncommon; however, stealing a dead person's identity is a morally questionable act. Ida, however, uses Eastern European folk wisdom to justify Lily's behaviour: "It wasn't uncommon, after all, for a person to change her name if she had escaped from death. It's not a custom here, I know, but where we were from, if you recovered from a serious illness or escaped death in some other way, it wasn't thought to be such a bad idea to change your name. To confuse death – you understand?" (Richler 147). When Ida's sister Sonya discovers that Lily is not who she claims to be, she maintains: "She's still a living soul, after all, a living, breathing, Jewish soul that managed to escape an inferno the likes of which you and I cannot understand. I would never expose her, never turn her in, and was prepared to reassure her completely" (Richler 36). Representing those directly unaffected by the Holocaust, both Ida and Sonya communicate the approval of Lily's decisions, without manifesting the need to examine the driving forces behind them. Thus, the suggestion follows that the fact that she is a Holocaust survivor may be sufficient to exempt her from hypothetical guilt. Both women refrain from judgment because the circumstances are such that prohibit logical reasoning, suspending human ability to tell right from wrong. Therefore, they avoid simplistic evaluations, pronouncing a clear-cut



distinction between good and evil void. What is left, though, is muteness, which, in Horowitz's words, "comes to represent something essential about the nature of the event itself. The radical negativity of the Holocaust ruptures the fabric of history and memory, emptying both narrative and life of meaning" (*Voicing* 38).

Lily's choices invite readers to discuss their ethical side: stealing a dead girl's belongings, assuming a dead person's identity, lying about who she is, abandoning her little baby and new family, not seeking contact with her daughter, and starting a new family for the third time. The author presents morally dubious actions, which are set in the still less moral context of the Holocaust, interrogating the limits to which the aim to ensure one's survival should still be given priority. An act of survival, which involves Lily's adoption of a false identity, opens up a discussion about rebuilding one's life after the trauma of war, questioning the methods and limitations of the process. A moral enquiry about a mother who abandons her child is further complicated by her experience of the Holocaust, which problematizes the pronouncement of judgment. In a paradoxical way, the strategy that enables her survival during the time of war, turns out to be detrimental to her attempts at rebuilding her life after. In order to survive, she has to undermine her ethical standards, which later proves to be an insurmountable obstacle in striking a meaningful relationship with her husband and daughter. The problem of Lily's moral ambiguity is located in the "grey zone," to use Primo Levi's term, a realm that "possesses an incredibly complicated internal structure, and contains within itself enough to confuse our need to judge" (Rosenfeld 91). Lily's ethical choices, or lack thereof, render an issue of agency and thus accountability problematic. Moreover, her decisions are impossible to evaluate since they transcend generally accepted notions of good and evil. They are, to use Lawrence Langer's term, "choiceless choices," which he characterizes as "crucial decisions [that] did not reflect options between life and death, but between one form of abnormal response and another, both imposed by a situation that was in no way of the victim's own choosing" (Langer 72). That is why other characters, including her own daughter, do not pass judgment on Lily and try to understand her motives.

The experience of the Holocaust is communicated through Lily's story, which is fragmented and full of omissions. When Sol sees Lily for the first time at the Windsor station, he thinks: "A broken life, a frightened woman, a marriage that would bind him – however briefly – to grief" (Richler 7-8). Lily's "grey dress too sombre amid the bright summer colours, its classic cut too severe among all the wide skirts and needless flourishes that flaunted the end of wartime restrictions" (Richler 12) paints a stark contrast to a Canadian "girl with yellow hair and a wide red mouth. "Sorry, hon," she'd exhaled. Her eyes were blue, her hair crimped into countless perfect, yellow waves"

(Richler 12). Sol's words become prophetic because of the later grief that Lily causes Nathan and Ruth, unexpectedly abandoning a new husband and their two-month-old baby daughter and just leaving behind a short note: "Forgive me. Yours, Lily" (Richler 21). Nathan, however, finds his own unsettling pull in Lily's predicament: "But it was the tension in her, a feral tension, part hunger, part fear. It was that which had quickened his blood" (Richler 6). Narrated in the first person, Lily's fractured account of her war ordeal does not end with the armistice. She tries to live but "[i]t was as if the world outside her bedroom was a stilted play she'd walked into and couldn't walk out of again, a dream she couldn't wake from, where everything was menacing in an intangible, slightly surreal way" (Richler 24). She can hardly call it life, "this pale afterlife of her own existence" (Richler 5). Exhibiting typical symptoms that have been recognized in survivors of traumatic situations, Lily is always tired, sad, has no appetite, and suffers from insomnia. As "nothing about her existence felt normal" (Richler 24), she chooses to retreat to solitude. The words that are used to describe her predicament, such as "broken" (Richler 8), "frightened" (Richler 8), "grief" (Richler 8), "severe" (Richler 9), "tension" (Richler 61), "hunger" (Richler 7), "surreal" (Richler 25), "gaping emptiness" (Richler 62), and "bleak" (Richler 62) indicate psychological scars that do not heal, but fester. Suppressing the trauma she sustained during the Holocaust results in her inability to distance herself from her past. Moreover, the lies she tells prevent her from mourning the dead that might eventually bring some comfort and closure. The tension between her traumatic memories and the inability to talk about them leaves her mute "because the condition of genocide renders the individual subject unable to articulate his or her own experience (we cannot narrate our own death) and because this particular death is unspeakable" (Horowitz, *Voicing* 39). By putting her mother's story together, it is Ruth who manages to restore a partial wholeness of Lily's life. Thus, the healing effect of the narrative is revealed even if its ending may not meet the daughter's expectations.

In a metaphoric way, the painful memory of war is given an account in the dead girl's diary: "In your cities I'm a rat scurrying beneath the surface of your life. I hide in your sewers. I infect your dreams with pestilence. Vermin, you call me. Insect. Cur. Swine. Once I was a girl" (Richler 23). The words "vermin," "rat," "infect," and "pestilence" are evocative of the Nazi antisemitic propaganda, whose aim was to portray Jews as a sub-human race and, thus, legitimize their annihilation. The repetition of the possessive pronoun "your" may refer to the German perpetrators who masterminded and finalized the genocide, however, the direct passage about "the indifferent Polish sky" (Richler 23) signals the local Polish community who stayed partially indifferent to the extermination of the Polish Jews. By juxtaposing "I," the victim, with "you," the war criminals, the narrator draws attention to

the idea of responsibility and punishment in the context of an armed conflict. However, the author further complicates the case having Lily assert: “‘Don’t believe it when people tell you no one would help us. People helped us. Good people.’ She paused. ‘Even not-so-good people. They helped us’” (Richler 174). So, the accusations about the Polish communal indifference are countered by the assertion of instances of individual help, which often cost the local people their own lives and the lives of their families since nowhere else in Europe but in Poland was helping the Jews punishable by death.

As Lily is not there to talk to Ruth about the war, the closest her daughter comes to understanding her mother’s trauma is through her teacher, Mr. Czernovitz. Mr. C, as he is called, is Ruth’s teacher in a Jewish day school and a newcomer: “his Hebrew [that] was still infected with the Yiddish inflections and pronunciations of Europe, entirely different, that is, from the Hebrew we spoke or aspired to speak, which was the modern – which is to say, Israeli – form of the language” (Richler 63). Criticized for his archaic speech, Mr. Czernovitz tends to break into a silent cry or drown in his own thoughts, which is immediately taken advantage of by the unruly class. Students show no respect for the vulnerable teacher: “He had called us to attention and we had ignored him. We had made him aware in countless other ways how little we respected him, how unpopular he was as a teacher, referring to him by initial only when we were talking amongst ourselves, as if he didn’t even have a name” (Richler 65). Trying to restore order, “he was no longer calling us children in English or in Hebrew, but yelling at us in Yiddish, a language only half of us understood, his face red with anger, the vein in his forehead engorged and hammering in a visible and disturbing way” (Richler 63). Mr. Czernovitz is not the only one who “exhibits certain peculiarities of behavior related to the war, problems with nerves, temper and mood” (Richler 64), as Mira’s father would watch her sleep, Helen’s mother hides and hoards food, and Lena’s father has a temper. But, since he is a teacher, parents feel uncomfortable and write a petition: “to enlist [...] support in having Mr. C removed from our classroom and shifted to a job that was less sensitive than classroom teaching. No one was suggesting he be fired...” (Richler 65). Then, he vanishes and never comes back. When a new teacher comes, students quickly forget about Mr. C, but Ruth remembers one of his outbursts:

I didn’t understand the exact content of his tirade – he had switched into Yiddish – but I understood his fury, his outrage that it was me and my ignorant and boorish ilk that he was forced to teach instead of the vastly superior boys and girls who had perished fifteen years earlier in Europe – no one ever died in Europe, they perished – and even though I knew he was damaged, and that that was the real cause of his tirade... (Richler 65).

Mr. C's erratic and startling behaviour provides a glimpse into her mother's psyche, as both are the Holocaust survivors. Years later, Ruth meets his son and admits: "I had been part of the young, healthy pack who had driven his ruined father from our sight so we wouldn't feel his ruination as our own?" (Richler 140). Mr. Czernovitz's story shows how the Montreal Jews reject the prewar, Eastern European heritage, deeming the Yiddish language and culture old-fashioned as well as redundant, if not impeding, in the process of assimilation. In the postwar years, the Yiddish accent is reminiscent of loss, pointing to the places that have become deserted and silent, whereas angst exhibited by Mr. Czernovitz and other Holocaust survivors is uncomfortable for Canadian Jews, who sympathize with them but would rather have them deal with their trauma in private. Weighing their loyalties to a multiethnic society, the Canadian Jews did not want the public opinion to see them as being interested solely in the Jewish problems, such as the genocide of the Jews. Hence, the attempts to universalize the experience of the Holocaust or their reluctance to talk about it at all.

### **The Intergenerational Legacy of the Holocaust**

Unravelling and pulling together the strands of the mother's and daughter's memory constitutes the plot of the novel. Weaving them back into the fabric of narrative is the task which is informed by the trope of muteness. The idea of muteness is represented thematically by the characters' lack of knowledge, mother's absence, the child's feeling of loss, an inability to communicate, a forgotten language (Yiddish), lies, blank pages of the journal, and the need to write. Linguistically, it is characterized by a narrative concern to silences, omissions, gaps, unuttered words, understatements, and imagined conversations. Sara Horowitz emphasizes the importance of the figure of muteness, "[i]n addition to providing a meaningful point of entry for exploring Holocaust fiction... The trope of muteness is linked to the complicated and allied acts of testimony, memory, and interpretation, which inform all post-Holocaust reflections, fictional and historical alike" (*Voicing* 38). Thus, Lily's disappearance has never been a family secret, as "they had each recounted their own version of my mother's departure, from which I, in turn, had created my own, the main point of which was that one afternoon during the second month of my life my mother had walked out the front door, ostensibly for a quart of milk, and simply not returned" (Richler 19), explains Ruth. At the same time, her narrative voice shifts from the third person to the first person, marking a private and an individual character of her quest. As Ruth does not get to know her mother, she does not learn to miss her: "In a way it was as if she had never existed for me. I didn't miss her, had never missed her. I would

not have known what to miss. Her absence was more a background to my life than anything else” (Richler 18). In their house, there is nothing to remind Ruth of her mother except the journal and an uncut diamond. It is the first gift, a small rock on Ruth’s sixth birthday, that opens the door to the girl’s fancy, “[a]nd now, for the first time, I wanted more” (Richler 19). Ruth’s imagination adds to the speculations about the motives of her mother’s choices: “Maybe she did something so terrible that she couldn’t recognize the person who did that as herself” (Richler 148), or “[m]aybe she felt she didn’t have a right to [Ruth]. To any of it ... [Ruth’s] father’s love, his name, his family, the new apartment, the expensive coat ...” (Richler 148). During the war, Yanna/Lily makes a choice to keep her baby daughter and, following the baby’s death, the mother blames herself for that decision. So, with another daughter, she thinks that if she leaves her in the loving hands of her husband’s family, the girl will be better off. Ruth’s awaited meeting with her mother results in an awkward silence – a few words are exchanged and some painful memories recalled, but the reunion does not bring answers that she sought and hoped for, nor does it bring closure. Their awkward *tête-à-tête* lacks spontaneous happiness, but is instead full of omissions and suppressed emotions. There are feelings on both sides but they are as complex and unsettling as Lily’s complicated life. Their encounter implies an inability to bridge the gap between the survivor and non-survivor, whereas the failure in communication reveals just the measure of that gap. The author, however, avoids judgment by having her protagonists subdue their emotions and restrain their urges to know at all costs. Why ask, the conclusion arises, when the definite answer is not available. What fragmentary moments of truth allow is only a fleeting moment of connection between the two women, which also signals the possibility of an ordinary existence after the trauma of war, when nothing can be brought to a close.

In theory, a mother-daughter bond allows a relatively safe site of memory exchange, validating the claim that the child’s first memories are formed and transmitted in the context of the family. Without such a dialogue, as in the case of this novel, family memories would be lost forever. While Ruth is trying to assemble fragmented pieces of her mother’s life into a narrative memory, Lily does not assist her daughter in the process of recuperating the past. Being absent from her daughter’s life, the mother wants to spare Ruth the burden of her memories, which proves futile since they persist in Ruth’s life in a form of, what Marianne Hirsch calls, “postmemory” – the relationship that the ‘generation after’ bears to the personal, collective and cultural trauma of those who came before – to experiences they ‘remember’ only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up” (5). The exploration of the second generation’s post-memory, which manifests itself in the daughter’s need to know her mother’s story, constitutes an important tenet of Richler’s story. “Hirsch has proposed the term “postmemory” to designate the

relation of the second generation to the experience of their parents – a mediated, second-degree memory that involves both a desire for identification with the survivor/victims and a recognition of distance from their experience” (Suleiman 179). While Ruth is tracking the slightest vestiges of her mother’s presence, the elusive nature of memory is conveyed in the image of loss and absence, physical and psychological, allowing for various interpretations to take shape. Even if the daughter’s need to discover family history is only partially satisfied, her quest signifies the importance to engage with the family’s past.

Lily Azerov’s notebook, which is delivered by her daughter to the archives at Yad Vashem, marks a symbolic completion of her story but not its closing, as the archives remain open to exploration by the next generations, thus preserving the memory of the Holocaust. The second notebook, in which there is no writing, symbolizes the inability to find the right words to talk about the trauma of war. Silence honours the dead whereas emptiness refers to the moral vacuum and lack of purpose that permeate the protagonist’s postwar life. For the survivors, writing a new chapter, both in the journal and in life, proves challenging if not futile. Language is used in both journals to imply the idea of loss: Yiddish represents the speakers who are dead and the world that is gone, whereas the blank pages of the journal correspond to the fate of war victims, whose lives never had a chance to develop since they were abruptly terminated. Sara Horowitz sees the two diaries as evocative of the restorative power of art, which is recognized “as the only ethical place to negotiate the absent spaces of the past” (Richler 222). The gifts of rocks that Ruth receives on her birthdays are the proof of her mother’s existence and an urge to get to know more about her whereabouts. In fact, the stones represent Lily’s spiritual presence and physical absence, as they recall the stones that Jews leave on the graves of their loved ones. The small rocks also refer to the uncut diamond, which Lily Kramer first steals from the real Lily and then leaves behind for her daughter. One can observe a relationship between the two metaphors: in order to cut the diamond into beauty, the artist must get to know the diamond’s “inner landscape.” Similarly, the journal’s story cannot be completed until it is experienced, remembered, recounted, and shared. The way the uncut diamond bears silent witness to Lily’s story, the unwritten journal bears witness to the desire to reach into those silences and communicate what is witnessed, releasing it for others to experience.

Nancy Richler’s novel presents the tragic inheritance of World War II through the gendered lens. The predominance of female narrative voices is the result of the war, which robs the families of husbands and fathers. Women are the survivors, like Yanna/Lily, and assume the roles of those who restore what is left of their family ties. Mother-daughter tandems, such as Lily and her daughter Ruth, Ida Pearl and her daughter Elka, Bella Kramer and her

daughter Nina, increase the dynamics of the narrative by, on the one hand, stressing the differences based on the generational divide, and on the other hand, demonstrating various realizations of mother's love. The mothers who are the Holocaust survivors, Andrea Lieber observes, "present a radical departure from the stereotypical over-nurturing, boundariless "Jewish Mother" of earlier American Jewish fiction in that these survivor-mothers are largely defined by their inability to nurture" (143). Engaging in a family story, whose central figures are mothers and daughters, allows a perspective that differs from the male-centred Holocaust accounts by shifting the focus onto what is intimate and private, not global or universal. An adoption of a woman's standpoint questions the assumption of the male perspective as representative of the experience of all Holocaust victims. Articulated through an act of personal memory, which is a vital constituent of collective memory, her story defies the boundaries of the national canon. At the same time, though, her characterization is limited by the patriarchal frame in how she represents and communicates her own story as a woman. Gendering the Holocaust does not result in creating a secondary hierarchy that would dilute the victim-oppressor dichotomy or engage in the dialectics of the feminist discourse, rather it enriches our understanding of what happened during World War II and how its aftermath has continued to affect the lives of the survivors and their families. In Clementi's words, "focusing on gender and the minutiae of intimate family portraits [should be viewed] as a productive, not detractive, way to observe devastating effects of the genocide. The focus on the singular, personal, and domestic allows us to trace the genocide's rippling impacts on the daily lives of its victims" (4). The presence of female protagonists does not only draw attention to the viability of the concept of family in the wake of the Holocaust trauma, but also questions bloodline as its primary carrier. As the story shows, fragmented and damaged in the time of war, the postwar family must take time to reinvent itself, with women acting as important agents in the process.

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**LES ITALIENS DE MONTRÉAL, LA SECONDE GUERRE  
MONDIALE ET LE FASCISME :  
TRANSFERTS CULTURELS ET LITTÉRAIRES**

**Abstract**

The aim of this study is to analyse the behaviour of the Italian community in Montreal during World War II and evaluate the impact of the strategies implemented by Canada in reaction to marches supporting fascism and Mussolini's policy. The analysis of Filippo Salvatore's play *La Fresque de Mussolini* (1985) will demonstrate how the Italian-Montreal author has reconstructed in its dramatic piece the history of the iconic fresco from the Italian church Nostra Signora della Difesa built in 1910 in the Little Italy of Montreal.

**Keywords:** Italo-Quebécois; Second World War; fascism; theatre; Mussolini fresco

**Résumé**

Nous nous proposons d'analyser le comportement de la communauté italienne de Montréal pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale et de comprendre les stratégies mises en œuvre par le Canada pour répondre aux manifestations identitaires liées au fascisme et aux sympathies pour la doctrine prônée par Mussolini. L'analyse de la pièce de théâtre intitulée *La Fresque de Mussolini* (1985), de Filippo Salvatore, permettra de voir comment l'auteur italo-montréalais a reconstitué dans son ouvrage dramatique l'histoire de cette fresque si emblématique que l'on peut voir encore aujourd'hui dans l'église italienne Nostra Signora della Difesa construite en 1910 dans la Petite Italie de Montréal.

**Mots-clés :** Italo-québécois ; Seconde Guerre mondiale ; fascisme ; théâtre ; fresque de Mussolini

Dans le volume *Les premiers Italiens de Montréal*, l'historien québécois Bruno Ramirez étudie les différentes étapes de l'immigration italienne au Québec afin de brosser un tableau aussi complet que possible de la Petite Italie de Montréal. Dans la première partie de son étude, il distingue trois phases importantes qui ont caractérisé l'arrivée et l'implantation des Italiens à Montréal.

Un premier noyau d'immigrés constitué d'une cinquantaine de familles originaires de l'Italie du Nord décide de s'établir à Montréal déjà au milieu du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle pour des raisons professionnelles. Ces « précurseurs », ce sont surtout des musiciens, des peintres, des cordonniers, des commerçants de marbre et des sculpteurs. Bruno Ramirez constate que ces premiers immigrants sont qualifiés d'un point de vue professionnel et bénéficient d'une bonne indépendance économique. Il s'agit déjà d'une petite communauté bien insérée dans le contexte urbain qui participe activement à la vie économique et sociale de la ville. Bien que ces premiers Italiens de Montréal soient toujours restés liés aux traditions culturelles de leurs villes natales et n'hésitent pas à manifester leur sentiment national à travers une série de célébrations patriotiques, ils se marient avec des Canadiennes françaises grâce aux affinités culturelles et religieuses qui existaient entre les deux communautés.

À partir de la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle et des premières années du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'immigration italienne devient un phénomène de masse au Québec. Ramirez désigne cette étape comme une période de « transition », car on voit arriver à Montréal un grand nombre d'Italiens, presque tous célibataires, qui proviennent du Sud de la péninsule et séjournent seulement pendant de courtes périodes dans le pays d'accueil, prêts à retourner à leurs villages d'origine au début de l'hiver. La forte demande de main-d'œuvre qui a caractérisé le début du siècle au Québec a attiré un grand nombre de ces travailleurs saisonniers qui deviennent mineurs ou ouvriers dans la construction des chemins de fer. Parfois, ils partagent le même appartement avec des immigrants du même village d'origine et les conditions de vie sont assez précaires. Ils souhaitent de cette manière améliorer la situation économique de leurs familles restées en Italie. Puisqu'ils ne parlent ni anglais ni français, ils sont victimes d'une espèce de commerce de la main-d'œuvre et ils sont exploités et manipulés par des agents d'emploi très vite appelés « Padroni », des intermédiaires nécessaires pour avoir accès au marché du travail. De retour au village après une saison passée au Québec, ils achètent des maisons ou des terrains arables dans le but d'exploiter au mieux les minces ressources que les pauvres régions du sud du pays pouvaient alors offrir à ces paysans.

« L'implantation », la troisième et dernière étape qui a caractérisé l'immigration italienne au Québec, produit un changement d'habitudes des immigrants saisonniers. Bruno Ramirez précise qu'à partir des années 1920, la presque totalité de ces saisonniers décide de s'installer définitivement à Montréal en permettant à leurs familles de les rejoindre au Québec. Ces

familles reconstituées louent des appartements dans les quartiers déjà habités par des membres de la même famille ou bien par des familles qui proviennent du même village d'origine. De petites communautés d'Italiens se forment et se concentrent dans les quartiers situés au nord de Montréal. À l'intérieur de ces « Petites Italies », les immigrants reproduisent les mêmes habitudes de vie qu'ils avaient dans le village d'origine.

Avec « l'implantation » de ces immigrants jadis saisonniers, une vraie communauté italienne se forme et bien que d'un côté elle reproduise un mode de vie privée basé sur les traditions culturelles du village d'origine, de l'autre, cette nouvelle communauté commence à contribuer au développement urbain et économique de Montréal, car ils travaillent tous au service de compagnies montréalaises, surtout anglophones. À partir des années vingt, les immigrants d'origine italienne de Montréal commencent à écrire une page importante de l'histoire québécoise et canadienne, car ils vont jouer un rôle de premier plan sur la scène politique de leur pays d'accueil pendant toute la période de la Seconde Guerre mondiale.

Dans la suite de cette réflexion, nous nous proposons de qualifier le comportement de la communauté italienne de Montréal à cette époque et de comprendre les stratégies mises en œuvre par le Canada pour répondre à certaines manifestations politiques et identitaires liées au fascisme et aux sympathies pour la doctrine prônée par Mussolini. Nous convoquerons dans un premier temps les travaux de Filippo Salvatore, l'un des intellectuels italo-montréalais qui s'est le plus intéressé à l'histoire du fascisme à Montréal avec des publications scientifiques et également fictionnelles. Puis, nous ferons appel aux travaux de Luigi Bruti Liberati auteur de plusieurs études sur les Italiens et le fascisme au Canada, dont le volume *Il Canada, l'Italia e il fascismo*.

L'analyse de la pièce de théâtre intitulée *La Fresque de Mussolini* (1985) de Filippo Salvatore permettra enfin de voir comment l'auteur italo-montréalais a reconstitué l'histoire de cette fresque si emblématique qui se trouve dans l'église italienne Nostra Signora della Difesa, construite en 1910 dans la Petite Italie de Montréal. La critique n'a pas consacré suffisamment d'attention à cette pièce de théâtre laquelle, à notre connaissance, n'a jamais été représentée sur scène. Cependant, le texte de Filippo Salvatore mérite que l'on s'y intéresse, car il traduit bien le sentiment ambiant d'exaltation pour l'idéologie mussolinienne prônée par les notables italiens de Montréal pendant les années de la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Par conséquent, il convient de s'interroger sur la stratégie mise en œuvre par l'auteur pour dramatiser la mémoire historique. De quelle manière le sujet historique a-t-il été mis en scène ? Quel aspect de « l'Histoire » a-t-il été dramatisé ? Y a-t-il spectacularisation du sujet historique ? Comment l'auteur a-t-il représenté les personnages historiques de la pièce ? Sont-ils crédibles ou bien caricaturés ?

## Les Italiens de Montréal et le fascisme

Selon plusieurs historiens de l'émigration italienne, il existerait aujourd'hui presque soixante millions d'Italiens éparpillés dans le monde entier, en Australie, en Amérique du Sud, en Europe et en Amérique du Nord. Il s'agirait presque d'une autre Italie disséminée à travers un grand nombre de pays. Tous ces émigrants italiens qui ont quitté le pays avant la Seconde Guerre mondiale ont côtoyé, plus ou moins directement dans leurs pays d'accueil, l'idéologie fasciste qui, à partir de la montée de Mussolini sur la scène politique italienne, prônait l'obéissance absolue et le culte de la nation. L'excellent volume d'Emilio Franzina et Matteo Sanfilippo, intitulé *Il fascismo e gli emigranti : la parabola dei fasci italiani all'estero* (2003), montre effectivement que dans tous les pays où il y avait une communauté italienne bien établie, les immigrants ont sympathisé avec l'idéologie fasciste.

À Montréal, sauf rares exceptions, un très grand nombre d'immigrés d'origine italienne a été « endoctriné » à l'idéologie fasciste par les autorités consulaires et par les prêtres des paroisses italiennes. Nombreux ont été les sympathisants de Mussolini qui se sont dévoués corps et âme à l'organisation et à la réussite de manifestations patriotiques en chemise noire. Dans l'essai historique *Le Fascisme et les Italiens à Montréal* (1995), Filippo Salvatore analyse les différentes stratégies mises en œuvre par les prêtres des paroisses et les consuls italiens pour « endoctriner » la communauté au fascisme. À travers une série d'interviews menées avec les protagonistes de cette période, des sympathisants, mais également des antifascistes, Filippo Salvatore illustre en profondeur toutes les dynamiques qui se sont produites pendant les années 1920-1940 pour insuffler au sein de la communauté un fort sentiment de ce qu'il nomme « l'italianité », c'est-à-dire l'amour démesuré pour la patrie d'origine.

Fondée à Montréal en 1925, la première organisation fasciste, le Fascio di Montréal, était composée d'une soixantaine de membres qui étaient dès le début en contact direct avec le parti fasciste italien. Les membres de ce premier groupe avaient prêté le serment qu'il convient de citer afin de bien comprendre l'esprit qui animait ces immigrants d'origine italienne devenus fascistes : « Au nom de Dieu et de l'Italie, je jure d'exécuter les ordres du Duce et de servir avec toute ma force et si nécessaire avec mon sang la cause de la révolution fasciste » (Painchaud, Poulin 71). Ces nouveaux révolutionnaires envisageaient alors de réveiller le sentiment de fierté nationale des immigrants italiens, presque tous analphabètes, avec une série de manifestations patriotiques dont la plus immédiate était le défilé en chemise noire.

Tout d'abord, il fallait faire taire les antifascistes, à l'époque peu nombreux en vérité, qui commençaient à s'organiser et à défiler dans les rues de Montréal avec des slogans contre Mussolini. Selon les mêmes méthodes militaires en usage en Italie, plusieurs syndicalistes et socialistes qui avaient tenté de faire entendre leurs voix seront intimidés et même passés à tabac par ces nouveaux missionnaires qui étaient épaulés et soutenus financièrement par les autorités consulaires italiennes de Montréal. Puis, il fallait convaincre la communauté italienne que Mussolini était l'antidote nécessaire contre le socialisme qui menaçait l'Italie et également contre le spectre bolchevique qui aurait pu être dangereux pour le Canada et l'Amérique tout entière. Enfin, il fallait donner l'impression que l'on était au service de la communauté italienne et que l'on pouvait tout faire pour améliorer les conditions de vie de tous les jours de ces déracinés tous pauvres.

L'une des premières stratégies mises en œuvre par les dirigeants consulaires et par les sympathisants du Fascio pour insuffler ce sentiment de fierté nationale a été l'érection d'une statue à Giovanni Caboto, l'explorateur vénitien qui a été le premier, avec son fils Sébastien, à découvrir les côtes de Terre-Neuve en 1497 alors qu'il voyageait au service du Roi d'Angleterre Henri VII. Pour les membres de cette première organisation fasciste et pour les dirigeants consulaires italiens de Montréal, ce n'était pas Jacques Cartier qui aurait découvert le Canada, mais le Vénitien Jean Cabot qui avait navigué autour du Golfe du Saint-Laurent quarante ans avant Jacques Cartier. Pour réaliser ce projet, à partir de 1925 les notables italiens ont organisé une collecte de fonds au sein de la communauté qui était déjà composée de 14.000 immigrants (Painchaud, Poulin 71). Cela a permis la réalisation d'une statue en bronze de Giovanni Caboto, en 1930, par le sculpteur Guido Casini qui affichait sans retenues ses sympathies pour Mussolini et le fascisme.

On aurait voulu également installer sur le socle de la statue une plaque avec l'inscription « Giovanni Caboto – Découvreur du Canada ». Toutefois, le maire de la ville de Montréal de l'époque s'y est fermement opposé, car on aurait dû réécrire toute l'histoire du Canada français. Avec cette tentative de révision historique, les Italiens de Montréal voulaient revendiquer eux aussi une place dans les livres d'histoire de leur nouveau pays en tant que « peuple fondateur ». Cependant, cette revendication exigée par ces nouveaux nationalistes a été très critiquée par les Canadiens français parce qu'elle mettait en cause la thèse ancestrale des « deux peuples fondateurs » du Canada. Cette statue se trouve encore aujourd'hui à l'entrée de la station de métro Atwater à Montréal, mais elle n'affiche pas la plaque « Découvreur du Canada ». L'érection de la statue à Jean Cabot faisait partie d'un grand projet fasciste qui était composé de plusieurs volets.

Entre-temps, I Patti Lateranensi – Les Accords du Latran, signés par Mussolini avec le Pape Pie XI en 1929, apportent un nouveau souffle aux

fascistes du monde entier, car le Duce met fin à la longue dispute de la « Question romaine » et reconnaît la religion catholique comme la seule religion d'État en Italie. Cela est très bien vu dans tous les pays catholiques du monde et notamment au Canada français. Voilà un homme qui avait réussi à faire, avec ce « Concordat », ce que personne n'avait pu réaliser avant lui et réconcilier l'Italie avec le Pape et le Vatican en légitimant le fascisme à travers le monde.

Dans la lignée de cet enthousiasme, il faut également situer la volonté de la part des responsables de l'église italienne Nostra Signora della Difesa, de Montréal, d'insérer dans une partie de la fresque de la voûte le portrait de Mussolini à cheval. Il s'agit toujours d'une véritable opération de propagande pour véhiculer davantage l'image idyllique du fascisme et de Mussolini au sein de la communauté italienne de Montréal. Réalisée par le peintre d'art sacré Guido Nincheri, entre 1930 et 1933, un détail de cette fresque représente le Duce à cheval entouré de ses quatre « gerarchi » : Italo Balbo, Michele Bianchi, Cesare De Vecchi et Emilio De Bono.



Détail de la fresque de la voûte de l'église Nostra Signora della Difesa de Montréal ([www.proposmontreal.com](http://www.proposmontreal.com))

Roger Nincheri, le petit-fils du peintre Guido Nincheri, raconte dans une interview accordée à Radio-Canada (2013) que dans le projet initial le Duce ne devait pas être portraituré dans la fresque, mais sur la demande des « marguilliers » de l'église, son grand-père a été obligé contre sa volonté, précise-t-il à plusieurs reprises, d'insérer le portrait de Mussolini à cheval sous la menace de voir son contrat annulé. Filippo Salvatore ajoute à ce propos que le père Manfredi, de la paroisse Monte Carmelo de Montréal, avait eu l'idée de « sanctifier » le Duce et avait travaillé à la bonne réussite du projet (*Le Fascisme et...* 31).

Il semble toutefois que le peintre se soit bien vengé des « marguilliers » de l'église et du père Manfredi en particulier. Tout d'abord, il a dessiné le visage de sa femme Giulia dans le portrait de la Vierge Marie, puis il a représenté le visage de Mussolini avec une expression très particulière, d'étonnement presque, comme s'il était en train de se demander, lui aussi, « mais que fais-je donc moi ici au milieu des Saints et des Vierges ? ». De plus, Saint-Liguori, le patron des confesseurs, que l'on voit agenouillé devant le Pape Pie XI, mais avec la tête penchée vers Mussolini avec une expression sérieuse, presque grave, semble également dire au Duce, avec les mains jointes, « mais pourquoi donc es-tu ici ? ».

Il faut préciser entre autres que ce portrait de Mussolini ne ressemble aucunement aux portraits sévères faits du Duce pendant le « ventennio fascista ». Les traits du visage ne sont pas tendus, mais presque joyeux, les sourcils ne sont pas froncés et la mâchoire, vrai trait distinctif du Duce, n'est pas carrée, mais plutôt arrondie. Dans le portrait de Nincheri, Mussolini ne véhicule pas vraiment l'image du dominateur, du « tyran sévère » (Luzzatto 16) que l'on a représenté dans plusieurs portraits et statues pendant les années du fascisme.

On ignore les réactions des prélats qui avaient obligé l'artiste à « sanctifier » Mussolini en le représentant dans la fresque. Toutefois, Guido Nincheri subira de lourdes conséquences de la part du Gouvernement canadien, car il sera considéré comme un « vrai fasciste », emprisonné pendant trois mois à Petawawa en Ontario et libéré seulement après que sa femme aura réussi à démontrer qu'il ne s'agissait pas d'une idée du peintre, mais de la volonté des prélats qui l'avaient obligé à dessiner le portrait du Duce dans la fresque. Pendant l'arrestation, on lui avait même mis une pancarte au cou avec le mot « traître » bien en vue. Il n'a jamais reçu personnellement les excuses officielles du Gouvernement canadien qui a effacé en quelque sorte le talent de ce maître de l'art religieux qui est l'auteur de plusieurs œuvres dans plus de deux cents églises au Canada et aux États-Unis (Radio-Canada).

Il est également intéressant d'ajouter à ce propos que ni en Italie ni dans aucun autre pays du monde le Duce n'a été portraituré dans une église et que la fresque de l'église Nostra Signora della Difesa de Montréal est le seul exemple de « sanctification » de Mussolini.

Quoi qu'il en soit, cela montre comment les paroisses italiennes de Montréal étaient devenues des centres où l'on menait une campagne gigantesque de promotion et de sensibilisation à l'idéologie fasciste. Avec l'insertion du portrait de Mussolini dans la fresque de la voûte, parmi les Saints et les Vierges, on a voulu « sanctifier » le Duce, il est ainsi devenu pour les immigrants italiens de Montréal « Saint Mussolini » qui méritait bien sa place dans une église pour qu'il soit vénéré tout comme l'on vénère les autres Saints. Filippo Salvatore ajoute également dans son essai historique que pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale le détail de la fresque représentant le Duce a été caché avec une toile par la police fédérale qui le considérait, justement, comme une forme d'apologie au fascisme (*Le Fascisme et...* 31).

Un autre événement important survenu en juillet 1933 a contribué à promouvoir l'idéologie fasciste au sein de la communauté italienne de Montréal. Italo Balbo, un important « gerarca » du régime fasciste italien, que l'on voit représenté à côté de Mussolini dans la fresque de l'église italienne rue Dante, fait une escale technique à Montréal à la tête d'un escadron de vingt-quatre hydravions alors qu'il se rend à l'Exposition internationale de Chicago. Tous les représentants consulaires et les sympathisants du régime étaient en chemise noire sur le quai du port de Montréal pour l'attendre et le féliciter de son exploit. Selon les témoins qui ont assisté à cet événement, il y avait presque cinquante mille personnes (Salvatore, *Le Fascisme et...* 32). Italo Balbo est accueilli comme un Dieu vivant et cette escale va nourrir et alimenter davantage l'idée de grandeur de l'Italie fasciste au Québec. Avec son escadron d'hydravions, Italo Balbo projetait aux yeux des Canadiens français l'image d'une puissance militaire capable, avec de tels moyens, de rivaliser avec n'importe quel autre pays. Cela flattait surtout l'ego des immigrants italiens, jadis considérés comme de misérables « culs-terreux », partis au Québec parce qu'ils n'avaient de quoi manger dans leurs régions pauvres du Sud de l'Italie. Il s'agissait en quelque sorte d'une forme de rachat, d'une revanche aux yeux de ceux qui les avaient critiqués et humiliés lors de leur arrivée dans le nouveau pays d'accueil.

En outre, pour bien enraciner le mythe de Mussolini à Montréal, les chemises noires réussissent également à convaincre le Consul italien de Montréal de financer en partie la construction de la Casa d'Italia, un lieu de rencontre pour les fascistes et toute la communauté italienne. Le maire de Montréal de l'époque, Camillien Houde, offre gratuitement le terrain sur lequel sera construite, en style Art moderne, variante Art déco, la Casa d'Italia. Il s'agissait également d'une forme de reconnaissance du maire à l'égard de la communauté, puisque les Italiens avaient voté pour lui lors des élections municipales. Les inclinations fascistes de Camillien Houde étaient connues depuis longtemps et, ironie du sort, à cause d'un discours prononcé contre la conscription, il sera arrêté le 5 août 1940 et emprisonné à Petawawa



en Ontario, dans le même camp d'internement où on avait emprisonné les Italo-Canadiens et les Allemands accusés d'être des « ennemis de la nation ».

Le 1<sup>er</sup> novembre 1936, l'immeuble ressemblant à un paquebot géant ouvre enfin ses portes à la communauté italienne de la ville. De nombreux immigrants italiens avaient contribué à la construction de l'édifice avec des dons ou en travaillant gratuitement sur les chantiers. Désormais, les fascistes pouvaient disposer d'un bel édifice où planifier les manifestations publiques visant à célébrer le mythe du Duce. C'est à la Casa d'Italia par exemple que l'on organisait les défilés en chemise noire et que l'on enseignait aux enfants les chansons patriotiques qu'ils devaient chanter lors de ces défilés.

La construction de la Casa d'Italia représente toutefois le point culminant de la parabole montante du fascisme à Montréal, car à partir de l'année 1936, au fur et à mesure que l'on commence à comprendre les stratégies que Mussolini met en œuvre dans la Campagne d'Afrique, le mythe du Duce commence à s'étioler. L'agression et l'occupation de l'Éthiopie seront très mal perçues d'abord chez les Canadiens anglais et puis également chez les Canadiens français.

Selon Filippo Salvatore, c'est pendant la Guerre d'Éthiopie que « la scission entre italianité et fascisme s'est opérée » (*Le Fascisme et...* 37). Les sanctions infligées à l'Italie par la Société des Nations qui condamnait sans demi-mesures l'occupation de l'Éthiopie affaiblissent considérablement l'image de Mussolini au Québec. Dans le complexe jeu des alliances qui se tissent en Europe, Mussolini commence à représenter une menace pour le Canada et cela sera particulièrement évident avec la signature du Pacte d'acier par lequel il scelle une alliance ambiguë avec l'Allemagne d'Hitler. Ainsi, à partir de l'année 1939, l'Allemagne et l'Italie sont liées ensemble grâce à leurs intérêts communs. Évoqué désormais chaque fois que l'on prononce le nom d'Hitler, le nom de Mussolini commence également à faire peur et représente une réelle menace pour l'équilibre politique de l'Europe, mais aussi du Canada.

En effet, lorsque le 10 juin 1940, Mussolini annonce à Piazza Venezia, à Rome, l'entrée de l'Italie en guerre, aux côtés de l'Allemagne contre les Alliés, le destin des fascistes montréalais tourne au cauchemar. Le Gouvernement canadien approuve la Loi sur les Mesures de guerre et tous les groupes fascistes et nazis, mais aussi communistes, qui se trouvaient sur le territoire canadien deviennent illégaux. La Gendarmerie royale qui avait déjà préparé des fiches sur plusieurs chemises noires procède alors à des centaines d'arrestations et beaucoup de perquisitions sont effectuées dans les structures stratégiques du Fascio di Montréal, comme le Consulat italien, la Casa d'Italia et les bureaux de la presse italienne. Tous les Italiens arrêtés, soupçonnés d'être des « ennemis de la nation », seront internés dans deux camps, à Petawawa en Ontario et à Fredericton au Nouveau-Brunswick. Plusieurs Italiens innocents, qui n'avaient jamais manifesté aucune forme de sympathie

pour l'idéologie fasciste, seront également emprisonnés, tandis que d'autres seront renvoyés de leurs postes de travail seulement parce qu'ils étaient Italiens (Salvatore, *Le Fascisme et...* 41). Le Gouvernement canadien fermera également ses frontières à tous les futurs immigrants venant d'Italie et cela jusqu'à l'année 1947.

Toutefois, comme le souligne Luigi Bruti Liberati dans son article, 230 prisonniers sur 600 seront libérés après une année de détention (« The internment... » 89). Le journaliste d'origine italienne Mario Duliani, lui aussi interné pendant trois ans (1940-1943) à Petawawa en Ontario, produira un témoignage direct de sa période de détention dans son roman autobiographique intitulé *La Ville sans femmes* publié à Montréal en 1945, aussitôt la guerre terminée.

Le même sort est réservé aux immigrants japonais et allemands, tous soupçonnés de vouloir former une « cinquième colonne » (Salvatore, « La quinta colonna... » 517) et permettre ainsi l'arrivée des nazis sur le sol canadien. Cependant, à la différence des Italo-Canadiens, aux ressortissants japonais, beaucoup plus nombreux, on confisquera tous leurs biens, les « maisons, les commerces, les autos » et cela pour financer les coûts de leur internement. Plusieurs Japonais nés au Canada seront également expulsés vers le pays d'origine (Jaumain, Remacle 86).

Pour la communauté italienne, la détention dans les camps d'internement représente une page noire de l'histoire du Canada, sur laquelle les autorités canadiennes n'ont pas envisagé de revenir pendant très longtemps. La communauté italienne a attendu presque quarante-cinq ans pour recevoir une attestation de sympathie de la part des autorités canadiennes. Le 4 novembre 1990, le premier ministre Bryan Mulroney, devant l'assemblée du Congrès national des Canadiens d'origine italienne, s'est excusé pour le sort que le Gouvernement canadien avait réservé à la communauté italienne : « Au nom du Gouvernement et du peuple canadien, dira-t-il lors de son allocution, je présente mes excuses pleines et entières à nos camarades canadiens d'origine italienne qui ont subi des torts pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale » (*Le Devoir* 2).

### **Transferts littéraires du fascisme**

Un grand nombre de ces événements liés au fascisme et à la Seconde Guerre mondiale a nourri l'imaginaire de plusieurs écrivains et réalisateurs italo-canadiens et italo-québécois. En particulier, la pièce de théâtre intitulée *La Fresque de Mussolini* (1985) de Filippo Salvatore met en scène des personnages réels et imaginaires de la communauté italienne et tente ainsi de reconstituer l'atmosphère de ces années si dramatiques vécues par les immigrants italiens victimes tout d'abord de leur inconscience et puis de l'idéologie fasciste.

Filippo Salvatore est l'un des spécialistes majeurs de l'histoire de l'immigration italienne et du fascisme à Montréal. Né dans le Sud de l'Italie à Guglionesi, un petit village du Molise, il arrive à Montréal à l'âge de seize ans. Il fait ses études à l'Université McGill, puis à Harvard aux États-Unis où il obtient un doctorat en littératures romanes. De retour à Montréal, il accepte un poste à l'Université Concordia où il enseigne encore aujourd'hui les littératures italienne et italo-canadienne. Ses recherches portent en particulier sur les écrivains italiens du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle et sur les écrivains italo-montréalais aussi bien anglophones que francophones. Il s'intéresse également à l'histoire du cinéma italien. Il a écrit plusieurs recueils de poèmes et il collabore en tant que journaliste à plusieurs magazines montréalais. Il est aussi membre de plusieurs associations culturelles.

*La Fresque de Mussolini*, publiée aux Éditions Guernica en 1985, n'a jamais été représentée sur scène et cela est dû peut-être au grand nombre d'acteurs nécessaires : il faudrait en effet 19 personnages et, de plus, quatre catégories de figurants (Policiers, Typographes, Danseurs et Militaires de l'armée canadienne).

Composée d'un seul acte divisé en 13 courtes scènes, la pièce est axée sur la faible histoire d'amour tragique entre le peintre florentin Fabrizio Tincheri, arrivé à Montréal pour peindre la fresque dans la voûte de l'église italienne Nostra Signora della Difesa, et la jeune Italo-Québécoise Cathy de Marinis.

Le peintre florentin Fabrizio Tincheri a beaucoup de talent, mais il est malheureux à cause de sa relation avec la jeune Cathy de Marinis, victime de l'idéologie paysanne de ses parents. Elle est née à Montréal et aimerait vivre comme les autres Québécoises. Elle souhaiterait quitter le cocon familial avec l'approbation de ses parents et faire sa vie à deux, puisqu'elle a déjà vingt ans. Mais, comme elle le souligne à plusieurs reprises, elle est victime de la mentalité du « ghetto ». Leur amour ne peut pas se réaliser pleinement et sereinement à cause des parents de Cathy, très respectueux des traditions du village d'origine. Ils ne veulent pas que leur fille aille vivre avec le peintre Fabrizio Tincheri en dehors du mariage et lorsque, sur un coup de tête, elle quitte la maison familiale, elle sera répudiée et désignée comme la « dévergondée » (Salvatore, *La Fresque...* 46). La faible intrigue se dénoue dans la dernière scène de la pièce au moment où l'on annonce à Cathy que Fabrizio, parti combattre en Éthiopie au sein du « corps expéditionnaire italo-canadien », vient de mourir (Salvatore, *La Fresque...* 61).

Toutefois, les deux protagonistes n'apparaissent pas souvent ensemble dans les treize courtes scènes qui composent la pièce. Surtout, le personnage féminin principal Cathy de Marinis fait son apparition seulement à partir de la cinquième scène et elle n'apparaîtra au total que dans quatre scènes de la pièce : la cinquième, la sixième, la dixième et la treizième. Ce sont donc les personnages secondaires qui prennent le devant de la scène dès le début de la

pièce et cela montre comment l'auteur a voulu plutôt mettre en scène les personnages fictifs de la communauté italienne : les notables, le prêtre de la paroisse italienne Manfredini, le Consul italien à Montréal, l'évêque du diocèse de Montréal, tous responsables de l'endoctrinement de la communauté à l'idéologie mussolinienne.

Comme il est bien précisé dans le court prologue, « le protagoniste de la pièce [est] l'Histoire » avec un « H » majuscule (Salvatore, *La Fresque...* 5). Mais, tout au long de la pièce, « l'Histoire » ne sera jamais dramatisée. La tension dramatique n'est pas concentrée sur les faits historiques évoqués dans les treize scènes, mais sur les minces conflits amoureux des deux protagonistes qui sont présentés au sommet de la liste des personnages.

Dès l'exposition de la pièce, le spectateur-lecteur est plongé dans une atmosphère « fasciste » qui n'est pas du tout tendue. À l'école italienne rattachée à l'église Nostra Signora della Difesa où l'on doit décorer la voûte avec la fresque, le directeur enseigne aux enfants à défiler correctement en chemise noire et à chanter des chansons fascistes. La vision du film historique tout juste arrivé de Rome qui montre « la cérémonie de la signature du concordat entre le Vatican et [le] Duce ! » (Salvatore, *La Fresque...* 14), complète l'initiation à l'idéologie fasciste de ces jeunes écoliers.

Filippo Salvatore montre comment les institutions italiennes à Montréal ont tout fait pour « enraciner » le mythe du Duce en insufflant le culte de la nation et un fort sentiment de fierté nationale. Lors de la première rencontre entre le personnage Manfredini et le peintre florentin Fabrizio Tincheri, il n'est pas question des détails du projet de la fresque, mais le prêtre de la paroisse dispense plutôt un cours sur les mérites des Italiens dans la découverte du Canada. Voilà les mots que ce personnage adresse au peintre une fois arrivé sous la voûte encore vide de l'église :

MANFREDINI : Je vous disais donc, cher monsieur Tincheri, que notre colonie a tout ce qu'il faut pour devenir le modèle des colonies italiennes à l'étranger. Elle commence à avoir du prestige ! Saviez-vous que c'est Giovanni Caboto – évidemment ici les Anglais l'appellent John Cabot – qui est arrivé au Canada le premier ? (15)

Le peintre aimerait qu'on lui explique tout de suite la composition de la fresque, les personnages qu'il doit y insérer et les couleurs préférées, tandis que le prêtre ajoute, en lui coupant la parole... :

MANFREDINI : Pas encore, pas encore... Oui, je vous disais, Giovanni Caboto... Et c'est un autre Italien, Giovanni Da Verrazzano, qui l'a appelé Nova Gallia, Nouvelle-France, dont la première description a d'ailleurs été faite par un père jésuite, grand méconnu : Francesco Bressani... [...] Et il y a Carignan, Carignano évidemment, le Piémontais, et l'explorateur Tonti... On m'a même dit que Jean

Talon pourrait être Giovanni Tallone... Ah, les racines de notre colonie sont bien solides au Canada ! Savez-vous d'où vient le nom de notre ville ? [...] Et bien, le nom de Montréal a été donné à cette ville, jeune homme, comme expression d'amitié pour le Cardinal Hyppolite de Médicis, que Cartier avait connu en France à la cour du roi François I<sup>er</sup>. Et ce cardinal de Médicis était à l'époque, évêque du diocèse de Monreale, près de Palerme en Sicile ! (15-16)

Et de fil en aiguille, ce personnage très caricaturé revendique même la présence des Italiens dans la Bataille des Plaines d'Abraham, qui est un moment clé de l'histoire canadienne-française...

MANFREDINI : Et ce n'est pas tout. Attendez... à la bataille des plaines d'Abraham, vous savez quand la ville de Québec fut conquise par les Anglais, bon nombre de soldats du général Montcalm étaient italiens ! Et en 1837, lors de la révolte de Papineau, le drapeau tricolore des patriotes canadiens-français imitait le tricolore de notre glorieux *Risorgimento* ! Nos racines sont bien profondes au Canada ! [...] (16-17)

Dans le discours du personnage Manfredini tout y passe : les Italiens sont protagonistes à partir de la découverte du Canada jusqu'à la Rébellion des Patriotes en 1837. Voilà comment ce prélat italien incarne l'esprit fasciste de cette période, comment il s'approprie quatre siècles d'histoire du Canada français en leur donnant une couleur italienne. Ce sont les arguments typiques que les fascistes utilisaient pour réveiller le sentiment de fierté nationale auprès des immigrants qui se laissaient charmer par ces mythes et convaincre de défiler en chemise noire dans les rues de Montréal.

L'historien Robert Harney a défini avec le terme « scopritorismo » (Salvatore, « Le métissage... » 19) l'attitude adoptée par plusieurs intellectuels italo-canadiens de l'époque qui visait à chercher sans cesse dans l'histoire du Canada des personnages illustres avec des noms à consonance italienne pour mythifier la présence ancestrale des Italiens au Canada et revendiquer une place dans les livres d'histoire canadienne et notamment québécoise. Selon Robert Harney, à la base de la communauté italienne du Canada il n'y a que « des paysans, des artisans et de petits commerçants » (Salvatore, « Le métissage... » 19) et aucun personnage digne d'être mentionné dans un livre d'histoire. Comme nous l'avons bien précisé dans l'introduction de cette réflexion à l'aide des travaux de l'historien Bruno Ramirez, c'est au milieu du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle en effet qu'une cinquantaine de familles (« les précurseurs ») originaires de l'Italie du Nord s'établissent à Montréal pour des raisons professionnelles.

Filippo Salvatore transpose au début de sa pièce l'atmosphère ambiante de cette époque où les notables italiens tentaient de véhiculer de faux mythes à

propos des explorateurs italiens avant et après Jacques Cartier et à propos de la présence des Italiens sur les Plaines d'Abraham.

Le discours prononcé par le personnage du Consul italien de Montréal, lors d'une réception en son honneur, traduit également la volonté, très répandue à l'époque au sein des institutions italiennes, qui visait à promouvoir l'idéologie fasciste en exaltant le sentiment de fierté nationale :

LE CONSUL : Mesdames et Messieurs, je ne vous ennuierais pas avec un long discours. Je tiens seulement à vous dire que je suis heureux d'être ici à Montréal, berceau de la présence française et latine en Amérique du Nord. On m'a déjà parlé de notre colonie italienne. Je tiens à la féliciter de son attachement à sa patrie d'origine, de son amour pour sa nouvelle patrie, de sa profonde foi chrétienne et de sa fidélité à nos valeurs morales, comme l'unité de la famille. Notre Duce aime bien les grandes familles (35).

Ce discours est en effet très connoté d'un point de vue linguistique, car on y trouve tous les clichés fascistes de l'époque : « notre colonie italienne » ; « attachement à la patrie d'origine » ; « profonde foi chrétienne » ; « fidélité aux valeurs morales » et le souhait du Duce de former de « grandes familles » pour rendre la nation toujours plus forte.

Quoi qu'il en soit, avec beaucoup d'attention à cette période historique, Filippo Salvatore met en scène les tentatives des antifascistes de contrer cet endoctrinement. Villani, le personnage antifasciste de la pièce, qui est le directeur de l'hebdomadaire italien *La foglia d'acero / La feuille d'érable*, cherche en effet à organiser un comice avec des personnages antifascistes de Montréal, comme le Docteur Norman Bethune, et tente également d'inviter à Montréal l'antifasciste et historien italien Gaetano Salvemini qui se trouve à New York. L'évocation de ces personnages réels vise à situer l'action de la pièce dans « l'Histoire » avec un grand « H » qui est la protagoniste principale du projet dramatique de Filippo Salvatore. Il s'agit en effet du seul moment où le lecteur-spectateur est transporté par une tension dramatique, car le conflit d'idéologies et le conflit physique sont exposés sur la scène :

VILLANI : Comment peut-on respecter ici un individu comme Adrien Arcand, cette caricature canadienne-française d'Hitler ? Comment peuvent-ils prendre au sérieux notre maire, ce Camillien Houde, cette grotesque caricature de Mussolini ? Il faut arracher notre peuple de l'ignorance dans laquelle tous ces démagogues le gardent ! [...] On va frapper un grand coup [...] avec tous les camarades, et Bethune, et maintenant l'illustre historien antifasciste Salvemini en personne, comme invité d'honneur ! Tous les antifascistes seront là, ce sera une date... (40).

Sur ces derniers mots du personnage antifasciste Villani, la police entre dans l'imprimerie pour confisquer les tracts et se bagarrer avec les communistes qui

travaillent à l'organisation de la manifestation antifasciste. Toutefois, dans la suite de la pièce le lecteur-spectateur n'assistera plus jamais à de pareils moments dramatiques.

En effet, même la scène où la décision d'insérer le portrait de Mussolini à cheval dans la fresque est prise n'est pas du tout dramatisée et tout se passe comme si l'insertion du portrait du Duce dans une église était la chose la plus naturelle du monde. Le chanoine Lionel Groulx est convoqué dans la quatrième scène en tant qu'historien nationaliste candien-français et il reçoit le peintre italien Fabrizio Tincheri dans son bureau de l'Université de Montréal pour lui donner des conseils quant au choix des « autorités civiles » que les notables de la communauté italienne aimeraient insérer dans la fresque. Ils voudraient effectivement que « cette fresque soit la synthèse d'un message à la fois religieux et historique » (Salvatore, *La Fresque...* 26) et ils ont bien évidemment suggéré au peintre d'insérer, à côté des allégories religieuses et des personnalités ecclésiastiques, soit « le débarquement à Terre-Neuve de Giovanni Caboto », soit « Verrazzano, sur le pont de son bateau, regardant la côte qu'il appellera Nouvelle-France » (Salvatore, *La Fresque...* 25). Mais le chanoine Lionel Groulx n'est pas vraiment favorable à un tel choix, puisque ces personnages ne sont plus actuels et ils mettraient en cause l'histoire officielle du Canada français.

Même les suggestions d'insérer « Papineau, à la bataille de Saint-Eustache » à la tête « des patriotes contre les Anglais » ou « Louis Riel, le chef des Métis, sur l'échafaud, sur le point d'être pendu par les Orangistes » sont écartées, car pour Lionel Groulx il s'agit de personnages « excommuniés » (Salvatore, *La Fresque...* 25-26).

C'est alors que le chanoine Lionel Groulx pense à un personnage qui, selon lui, « plus qu'incarner [...] transcende la simple réalité historique » de l'époque. Il ajoute alors avec enthousiasme que « ce personnage qui transcende l'Histoire » existe déjà puisqu'il « y a à notre époque un grand homme que nous aussi [les Canadiens français] admirons beaucoup. Le Duce ! » (Salvatore, *La Fresque...* 26-27).

Cette proposition de l'historien québécois reçoit tout de suite l'approbation du peintre italien, lequel montre immédiatement à Groulx sur un croquis de la fresque l'endroit précis où il représentera le Duce à cheval avec ses quatre « gerarchi » (Salvatore, *La Fresque...* 27).

Or, quel sens faut-il donner à cette interprétation des faits historiques que l'auteur propose dans la pièce où la protagoniste principale devrait être « l'Histoire » avec un « H » majuscule (Salvatore, *La Fresque...* 5) ? L'historien et nationaliste Lionel Groulx est caricaturé dans cette scène clé de la pièce. La décision est prise très rapidement et ne sera pas validée par les notables italiens qui ont confié la réalisation de la fresque au peintre florentin Fabrizio Tincheri. Dans cette scène clé, Filippo Salvatore mélange réalité et fiction et attribue à

Groulx l'idée d'insérer le portrait de Mussolini dans la fresque de l'église Nostra Signora della Difesa. Il est vrai que Mussolini au début de son ascension était très admiré par les Canadiens français. Toutefois, il semble que la lecture donnée par Filippo Salvatore sur la genèse de cette fresque soit un peu bizarre. Qu'a-t-il voulu exprimer avec cette interprétation de ce fait historique si emblématique pour les Italo-Québécois ? Pourquoi mélange-t-il réalité et fiction sans dramatiser davantage cette scène qui résume le titre de la pièce ?

Nous avons évoqué dans la première partie de notre réflexion le sort dramatique réservé au peintre Guido Nincheri, obligé par les « marguilliers » italiens de l'église de réaliser le portrait de Mussolini dans la fresque et interné pour cela dans le camp de Petawawa, en Ontario, parce que considéré « traître » et « ennemi » de la nation. Filippo Salvatore souligne dans le prologue de son livre que l'objectif principal de son travail était de « transposer la vérité historique au théâtre » (5). A-t-il atteint de cette manière l'objectif souhaité ?

### Conclusion

En guise de conclusion, nous aimerions souligner que plusieurs de ces immigrants endoctrinés n'avaient pas véritablement compris ce que le fascisme était en réalité et ce qu'ils faisaient lorsqu'ils défilaient en chemise noire dans les rues de Montréal. Ils ont eu confiance dans les notables italiens qui leur avaient présenté l'Italie mussolinienne comme un pays qui se dirigeait vers un avenir radieux, mais il s'agissait tout de même du même pays qu'ils avaient quitté parce qu'il ne pouvait plus subvenir à leurs besoins primaires. La pièce de Filippo Salvatore transpose remarquablement l'atmosphère ambiante de l'époque, toutefois l'auteur ne dramatise jamais le sujet historique et déplace le drame, c'est-à-dire le sort réservé au vrai peintre de la fresque, sur l'histoire d'amour entre les personnages Fabrizio Tincheri et l'Italo-montréalaise Cathy de Marinis. Les personnages réels de l'histoire qu'il convoque sont caricaturés et il donne en plus une lecture de certains faits qui malheureusement s'éloignent de « l'Histoire ».

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**ENTRE EUROPE ET ÉTATS-UNIS – TENSIONS DUES  
À LA SECONDE GUERRE MONDIALE DANS  
*LE CIEL DE BAY CITY* DE CATHERINE MAVRIKAKIS**

**Abstract**

The article proposes to ponder upon the phenomenon of war in contemporary Quebec literature on the example of Catherine Mavrikakis's *Le ciel de Bay City*, published in 2008. The author guides the reader through the meanders of the American memory built on the European ashes, at the same time seemingly questioning the existence of a memoryless society that the American community has apparently become. With a history of Amy Duchesnay, an ordinary young woman from Bay City living in the Francophone universe and a child of a Polish Jew who came to the New World in order to escape the horrors of the Second World War, the novelist re-examines the problem of the Holocaust and its consequences for future generations.

**Keywords:** Catherine Mavrikakis, World War II in the Québécois contemporary novel

**Résumé**

L'article propose de réfléchir sur le phénomène de la guerre dans la littérature québécoise contemporaine à l'exemple du roman de Catherine Mavrikakis, *Le ciel de Bay City* publié en 2008. L'auteure nous plonge dans les méandres d'une mémoire américaine construite sur les cendres européennes et semble contester l'existence de cette société sans mémoire qu'est la société américaine. À travers l'histoire d'une jeune fille ordinaire de Bay City, vivant dans un univers francophone, Amy Duchesnay, enfant d'une Juive polonaise venue au Nouveau Monde afin de fuir les horreurs de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, la romancière réactualise le thème de l'Holocauste dont elle évoque les conséquences pour les générations futures.

**Mots-clés :** Catherine Mavrikakis, la Seconde Guerre mondiale dans le roman contemporain québécois

La question de la guerre, dans un Québec « si monstrueusement en paix » selon la formule utilisée par le dramaturge d'origine libanaise, Wajdi Mouawad<sup>1</sup>, ne cesse de hanter les écrivains et de marquer l'imaginaire collectif comme le soulignent les auteurs du dossier paru à l'hiver 2012 de la revue *Voix et images* consacré à la guerre dans la littérature québécoise (Biron, Parenteau 9). Les chercheurs constatent pourtant que les rapports entre la guerre et la littérature du Québec ont été abordés par la critique jusqu'à présent de manière indirecte (Biron, Parenteau 9) étant donné que les textes littéraires jusqu'aux années 1970 ont traité la question de manière indirecte « à partir d'une position qui était non seulement celle de l'«arrière» mais aussi celle de l'écart » (Nardout-Lafarge 1). C'était souvent la guerre des autres, ou la guerre de l'autre, à savoir celle des Anglais, qui était évoquée (Biron, Parenteau 9). La situation de la littérature des années 2000 est différente car l'effet de déterritorialisation devient plus marqué à l'ère de la mondialisation (Biron, Parenteau 13) et « [t]out se passe comme si la guerre, quelle qu'elle soit, était désormais sans extériorité, non plus mondiale mais globale, fût-ce par les intérêts dont elle dépend et les tensions qu'elle génère » (Nardout-Lafarge 1). Comme l'ont bien vu Hélène Boblet et Bernard Alazet dans *Écritures de la guerre aux XX<sup>e</sup> et XXI<sup>e</sup> siècles* :

La génération des écrivains contemporains semble, elle, arriver « après la bataille ». Mais [...] elle est environnée d'images médiatiques qui inscrivent, sur fond de mémoire historique des guerres mondiales vécues par leurs aînés, « ce mixte d'irréalité et de trop de terrible réalité » que suppose une expérience de la guerre par procuration. Dès lors, entrer en littérature après guerre, c'est être confronté à tout ce qui hante les consciences et n'est pourtant curieusement pas là, dans l'expérience concrète (cité dans Nardout-Lafarge 1-2).

De nos jours, la guerre s'est donc banalisée et le mot « guerre » s'est dangereusement étendu, en prenant des formes diverses : guerres, guerres civiles, guérillas, massacres et génocides, sans parler du terrorisme sous ses multiples formes (Nardout-Lafarge 2).

Comme l'explique Élisabeth Nardout-Lafarge dans sa communication présentée dans le cadre du colloque international *Que devient la littérature québécoise ? Formes et enjeux des pratiques narratives depuis 1990* qui s'est tenu à l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne du 17 au 20 juin 2015 :

Quel que soit le conflit évoqué, la plupart de ces textes [les textes québécois des années 2000] travaillent non seulement la distance temporelle entre l'évènement

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<sup>1</sup> Le dramaturge a parlé d'« un pays si monstrueusement en paix » dans son programme de la pièce de théâtre *Don Quichotte* produite au Théâtre du Nouveau Monde à Montréal en septembre-octobre 1999 (les propos repris par Biron, Parenteau 14).

et son énonciation (le passé de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale est remémoré au présent) mais aussi la distance spatiale entre le lieu du conflit et le lieu de l'énonciation. Le « théâtre des opérations » y est configuré par la narration comme ailleurs, lointain, confins. Personnages et narrateurs ou narratrices en reviennent ou s'y rendent, en visiteur, en pèlerin, en témoin. S'ils s'y trouvent au titre d'acteurs, c'est leur propre étrangeté qui est soulignée. Mais on ne déduira pas pour autant de ces dispositifs, comme on l'a fait pour les romans des années cinquante, qu'ils maintiennent la guerre hors du territoire familial. Les narrations des années 2000 s'appliquent plutôt à ramener la guerre ancienne ou lointaine, sa peur et ses conséquences, au cœur du présent quotidien, selon divers procédés qui vont de la mise en scène d'une histoire familiale au choix des métaphores (Nardout-Lafarge 2-3).

Ces observations sur l'inscription de la guerre dans la littérature québécoise contemporaine faites, il nous semble pertinent de présenter *Le ciel de Bay City* de Catherine Mavrikakis afin de chercher à étudier le phénomène de la guerre.

Fille d'immigrants européens, née aux États-Unis, mais arrivée à l'âge d'un an à Montréal, professeure au Département des littératures de langue française à l'Université de Montréal, Catherine Mavrikakis a été présentée par son editrice lors de la promotion de *Le ciel de Bay City* en France comme une sorte de Franco-Américaine. Un vrai « carrefour international » pour le journaliste Sylvain Sarrazin (25), la romancière s'est fait connaître par ce roman qui a bénéficié d'un accueil enthousiaste et a été récompensé par plusieurs prix et nominations. *Le ciel de Bay City* a été précédé de trois romans : *Deuils cannibales et mélancoliques* (Trois, 2000), *Ça va aller* (Leméac, 2002), *Fleurs de crachat* (Leméac, 2005) ; une pièce de théâtre, *Omaha Beach* (Héliotrope, 2008) ; trois essais : *La mauvaise langue* (Champ Vallon, 1996), *Ventriloquies* (Leméac, 2003) écrit avec Martine Delvaux et *Condamner à mort. Les meurtres et la loi à l'écran* (PUM, 2005). Puis ont suivi deux romans : *Les derniers jours de Smokey Nelson* (Héliotrope, 2011) et *La ballade d'Ali Baba* (Héliotrope, 2014) ainsi que quatre essais : *L'éternité en accéléré* (Héliotrope, 2010), où elle a condensé les entrées de son blogue et plus récemment, *Ce que dit l'écorce*, publié avec Nicolas Lévesque (Nota Bene, 2013) et *Diamanda Galás. Guerrière et Gorgone* (Héliotrope, 2014). Aux dires de Mathieu Poulin, l'œuvre romanesque mavrikakienne est exigeante, éprouvante et parfois sévère. L'écrivaine aspire à une littérature qui serait virulente, authentique, audacieuse, qui dédaignerait les lieux communs et qui inviterait au dépassement individuel et collectif (cf. Poulin).

Le quatrième roman mavrikakien, désigné comme révélation (cf. Basch), une véritable comète de la rentrée littéraire 2009 en France, « un roman d'une force peu commune » (selon l'avis d'un journaliste cité sur le site des éditions Héliotrope), lauréat du Grand Prix du livre de Montréal, du Prix des collégiens 2009 et du Prix des libraires 2009, *Le ciel de Bay City* a été aussi sélectionné

comme finaliste pour la huitième édition du Prix des cinq continents en 2009 et a reçu un écho très favorable en France, s'étant retrouvé sur la première liste du prix Femina. Décrit par le jury du Prix des collégiens comme « une œuvre qui se démarque [...], une œuvre qui marque l'imaginaire, déconstruit les conventions, amène le lecteur à découvrir des zones d'inconfort où il ne souhaite pas s'aventurer et met l'humain à nu dans toute sa fragilité » (Prix littéraire des collégiens), le roman a rendu célèbre son auteure et l'a emportée dans une flambée médiatique.

La Seconde Guerre mondiale et les horreurs du génocide juif constituent le pivot de *Le ciel de Bay City*, bien que ni la romancière ni sa famille ne soient d'origine juive. Cet aspect domine son œuvre car, comme le souligne l'auteure, elle a été élevée dans la commémoration de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, c'est qui fait « un drôle d'héritage pour [elle] qui [a] grandi dans les années 60 et 70 au Québec » (Nancy).

Le roman a été publié au Québec en 2008 mais l'action est située dans une petite ville américaine, à Bay City, dans le Michigan, un état industriel de la région des Grands Lacs, à la frontière des États-Unis et du Canada (ainsi qu'à Albuquerque au Nouveau-Mexique). C'est « une ville ennuyeuse comme son ciel mauve, une ville polluée et sans éclats » (Lequin 245). D'ailleurs, d'après Louis-Bertrand Robitaille de *La Presse*, cet univers de la banlieue ouvrière américaine rappelle beaucoup le paysage de l'est de Montréal, « avec les dépôts de pétrole obsédants » que la romancière connaît depuis son enfance. L'espace états-unien a permis à Catherine Mavrikakis « de dire ce qu'[elle] voulais[t] de l'Amérique » et il lui a donné l'occasion de ne pas toucher la question québécoise (Robitaille).

Daniel Laforest voit dans cette relation entre le lieu de l'action et les deux lieux de publication, d'abord le Québec puis la France, un élément riche en significations, ce qu'il explique comme suit :

Québec, France, États-Unis : un vaste espace éditorial et thématique paraît ici exemplairement couvert. Tout indique que nous nous trouvons, une fois de plus, dans ce triangle arbitraire où l'imagination se meut à loisir entre une France éprise d'américanité, un Québec qui se voit attribuer un caractère commode de plaque tournante, et des États-Unis qui n'en demandent pas tant. Triangle assez fréquent pour tout dire, au passé encombré d'exemples, mais qui tend dans la majorité des cas à ne se nourrir que de stéréotypes (213).

Le lecteur croit au début que le roman sera le récit d'une banale adolescente américaine moyenne qui se révolte contre tous et contre tout en « ne rêv[ant] jamais à rien. Surtout pas à l'avenir » (Mavrikakis 25). Amy Duchesnay a grandi rue Veronica Lane, dans une maison de tôle avec sa mère Denise et sa tante Babette, deux immigrantes. Elle ressemble à toutes les jeunes femmes

américaines ainsi qu'à de nombreux personnages contemporains, désabusés, en colère contre la société dans laquelle ils vivent (Lapointe 148). Enfant non désirée, elle est souvent comparée à sa sœur Angèle, décédée à la naissance. « Cette absence initiale d'amour s'avère un terrain fertile de révolte, de haine et de mépris » (Lequin 245) car depuis son plus jeune âge, Amy regrette d'être née. Cette adolescente ordinaire du Michigan aux allures de punkette rock'n'roll aime Alice Cooper dont elle se plaît à chanter *Welcome To My Nightmare*, fréquente un *high school*, s'ennuie, fait l'amour sans passion dans les voitures des garçons qui l'indiffèrent, travaille dans le K-Mart, magasin libre-service et « fai[t] du stop en espérant qu'on [l]'embarquera, [la] kidnappera, [la] ravira à la médiocrité de [s]a vie » (Mavrikakis 17). Née à Chicago en 1961, la protagoniste semble mener la vie insouciant de toutes les Américaines de son âge.

À cette banalité apparente de la protagoniste correspond la médiocrité du décor. Le Bay City des années 1970 est une petite ville provinciale américaine, « avec ses gentilles familles chrétiennes installées dans de jolies maisons aux canapés en Skaï, son supermarché où l'on trouve tout ce qu'il faut pour combler le vide de l'existence [et] ses usines du Michigan qui déversent tranquillement leurs émanations toxiques » (Basch). L'espace de la banlieue, parsemée de parcs d'habitation qui se sont répandus partout aux États-Unis dès les années quarante du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, puis de la même manière au Canada quelques années plus tard, évoque un lieu ordinaire. Toutefois, dès les premières pages, une certaine inquiétude s'installe. La banlieue devient peu réaliste, floue, voire menaçante. Le roman s'ouvre sur une série de négations ayant pour effet de déréaliser cet univers banlieusard états-unien :

*Je ne sais même pas<sup>2</sup> s'il y a une baie dans cette petite ville du Michigan où j'ai passé dix-huit années de ma vie, et puis surtout tous les étés bien longs de mon adolescence. Je ne sais même pas s'il y a une promenade au bord de l'eau, un chemin sur lequel les foyers américains vont faire des balades le dimanche après-midi ou encore tiennent à faire courir Sparky, le gros labrador blond, après avoir laissé l'Oldsmobile à quatre portes sur le parking attenant aux berges. Je ne sais pas si l'hiver sur le lac Huron rappelle quelque période glaciaire, primitive et oubliée et s'il est effrayant de s'aventurer sur l'eau violette, gelée, quand les*

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<sup>2</sup> Dans ce début de la phrase, on pourrait voir une référence à *Hiroshima mon amour* de Marguerite Duras, publié en 1960 : « LUI : Tu n'as rien vu à Hiroshima. Rien. ELLE : J'ai tout vu. Tout... Ainsi l'hôpital je l'ai vu. J'en suis sûre. L'hôpital existe à Hiroshima. Comment aurais-je pu éviter de le voir ? LUI : Tu n'as pas vu d'hôpital à Hiroshima. Tu n'as rien vu à Hiroshima... ELLE : Je n'ai rien inventé. LUI : Tu as tout inventé. ELLE : Rien. De même que dans l'amour cette illusion existe, cette illusion de pouvoir ne jamais oublier, de même j'ai eu l'illusion devant Hiroshima que jamais je n'oublierai. De même que dans l'amour » (8).

tempêtes balayant les Prairies d'ouest en est apportent des flocons gros comme des désespoirs. *Je ne sais* si l'esprit des Indiens d'Amérique hante encore quelque rive sauvage et si le mot Pontiac veut dire autre chose qu'une marque d'automobiles. De Bay City, *je ne connais rien* (9-10 ; c'est nous qui soulignons).

Pour le professeur Daniel Laforest, dès l'ouverture du roman, nous sommes confrontés à une image en négatif de ce réalisme aussi consensuel que superficiel de la banlieue nord-américaine (Laforest 217). Selon Jean-François Chassay, par contre, le début du roman est une mise en scène de l'ennui, d'une forme de néant existentiel et culturel (Chassay 3), souligné par les phrases : « 4122 Veronica Lane. C'est là que j'ai habité. Veronica Lane, une rue au nom sans histoire, une rue de l'avenir » (Mavrikakis 10).

La couverture du roman semble correspondre parfaitement à l'ambiance qui domine la ville. Elle met en relief l'aspect sinistre et brouillé de Bay City et de son environnement en représentant l'endroit où la narratrice aurait pu passer les premières dix-huit années de sa vie. Le ciel mauve figure sur la grande partie de la page couverture dans deux éditions du roman, québécoise et française. C'est très symbolique puisque le ciel monopolise l'attention du lecteur et accapare une grande place dans le roman. On y voit également une maison de tôle, petite et peu attrayante, un peu comme une prison sans issue. Dans l'édition québécoise, on y voit également des fils électriques qui prouvent que l'industrialisation règne dans cette petite ville. La teinte du ciel s'avère donner un aspect irréel ou non-naturel au lieu.

Née un 4 juillet, Amy et son cousin Victor, né quelques semaines après elle, sont « de petits Américains tout neufs » (Mavrikakis 11) qui permettent à Denise, mère d'Amy et à Babette, sa sœur, d'oublier les rages et les colères de l'Europe guerrière. En fait, les deux femmes sont des Juives polonaises qui ont échappé à la Shoah grâce à l'aide d'un couple de Normands qui leur a donné une nouvelle identité française, leur langue et leur nom. Après la guerre et la mort de leurs parents adoptifs, les deux sœurs se réfugient aux États-Unis où elles nient leur judéité et s'installent d'abord à New-York et ensuite à Bay City, dans le Michigan en espérant « que les rats, les guerres et les blessures [y sont] inexistantes » (Mavrikakis 125). Elles peuvent ainsi commencer « une vie dans un pays sans rétroviseur, où on fonce sans que le passé ne fasse retour » (Chassay 3).

Enfant d'une banlieue américaine, élevée par les Françaises faussement catholiques, Amy est une immigrante européenne de seconde génération. Elle vit dans un univers « curieusement francophone » (Barrot). Dans son mémoire de maîtrise sur la récupération identitaire dans *Le ciel de Bay City*, Catherine Lord note qu'après s'être installées aux États-Unis, la tante et la mère d'Amy se déracinent encore par certains traits identitaires, dont celui de la langue (14). Le français devient donc pour la narratrice un élément identificatoire

inexplicable, ce qui la marginalise encore plus par rapport à d'autres adolescents américains. La langue, normalement vecteur d'une communauté, s'avère restreinte à la domesticité (Lord 14). De fait, la narratrice ignore même pourquoi elle parle français. Pour elle, la langue française est une langue d'enfance. D'ailleurs elle parle un français des années cinquante utilisé par sa mère et sa tante, dans lequel se retrouve de l'argot désuet (Mavrikakis 56). Elle ne sait même pas que c'est une langue également parlée en dehors du cadre familial jusqu'au moment où, un jour au K-Mart où elle travaille, la fille rencontre un couple de Français. Cela devient une révélation pour elle car la jeune Américaine découvre que la langue française existe ailleurs que dans sa famille et n'a pas été inventée par les deux sœurs afin de « [la] rendre folle » (Mavrikakis 29). Elle constate avec surprise qu'« [a]illeurs, [elle] peu[t] les trahir en français, dénoncer leurs délires dans leur propre langue et surtout rire, plaisanter, exister dans des mots qui depuis [s]on enfance [lui] obstruent la gorge » (29).

Dans sa communication intitulée « L'identité palimpseste dans *Le ciel de Bay City* », le professeur Bruno Lemieux, fait un rapprochement entre le prénom anglophone Amy et le prénom français Aimée. D'après lui, Amy est une version anglophone du prénom répandu dès le XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle dans le monde anglo-saxon grâce au succès du roman de Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, où l'héroïne s'appelle ainsi. Aux dires du professeur, ce prénom souligne tristement et ironiquement le fait que la narratrice de *Le ciel de Bay City* n'est pas aimée de sa mère (Lemieux) qui « pleure souvent dans les bras de sa sœur Babette [...] répétant qu'elle aurait préféré avoir une fille morte, enterrée, comme sa première fille Angèle [...] plutôt qu'une mioche aussi idiote [qu'elle] » (Mavrikakis 13).

Bien que les deux sœurs soient imbues de la culture et de la cuisine françaises, elles préparent ostensiblement une grande fête à l'américaine à l'occasion du 4 juillet car :

[m]algré leurs excentricités vestimentaires, devant les voisins, elles veulent se montrer de bonnes Américaines bien intégrées à la vie de Bay City. Ce soir, ma tante sera déguisée en statue de la liberté pour accueillir ses hôtes. Les décorations que mon oncle doit poser partout dans le jardin et devant le garage seront bleues, blanches ou rouges, aux couleurs de l'Amérique. Un grand drapeau américain sera accroché par mon cousin Victor sur la porte du garage et les serviettes en papier, elles aussi arboreront l'étendard du pays. Ma tante et sa sœur sont malgré tout patriotes. Elles croient dans cette nation qui leur a permis d'oublier le passé, de refaire leur vie (193).



Amy semble incarner la rédemption et la confiance en l'avenir désiré par les deux sœurs. Cette volonté de « refaire sa vie » est mise en relief par la date de l'anniversaire de la jeune Américaine, date symbolique, jour de la fête nationale américaine :

[L]e *4<sup>th</sup> of July*, la fête de l'Amérique. Je suis née ce jour-là. Le jour de l'Indépendance, de la liberté, de la coupure avec l'Ancien Monde. Moi, la mauvaise graine du nouveau continent, moi l'esclave de cette terre si souvent morne et de ce ciel si triste, je suis venue au monde le jour même de la fête de tous les Américains et mon anniversaire est accompagné d'un magnifique feu d'artifice qui colore de façon kaléidoscopique le ciel estival de Bay City. Je suis destinée à me noyer dans le bonheur de tout un peuple qui s'est affranchi du joug européen et il m'est difficile, depuis bientôt dix-huit ans, de ne pas être joyeuse le 4 juillet (112).

Une fois de plus, les couleurs s'associent à l'action et mettent en relief l'histoire d'Amy Duchesnay.

Comme le souligne Catherine Mavrikakis dans une entrevue, elle désirait à travers le travail sur les couleurs montrer l'ambivalence du ciel américain (Barrot). Chez la romancière, le ciel acquiert une dimension particulière. Nombreux sont les extraits où la narratrice scrute le ciel américain, ce « ciel de l'Amérique gonflé de son futur vide [qu'il faudrait préférer] à tous les cieux du monde » (Mavrikakis 32). Le ciel mavrikakien est d'un côté plein d'espoir, il symbolise les États-Unis, pays de tous les possibles, étant donné que « [l']avenir paraît [...] appartenir à ce continent où tout est plus gai, plus neuf » (Mavrikakis, la quatrième de couverture). D'un autre côté, comme le constate Mavrikakis, ce ciel devient porteur d'un passé qui le hante, « c'est-à-dire du passé de l'Europe, donc des cendres de l'Europe, parce que c'était aussi porteur de l'Holocauste, de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale » (Barrot).

Ce passé européen refait surface la nuit car la jeune Américaine est littéralement hantée par l'histoire tragique de sa famille et ses grands-parents tués à Auschwitz. Émigrée en Amérique afin de tourner la page, sa mère, Juive polonaise, voulant se sentir libre et sans mémoire, cache ses origines à la fille. Amy grandit donc dans le déni du génocide des Juifs, silence désiré par la mère, en ignorant son héritage social, sa famille assassinée dans les camps d'extermination. Ce passé revient pourtant à Amy sous forme de rêves « qui font froid dans le dos » (Mavrikakis 98) qu'elle fait depuis son enfance. Elle les décrit comme suit :

Toute petite, je me réveillais en nage et je voulais raconter à ma mère ce que j'avais vu dans la nuit sanglante, cinabre, de Bay City. Ma mère coupait court à mes histoires. Bien vite elle me défendit de faire le récit de mes rêves. Denise y pressentait sans doute quelque chose qui lui appartenait, qu'elle ou quelqu'un de sa

famille avait peut-être déjà vécu. Elle préférerait que je me taise. Que je me rendorme vite, emportant avec moi une partie d'elle, ces morceaux de vie qu'elle avait décidé d'enterrer dans le ciel de l'Europe. Ma tante, elle, quand ma mère était absente, accourait à mes cris animaux qui résonnaient dans la maison de tôle (99).

Ses nuits sont peuplées de cauchemars et d'images d'un passé terrifiant consciemment tu par sa famille. D'après le psychiatre chez qui la jeune fille est envoyée par la psychologue de l'école inquiétée par le récit de ses rêves, Amy souffre d'un traumatisme transgénérationnel venu de sa mère et de sa tante. Dans un groupe thérapeutique qu'elle fréquente, les images de ses cauchemars présentent étrangement des traits communs avec des souvenirs des soldats revenus d'une guerre :

Une fois par semaine, je me retrouvais donc dans des groupes de thérapie, en compagnie d'hommes de trente à cinquante ans, de vétérans de guerre de Corée ou du Vietnam sur lesquels on faisait des tests de toutes sortes. Ce que je racontais alors de mes rêves ressemblait assez à ce que tous ces hommes avaient vécu au combat. Nous partagions des nuits semblables, peuplées de morts et d'horreurs, de démembrements et de peurs. Mais moi, contrairement à tous ces anciens soldats, je n'étais pas allée faire la guerre au Vietnam ou en Corée. J'étais une jeune fille de dix-sept ans, sans aucun souvenir personnel, vierge de tout événement traumatisant (103).

La jeune femme porte donc en elle la mémoire confuse de l'Occident et devient « l'héritière d'une double histoire, celle de l'Europe qui conserve et qui commémore, et celle de l'Amérique qui souhaite oublier pour mieux se refonder » (Lapointe 147).

Cela nous renvoie à la notion de postmémoire forgée par Marianne Hirsch, professeure de littérature comparée à l'Université Columbia. La chercheuse se sert de ce concept pour désigner le rapport entre la « génération d'après » et le trauma culturel, collectif et personnel vécu par ceux qui l'ont précédée (cf. Hirsch, « Postmémoire » 205). Ce sont des traces des traumatismes laissées sur les générations suivant celles des victimes, des expériences dont la « génération d'après » se souvient à travers des histoires, des images et des comportements parmi lesquels elle a été élevée et qui semblent former sa propre mémoire (cf. Hirsch, « Postmémoire » 205). Or ce ne sont pas des souvenirs mais des projections, des créations et des investissements imaginaires. Le mot aide ainsi à décrire cette forme indirecte de mémoire, son caractère « retardé » et les multiples médiations par lesquelles elle passe. La professeure fait aussi la distinction entre la « postmémoire familiale » et la « postmémoire par affiliation » (« affiliative »). Dans le premier cas, interviennent aussi des artefacts culturels et, réciproquement, dans le second cas, le travail psychique chez des descendants plus indirects d'événements

catastrophiques peut avoir la même intensité qu'un héritage familial par le biais de l'appel à certaines figures de style et à certaines conventions artistiques (cf. Hirsch, « Postmémoire/Postmemory »).

Le réalisme du roman bascule au moment où Amy retrouve dans un cagibi de la maison de Veronica Lane un couple de vieillards aux vêtements d'un autre temps, prostrés dans une saleté qui contraste avec la propreté de la maison entretenue par la tante Babette de façon maniaque, qui sont censés être ses grands-parents, Elsa Rozenweig et Georges Rosenberg, morts respectivement en 1943 et 1944 dans un camp de concentration. Ainsi dans la trame s'intègre une dimension qui échappe à la rationalité. Selon les propos de Bruno Lemieux, cette irruption surnaturelle des grands-parents morts à Auschwitz dans le quotidien d'Amy rappelle d'une certaine manière le réalisme magique de la littérature latino-américaine, surtout les univers décalés de Carlos Fuentes et de Gabriel Garcia Marquez (cf. Lemieux).

Comme le souligne pertinemment Mathieu Arsenault dans son compte-rendu du roman, « [c]e couple de grands-parents sans âge existe en même temps qu'il ne peut exister, et pourtant cette aporie ne les empêche d'être absolument présents, de ne pas être autre chose que cette présence inéluctable et prégnante d'une histoire familiale déchirée par la Shoah dont le deuil est impossible » (45).

Le spectre du grand-père demande à Amy de mettre le feu à tout cela. En réponse à cette demande, le soir de ses 18 ans, avec ses grands-parents, elle provoque l'incendie de la maison. *Le ciel de Bay City* s'arrange autour d'une date, celle de la fête nationale américaine, le 4 juillet. Dans la partie centrale du roman, l'héroïne retrace les quatre jours ayant mené à l'anniversaire de ses dix-huit ans, au soir duquel toute la famille a péri dans un incendie que la narratrice affirme avoir allumé. L'incendie de la maison familiale d'Amy dans la nuit du 4 au 5 juillet 1979, dans lequel meurent toute la maisonnée et le chien ne possède aucune cause objective. Catherine Mavrikakis fait de nouveau planer le doute car le lecteur ne peut vraiment savoir si le feu a été provoqué par Amy, aidée de ses grands-parents, ou causé par un hasard improbable résultant des braises d'un barbecue emportées par le vent. Le mystère est impossible à élucider. La jeune Américaine devient par conséquent la seule survivante de sa lignée, répétant l'histoire des camps de concentration où ses grands-parents maternels ont perdu la vie. Ainsi *incendie-t-elle l'histoire* comme le remarque Lucie Lequin (246). Ce geste ne délivre pourtant pas l'héroïne. Le sentiment de culpabilité l'accompagne partout. Au lieu d'« être jugée, déclarée coupable, puis condamnée à perpétuité ou encore à la peine de mort » (Mavrikakis 38), elle reste disculpée par toutes les instances extérieures et le fardeau de l'histoire pèse toujours sur elle. La jeune femme n'a pas droit à une rédemption. L'Amérique censée être sans mémoire devient une terre où il n'est pas possible de faire table rase de la mémoire et le poids

de la survivance repose encore sur les générations qui viennent. « Je suis damnée, éternellement damnée. Le néant m'est, par ma faute, interdit » (268) explique la narratrice.

La soif de recommencement et une volonté d'en finir avec le passé s'entremêlent sur ce continent « [...] où tout est plus gai, plus neuf » (Mavrikakis, la quatrième de couverture). Toutefois l'Amérique montre encore son autre visage. Si l'Amérique est associée au renouvellement, elle est aussi doublée de l'oubli, du déni ou de l'indifférence. La protagoniste ne peut s'empêcher de tisser des liens entre l'espace américain qui l'entoure et la mort. Le long extrait ci-dessous illustre bien ce paradoxe :

L'Amérique est une fête, mais elle se change aussitôt en commémoration funèbre. Tout ici vire au tragique sans crier garde. Mais on oublie, on repart pour un autre tour. La machine à leurres se remet en marche. Le ciel mauve des hivers et des étés du Nord est si rassurant. Il témoigne de la prospérité de notre économie. Sa toxicité est la garantie de notre esprit de conquête, de notre réussite industrielle. Après avoir enterré leurs morts, demain les Américains se mettront devant la télé et regarderont des reprises du *Sonny and Cher Comedy Hour*, verront avec joie le *Donny & Marie* ou s'esclafferont devant *All In The Family*<sup>3</sup>. J'aime profondément ce pays illusoire où il est possible de croire en demain malgré l'ignominie des temps. Je suis américaine. J'ai voulu l'être. J'abhorre depuis toujours l'Europe qui hurle en moi. J'aimerais désespérément ne pas penser à hier et n'avoir foi qu'en demain. Mais ma vie a été décidée bien avant ma propre naissance. Sur mon berceau planait l'ombre du nazisme et je n'ai pu malgré la télé, le K-Mart, les voitures, le sexe, la musique et Alice Cooper déposer ce fardeau pesant de mes origines. La seconde génération d'immigrants est maudite. Il faut des siècles pour se remettre de l'histoire de sa famille (208).

Par *Le ciel de Bay City*, Catherine Mavrikakis nous plonge dans les méandres d'une mémoire américaine construite sur les cendres européennes et semble contester l'existence de cette société « sans mémoire » qu'est la société américaine. À travers l'histoire d'une jeune fille ordinaire de Bay City, vivant dans un univers francophone, Amy Duchesnay, enfant d'une Juive polonaise venue au Nouveau Monde afin de fuir les horreurs de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, la romancière réactualise le thème de l'Holocauste dont elle évoque les conséquences pour les générations futures. Par cette « pénétrante métaphore sur la mémoire et l'oubli » (Payot), aux dires de Marianne Payot, l'auteure revisite les relations entre l'Ancien et le Nouveau Monde et repense le phénomène de la guerre dans le contexte nord-américain.

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<sup>3</sup> *Sonny and Cher Comedy Hour*, *Donny & Marie* et *All In The Family* étaient des émissions américaines (une série télévisée et deux émissions de variétés) sur les réseaux CBS et ABC dans les années 1970.

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**L'ENFANT, LA GUERRE, LE TRAUMA.  
LA PAROLE DES « ENFANTS DU SILENCE »**

**Abstract**

In the Western world, for a long time it was believed that children were immune to the repercussions of war because they refrained from verbalizing their experiences. It was only at the end of the 1970s that, the so-called 'children of silence' slowly started to express what had happened to them and the first publications of autobiographical stories about childhood during the Holocaust appeared. Today, abundant and versatile literature discussing the consequences of wars and totalitarian regimes for children proliferate.

The present article studies novels by Quebecois migrant writers originating from Eastern Europe and Haiti who place child survivors of World War II and the Duvalier regime at the centre of their stories. This literary corpus is approached by explaining relevant historical and theoretical aspects concerning child survivors and trauma. Then, a panoramic view of the various fictional representations of the narrative transmission about traumatic events experienced by the young protagonists is presented. Finally, the potential benefits of the memory work for the contemporary reader – Quebecois or francophone –, but especially the reader remote in time and space from armed conflicts, are discussed.

**Keywords:** child survivors, trauma, war, migrant literature, Quebec

**Résumé**

Dans le monde occidental, on a longtemps cru que les enfants étaient imperméables aux troubles de la guerre parce qu'ils n'en parlaient pas. Cependant, à la fin des années 1970, les premiers soi-disant « enfants du silence » ont commencé à demander la parole. De cette époque datent aussi les premiers récits autobiographiques sur des enfances pendant la Shoah. Aujourd'hui, des ouvrages de tout genre évoquant les répercussions des guerres et des régimes totalitaires sur les enfants se trouvent dans presque toutes les bibliothèques.

Le présent article porte sur des romans d'écrivains migrants québécois, qui sont originaires de l'Europe de l'Est et d'Haïti. Au centre de leurs récits se trouvent des enfants survivants de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale et du régime duvaliériste. Tout d'abord, nous appréhendons ce corpus littéraire sous l'angle des aspects historiques et théoriques quant aux enfants survivants et au trauma. Ensuite, nous fournissons une vue panoramique des différentes représentations fictionnelles de la transmission narrative d'événements traumatiques vécus par les protagonistes en bas âge. À la fin, nous nous interrogeons sur les bénéfices potentiels de ce travail de mémoire dans les exemples mentionnés pour le lecteur contemporain, québécois (ou francophone en général), mais surtout éloigné dans le temps et dans l'espace des conflits armés.

**Mots-clés :** enfants survivants, trauma, guerre, écriture migrante, Québec

### De la « découverte » des « enfants survivants »

Chaque guerre, conflit armé ou agitation politique fait des victimes parmi lesquelles se trouvent non seulement des adultes, mais aussi un grand nombre d'enfants, un des groupes les plus fragiles de la société. À proprement parler, les enfants représentent toujours

les premières personnes à être touchées par les conflits, que ce soit directement ou indirectement. Les conflits armés les affectent de bien des façons, et même s'ils ne sont pas tués ou blessés, ils peuvent être rendus orphelins ou être enlevés ou violés ou profondément marqués et traumatisés après avoir été mis directement en présence d'actes de violence ou avoir dû endurer un déplacement forcé, la pauvreté ou la perte d'êtres chers (Bellamy 41).

Alors que le discours des adultes qui ont survécu à des conflits géopolitiques, notamment à la Shoah, a été abordé et analysé dans différentes disciplines, telles que la médecine, la psychanalyse ou la littérature (surtout anglophone), ces mêmes disciplines ont longtemps négligé celui des enfants placés dans des situations similaires. Dans la conscience de la société et de la médecine, la catégorie de personnes désignées (au-dessus des frontières linguistiques) par le terme anglais *Child Survivors* – *enfants survivants* ou *enfants rescapés* en français – a tardé à se mettre en place parce que « pendant longtemps, les enfants survivants n'ont pas été reconnus comme victimes par le groupe social » (Feldman 192). En fait, ce n'est que vers la fin des années 1970 que l'expression de *Child Survivors* s'est développée (cf. Zalashik 119)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Les enfants des survivants de la Shoah (la deuxième génération) ont été reconnus comme un groupe de victimes de la Shoah environ une décennie plus tôt, à la fin des



Ce retard dans la reconnaissance publique de la souffrance des enfants survivants est dû à plusieurs facteurs : d'une part, les jeunes qui ont survécu à la Shoah et qui n'ont pas montré de troubles psychiques après la Guerre ont été considérés comme sains de corps et d'esprit. D'autre part, ni les médecins ni les autorités judiciaires n'ont défendu les intérêts des enfants survivants qui, au plus, « n'étaient pas considérés comme des survivants, ni par eux-mêmes ni par les autres » (Suleiman 82). De ce fait, personne n'a entendu leur récit et la majorité des enfants survivants s'est tue rapidement (cf. Zalashik 121-122). Le psychiatre Robert Krell, fondateur du *Vancouver Holocaust Education Center*, qui était lui-même un enfant caché pendant la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, explique que la langue de l'enfant survivant était justement celle du silence parce que les adultes les encourageaient à continuer leur vie en oubliant le passé et en escamotant leurs souvenirs (cf. Krell, dans Kellermann 55).

Vers la fin des années 1970, ces « enfants du silence » commençaient à prendre lentement la parole (cf. Krell 2). De cette époque datent, par exemple, les premiers récits autobiographiques racontant l'enfance de survivants pendant la Shoah et la fondation de premiers regroupements des *Child Survivors*. Depuis 1988, la *World Federation of Jewish Child Survivors of the Holocaust and Descendants* (WFJCSHD) organise des colloques aux États-Unis et au Canada, mais aussi en Israël et en Europe durant lesquels plusieurs centaines de personnes se rencontrent afin de discuter de questions liées aux *Child Survivors* (cf. Seltzer).

Dans les années 1980, les premières analyses psychologiques ont été entreprises et ont montré que les enfants survivants souffrent autant que la première génération (née avant la guerre) ou la deuxième génération (née après la guerre) de répercussions psychiques engendrées par la Deuxième Guerre mondiale (cf. Zalashik 124-125). Afin de tenir compte de la spécificité de la souffrance des enfants, la professeure américaine de littérature française et de littérature comparée, Susan Suleiman, a développé une nouvelle désignation pour ce groupe. Pour elle, ces enfants victimes font partie de la « génération 1,5 », terme qui englobe tous « ceux qui étaient trop jeunes pour avoir eu une compréhension adulte de ce qui leur arrivait, mais qui étaient en âge d'avoir été là [italique dans l'original] pendant la persécution nazie des Juifs » (Suleiman 82).

Comme un grand nombre d'enfants à travers le monde a été victime de conflits géopolitiques, et l'est toujours, il nous semble judicieux d'élargir la définition de Suleiman. Nous y incluons, sans faire de distinction et sans vouloir dénigrer quiconque, tous les enfants, peu importe leurs origines, ayant

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années 1960 (cf. Zalashik 123). Des colloques organisés par les enfants de la première génération ont également déjà eu lieu en Amérique du Nord au début des années 1970 (cf. Krell 2).

survécu à un conflit belliqueux dont ils étaient des témoins involontaires et qui a laissé sur eux des cicatrices psychiques, souvent désignés par le terme d'État de Stress post-traumatique, ESPT (en anglais : *Post-traumatic Stress Disorder*, PTSD).

### Le trauma-tisme

Le terme « trauma » est issu du grec ancien où il désigne « blessure », « dommage » ou « désastre » – trois définitions dont seulement la première a été retenue. Le terme a été longtemps utilisé pour définir uniquement une blessure infligée au corps (trauma physique), mais au fil du temps le mot a changé de signification ; un trauma est devenu synonyme de « blessure de l'âme » (trauma psychique) (cf. Caruth 3 ; Crocq 214). Ce n'est qu'en 1980 que l'Association américaine de psychiatrie (APA) a inclus l'État de Stress post-traumatique dans la troisième version du *Manuel diagnostique et statistique des troubles mentaux*<sup>2</sup>, afin de rassembler les symptômes qui peuvent apparaître suite à l'exposition à un ou plusieurs événements traumatiques.

Dans la langue de tous les jours, le mot trauma peut signifier à la fois un événement traumatique (cause) et l'impact psychique (conséquences) d'un tel événement. On peut aussi distinguer entre trauma et traumatisme comme l'a fait le psychanalyste et enfant survivant Boris Cyrulnik, sur le modèle d'Anna Freud. Selon lui,

le premier coup, c'est le trauma : le coup dans le réel, celui qui fait mal, fait peur et humilie. Le second coup, c'est le traumatisme : celui qui passe dans la représentation du réel de la déchirure subie, de l'idée que je m'en fais, de l'histoire que je me raconte de ma blessure et du récit que vous en faites et qui peut m'humilier à nouveau, me faire souffrir ou me réparer (Cyrulnik cité dans Orban 54).

En d'autres termes, une personne traumatisée souffre deux fois : une première fois en recevant le coup, et une deuxième fois en y repensant (cf. Cyrulnik, *La mémoire traumatique : Conférence*).

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<sup>2</sup> Le manuel *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, mieux connu sous son acronyme anglais DSM, a été développé par l'APA avec le but de classer et répertorier l'ensemble des troubles mentaux avec leurs diagnostics distincts. Quoique le manuel soit utilisé par des cliniciens dans le monde entier, il existe tout un mouvement anti-DSM qui craint que le manuel ne crée de nouvelles pathologies ou ne mène à un surdiagnostic et à une surmédicalisation, surtout chez les enfants, et ne fasse la promotion du marché pharmaceutique (cf. Cabut).

Comme indiqué ci-dessus, on a longtemps cru que le jeune âge protégeait les enfants des traumatismes, mais ce n'est pas le cas. Un enfant qui vit ou devient le « témoin d'un événement impliquant un risque de mort ou de blessure grave avec menace à l'intégrité physique » (Daligand 223) peut – tout comme un adulte – subir un trauma et, par la suite, subir des conséquences psychologiques ou somatiques immédiates, à moyen ou à long terme<sup>3</sup>. En conséquence, le fait de survivre à une situation extrême pendant une guerre ou un conflit armé n'est souvent pas perçu comme l'heureux hasard de la fortune, mais plutôt comme un fardeau par les survivants. C'est ce que révèle déjà l'acception du mot « survivre », qui désigne

l'exigence, faite à chacun, de continuer de vivre, ici et maintenant, malgré l'expérience de la mort qui s'impose à sa vie. La distinction est mieux marquée par certaines langues, comme l'allemand : *überleben*, vivre au-delà, *fortleben*, continuer à vivre [italique dans l'original]. Dans le deuxième cas, il s'agit alors de vivre non pas au-delà des limites de l'existence, après la mort, mais dans l'expérience même de ces limites, en assumant les ruptures et la précarité de la vie (Lemieux 222).

Afin d'alléger le fardeau de la survie des personnes souffrant des répercussions d'un trauma, un « transfert narratif » de l'expérience traumatique de l'intérieur vers l'extérieur s'est avéré salvateur dans un grand nombre de cas. Ce travail de mémoire par la parole ou par l'écriture permet de conjurer le danger que le passé traumatique gouverne la personne traumatisée, et même, au mieux, de maîtriser l'émotion (cf. Cyrulnik, « La mémoire traumatique » 201). De plus, la narrativisation peut avoir un autre impact positif que Cyrulnik explique en ces termes : « Raconter son désastre, c'est le faire exister dans l'esprit d'un autre et se donner ainsi l'illusion d'être compris, accepté malgré sa blessure. [...] Il y a une transformation émotionnelle de son épreuve qui, dès qu'elle est partagée, change de forme » (Cyrulnik, *Un merveilleux malheur* 106). Par conséquent, afin de donner sens aux événements passés, il faut les re-interpréter à la lumière du présent.

C'est précisément ce que font les protagonistes des romans issus de la plume des écrivains de l'Europe de l'Est, dont Régine Robin, Monique Bosco, Tacia Werbowska et Ilona Flutsztejn-Gruda, ainsi que d'Haïti, dont Émile Ollivier, Marie-Sœurte Mathieu, Antony Phelps, Gary Klang, Stanley Péan et Marie-Célie Agnant. Comme nous le verrons par la suite, tous leurs protagonistes font partie de la génération 1,5, marquée à jamais par un conflit belliqueux. Nous rencontrons ces personnages à un moment où ils sont en

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<sup>3</sup> Pour une description des différentes agressions et conséquences qu'un enfant peut subir en temps de guerre, voir l'article « L'enfant et la guerre » de Tomkiewicz.

train de repenser l'événement – l'exposition à la violence, la perte d'êtres chers et le péril de mort quotidien vécus durant leur enfance – qui a bouleversé le reste de leur vie et qui les a menés à entamer un travail de mémoire.

### **La parole des « enfants du silence » de l'Europe de l'Est**

Plusieurs des romans d'auteurs québécois provenant de l'Europe de l'Est dégagent un travail de mémoire manifeste lié à la Deuxième Guerre mondiale. Ils donnent fréquemment à lire une rétrospective de la part d'un narrateur ou d'une narratrice âgé/e qui raconte, pour la première fois de sa vie, l'histoire de ses origines perdues ou bien sa survivance à la Shoah.

*La Québécoise* (1983) de Régine Robin, née à Paris de parents juifs polonais, illustre bien comment le passé traumatique de la narratrice provoque un style de narration peu conventionnel se manifestant surtout par le recours à la polyphonie et au collage. Quoique ce style de narration n'ait pas été pour Robin un choix esthétique, mais un impératif éthique avec lequel elle a tâché de préserver la pluralité culturelle au Québec (cf. Aronoff viii)<sup>4</sup>, il s'agit également d'une mise en relief de la voix de l'enfant survivant. Ce dernier est incarné par la narratrice adulte à la première personne qui est hantée par des visions cauchemardesques de son enfance à Paris durant la Deuxième Guerre mondiale. En même temps qu'elle subissait la Guerre à la maison et à l'école, la jeune fille a été témoin de la déliquescence de la société. De plus, elle a perdu sa mère lors de la rafle du Vélodrome d'hiver en juillet 1942 lors de laquelle les nazis ont déporté tous les Juifs de Paris. Au moment où la narratrice essaye de trouver sa place à Montréal, ville dans laquelle elle s'est installée plusieurs décennies plus tard, elle est constamment ramenée à ses sentiments d'abandon et de perte éprouvés pendant cet épisode bouleversant, voire traumatique, de l'Histoire. Afin d'exprimer sa confusion intérieure, la narratrice recourt à un style embrouillé et souvent saccadé, voire tronqué, qui rend perceptible aux lecteurs son âme blessée. À travers le roman, son déchirement intérieur et l'impossibilité d'intégrer la perte de sa mère dans sa généalogie deviennent reconnaissables à travers la façon dont elle décrit ses souvenirs ; notamment la disposition des mots – même pas des phrases – sur la page semble révélatrice de sa blessure ouverte :

Metro Grenelle. Après Grenelle. Je ne sais plus  
La ligne se perd dans ma mémoire  
les Juifs  
doivent

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<sup>4</sup> Pour une discussion de la conception de Robin sur l'éthique, voir l'article « L'éth(n)ique, *La Québécoise* et l'écriture migrante québécoise » de Verduyn.

prendre  
le  
dernier  
wagon.  
Il faisait beau ce 16 juillet 1942  
autour de la rue du D<sup>r</sup> Finlay.  
de la rue Nocard,  
de la rue Nelaton.  
Autour de Grenelle, XV<sup>e</sup> arrondissement.  
Wurden vergast.  
L'opération s'appelait  
VENT PRINTANIER.  
Jamais revenus (204).

La Deuxième Guerre mondiale a aussi marqué la narratrice de quarante ans de *La femme de Loth* (1970) de Monique Bosco, née à Vienne. À cause de la Guerre, Hélène a perdu toute sa famille maternelle qui, étant d'origine juive, a péri pendant la Shoah. Dans son bilan de vie, elle reproche à ses parents, qui ont émigré au Canada avant l'éclatement de la Guerre, de l'avoir « dépossédée de cette appartenance » (64), malgré le fait qu'en restant en France, elle aurait partagé le destin mortel des siens. Qui plus est, le destin la frappe de nouveau dans le Nouveau Monde : d'abord, la fillette de dix ans échappe de justesse à un viol, ensuite, elle perd ses parents dans un accident de voiture et enfin, elle rencontre trois hommes qui abusent de sa fragilité psychique. Traumatisée par ces multiples coups du destin, Hélène éprouve, malgré son âge avancé, des difficultés énormes à énoncer ce qui s'est passé et à établir une chronologie de son vécu, ce qui se manifeste dans un récit saccadé, a-chronologique et non structuré de 240 courts chapitres sur moins de 200 pages.

Déjà dans son premier roman, *Un amour maladroit* (1961), Monique Bosco décrit le destin difficile d'un enfant survivant. Prenant la parole à la première personne du singulier, la narratrice entame à l'âge de vingt ans le récit de sa vie en mettant l'accent sur son enfance en France pendant la Deuxième Guerre mondiale. D'un côté, cette enfance a été affectée par la perte de son autodétermination : c'est-à-dire qu'en raison de son apparence physique trahissant ses origines, elle ne pouvait ni fréquenter l'école ni sortir de chez elle. De l'autre, cette enfance a aussi été façonnée par la perte de ses parents, et plus particulièrement de l'amour parental, si essentiel pour que l'enfant puisse construire une image positive de sa personne et développer sa confiance en soi. Ces expériences ont pour conséquences que la jeune fille se replie de plus en plus sur elle-même jusqu'à renier ses origines. C'est seulement suite à un long et pénible processus de remémoration et de narrativisation accompli devant un psychanalyste qu'elle sera capable d'accepter son passé traumatique et de s'accepter elle-même au final :

« [J]’accepte que mon reflet me paraisse familier et inévitable. [...] Je me reconnais enfin » (213).

Les enfants survivants, déracinés et traumatisés par la Shoah, sont également au cœur des *romans miniatures* de Tecia Werbowski, née à Lviv, ville alors située en Pologne, mais aujourd’hui en Ukraine. Dans *Le mur entre nous* (1996), la narratrice-protagoniste, Iréna, apprend à l’âge de dix-huit ans qu’elle n’est pas celle qu’elle croit être : à l’origine, Iréna se nommait Estera ; alors qu’elle était bébé, elle a été sauvée d’un ghetto juif par un couple de Polonais catholiques qui l’ont rebaptisée. En même temps, Iréna reçoit un sac de ses parents adoptifs qui contient un manuscrit écrit par sa mère biologique. En lisant ce legs maternel, Iréna s’aperçoit que ce livre a déjà été publié sous le nom de la *meilleure* amie de sa mère. Indignée par cette trahison, Iréna jure vengeance. Dans le court récit que nous avons devant nous, Iréna, déjà âgée, consigne délibérément dans un style concis son histoire de vie et retrace comment cette double découverte troublante (de sa vraie identité et celle de la trahison de sa mère) l’a accompagnée, voire hantée, pendant le reste de sa vie.

*L’Oblomova* (1997) de Werbowski présente un autre regard rétrospectif ; le monologue intérieur entamé par la *je*-narrante révèle, de nouveau, un passé marqué par sa naissance au cours de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale. D’origine juive, Maya a grandi dans un orphelinat polonais sans jamais connaître ses origines ou même le nom de ses parents. Aujourd’hui – au moment de la narration – elle est seule au monde, sans mari, ni amis, ni enfants. Ce sort a fait d’elle une femme apathique qui « reste à côté de [s]on destin, [...] n’y pren[d] pas part » (11). Compte tenu de sa solitude et de son apathie, il est d’autant plus surprenant que Maya se donne consciemment la tâche de mettre par écrit la trajectoire qui l’a menée de la Pologne jusqu’au Canada en passant par l’Angleterre. Son court récit reste pourtant très fragmentaire, passant constamment d’un souvenir et d’un niveau temporel à un autre, suivant en cela le courant de conscience de Maya.

Le destin néfaste des enfants juifs est aussi évoqué dans *Quand les grands jouaient à la guerre* (1999) d’Ilona Flutztejn-Gruda, qui a grandi en Pologne. Dans ce *récit de témoignage*<sup>5</sup>, la *je*-narrante homonyme raconte intentionnellement comment la Guerre des adultes a usurpé sa vie d’enfant. La narratrice d’origine polonaise entame à l’âge d’environ soixante-cinq ans l’histoire de sa fuite devant les nazis de la Pologne jusqu’en Ouzbékistan. Tout au long du récit, présenté de façon détaillée et chronologique, elle suit un

<sup>5</sup> Après la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, les *récits de témoignage* sont devenus un genre constitutif de la littérature du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle. Témoigner signifie se confier et confier son histoire à quelqu’un d’autre. Le survivant d’un événement historique, tel que la Shoah, raconte son histoire de survie et assume la responsabilité pour la vérité de cette expérience qui dépasse souvent la compréhension humaine (cf. Felman, Laub 5-6 et 204-205).

style simple et sobre, décrit les différentes conditions de vie dans les pays traversés et transmet des informations concernant le déroulement de la Guerre en Europe de l'Est. Pour finir, Ilona énumère les quinze maximes personnelles tirées de la Guerre qui frappent par leur simplicité, comme celle-ci : « Je ne crains pas le manque d'argent, je sais qu'il est possible de vivre avec beaucoup moins que ce que l'on possède » (190). Cette capacité à souligner le côté positif de cette « époque importante de [s]a vie, une époque longue et difficile, mais si enrichissante » (187) impressionne et témoigne de sa résilience<sup>6</sup> malgré le coup du destin.

### La parole des « enfants du silence » d'Haïti

L'histoire d'Haïti au 20<sup>e</sup> siècle a été forgée par François Duvalier et son fils Jean-Claude qui ont dirigé l'île caribéenne pendant presque trente ans (1957-1986). Pour une grande partie de la population civile, cette période a représenté un temps de misère et de crise, marqué non seulement par une forte restriction des droits de l'homme, mais aussi par leur violation. Par exemple « des prisonniers politiques et d'opinion ont [été] incarcérés sans inculpation ni jugement, le recours à la torture<sup>7</sup> contre les détenus [était] la norme et des cas de disparition et d'exécution sommaire [...] [figuraient à l'ordre du jour] » (Amnesty International 4). De la sorte, un très grand nombre d'intellectuels opposés au régime se sont exilés et ont commencé de loin à contribuer au paysage littéraire de leur pays d'accueil. Au Québec, ce groupe comporte, entre autres, les noms de Gérard Étienne, Serge Legagneur, Georges Anglade, Joël Des Rosiers et Dany Laferrière.

Comme le décrit Jack Corzani, auteur de plusieurs œuvres sur la littérature antillaise, « [l]a vie quotidienne en Haïti sous la dictature duvaliériste est un thème qui s'imposait aux écrivains de la diaspora. Le meilleur de ces romans, et peut-être le meilleur des romans haïtiens, est sans doute *Mère-Solitude*, d'Émile Ollivier (Paris, Albin Michel, 1983) » (65). Dans ce roman, l'histoire est racontée à la première personne du singulier par un jeune Haïtien, Narcès

<sup>6</sup> Cyrulnik décrit la résilience comme « l'aptitude d'un corps à résister aux pressions et à reprendre sa structure initiale. Ce terme est souvent employé par les sous-marins de Toulon, car il vient de la physique. En psychologie, la résilience est la capacité à vivre, à réussir, à se développer en dépit de l'adversité » (Cyrulnik cité dans Taubes).

<sup>7</sup> Il existe plusieurs romans haïtiens qui abordent explicitement l'emploi de la torture pratiquée par les tontons macoutes dans les cachots du régime. Plusieurs œuvres de Gérard Étienne, telles que *Le Nègre crucifié* (1974), *La Pacotille* (1991) ou *Vous n'êtes pas seul* (2001), décrivent les douleurs subies dans les prisons, avec pour but, comme le décrit le narrateur de *La Pacotille*, de se débarrasser avec son récit « de tous les cadavres putréfiés qui se collent à [s]on crâne » (Étienne 10).

Morelli (dix-huit ans), orphelin de père et de mère, qui, à huit ans, a été témoin de la pendaison de cette dernière. Comme dans d'autres récits-témoignages (fictifs ou non), c'est la troisième personne du singulier qui est employée au moment de narrer les événements traumatiques qu'il a vus de ses propres yeux, ce qui lui permet de s'en distancier. À travers la reconstruction de ses origines et de l'histoire de sa mère, Narcès reconstruit en même temps l'histoire de son pays et arrive à cette conclusion amère :

Depuis la colonie, rien n'a changé. [...] Les faces continueront à grimacer de peur et tous ceux qui voudront échapper à la torture, à la misère, à la mort se verront contraints de fuir à l'étranger. [...] mais comment s'en sortir ? Il y a des taches de sang sur la Caraïbe. Il faudrait s'en aller, mais il n'y a ni bateau ni Boeing qui puissent nous conduire ailleurs. Quand les ramiers sauvages empruntent le long chemin de la migration, la mer trop souvent rejette leurs cadavres (240-242).

Un autre roman qui évoque l'histoire d'un enfant survivant est *Un pas vers la matrice* (2009) de Marie-Sœurette Mathieu. À travers un narrateur qui suit une focalisation interne variable, les lecteurs font la connaissance de Chantale Tardif, âgée d'environ trente ans. Dès les premières pages, nous apprenons qu'elle a été adoptée à l'âge de deux ans par un couple québécois qui l'a élevée comme si elle était leur propre enfant. Pourtant, Chantale a toujours eu le vœu secret de connaître sa mère biologique. La mort de ses parents adoptifs réveille en elle ce désir refoulé et elle part pour Haïti. Durant le voyage, ses troubles intérieurs prennent de l'ampleur quand elle n'arrive pas à retrouver la piste de sa mère biologique. Il semble qu'elle doive quitter l'île sans avoir atteint son but. De plus, Chantale est frustrée par son ignorance quant à ses origines culturelles, surtout quant à la langue créole et à l'histoire haïtienne :

[R]egarde-moi, je ne sais même pas parler créole. Je suis née ici. J'ai, toute de suite, appris la langue du pays qui m'a adoptée. Je suis toute perdue dans mon propre pays, car j'y étais déracinée dès mon tout jeune âge. Je n'ai connu ni mon vrai père, ni ma mère biologique, ni l'histoire du pays où ils sont nés. Où sont mes racines ? Quelle est mon identité ? C'est tout cela que je cherche en venant ici. Et voilà que je ne trouve rien encore (55).

La perspective de l'enfant survivant, déraciné et troublé par les années duvaliéristes, se retrouve également dans d'autres œuvres d'écrivains haïtiano-canadiens, telles que *Haïti ! Haïti !* (1985) d'Anthony Phelps et de Gary Klang<sup>8</sup>, *Zombi Blues* de Stanley Péan (1996) et *Un alligator nommé Rosa* (2007) de Marie-Célie Agnant.

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<sup>8</sup> Ce roman a été réimprimé en 2015 sous le titre *Le massacre de Jérémie : Opération vengeance* dans la maison d'édition Dialogue Nord-Sud.



Pour mieux faire comprendre les cruautés du régime duvaliériste, Klang et Phelps choisissent le genre du roman policier et prennent pour point de départ un fait historique bien réel, survenu durant l'époque de Duvalier. Il s'agit du massacre de plusieurs familles dans la nuit du 5 août 1964, comme l'explique l'un des personnages :

[T]reize jeunes gens, originaires de Jérémie, ont débarqué le mois dernier dans le sud d'Haïti avec l'intention de renverser le président [...]. Bien qu'ils semblent avoir échoué, les macoutes<sup>9</sup> ont massacré leurs familles [...]. Femmes, enfants, vieillards, sans discrimination, ont été brutalement liquidés (20).

Pendant ce massacre, tous les amis et proches haïtiens du protagoniste, Philippe Rivière, un Français né de mère haïtienne, ont été tués. Lorsque ce message arrive auprès de cet ex-légionnaire et champion de karaté, il jure de se venger du crime en leurs noms et part pour Haïti. Il recevra l'aide d'un groupe d'Haïtiens luttant contre le régime à différents échelons, groupe auquel il se joint après avoir vengé sa famille.

Quant à lui, le roman de Stanley Péan raconte, avec pour toile de fond des histoires et des souvenirs de plusieurs Haïtiens exilés, l'histoire de jumeaux haïtiens séparés à la naissance qui ont connu un destin bien différent. Tandis que Gabriel a été adopté par une famille québécoise qui l'a soutenu dans son choix de devenir musicien, Caliban est tombé entre les mains d'un tonton macoute qui, à l'aide de la magie noire, a fait de lui son tueur personnel. Quand les lecteurs rencontrent le trompettiste Gabriel, il souffre de cauchemars et de visions étranges qu'il noie dans l'alcool. Jamais il ne les aurait mis en rapport avec ses origines haïtiennes qui s'avèrent la raison de son trouble et qui entraînent une intrigue sanglante au milieu du Montréal des années 1990.

Marie-Célie Agnant décrit dans son roman *Un alligator nommé Rosa* l'histoire de Laura et d'Antoine dont le sort est lié à Rosa Bosquet, une commandante des tontons macoutes pour lesquels « tuer était instinctif » (63) comme pour les animaux des eaux douces de la Floride, les alligators. Rosa est responsable de l'assassinat de leurs familles respectives, à la suite duquel elle a adopté la petite Laura. Adulte, Laura ne se souvient presque plus de sa famille d'origine tandis qu'Antoine, adopté par un autre commandant du régime, n'a jamais oublié le jour tragique de la perte de sa famille et brûle de se venger de Rosa.

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<sup>9</sup> « Macoutes » ou « tontons macoutes » est le nom de la milice paramilitaire créée sous la dictature de François Duvalier qui est tristement célèbre pour ses démarches violentes et la terreur qu'elles ont semées sur l'île haïtienne.

À part la cruauté des événements racontés, le point de convergence des trois histoires évoquées est leur narrateur omniscient qui suit une focalisation interne variable sur les victimes et leurs bourreaux – sauf dans la troisième histoire, où la malfaitrice n'est focalisée que de l'extérieur, c'est-à-dire sans que l'on puisse pénétrer ses pensées. Cette focalisation variable donne un effet différent par rapport aux romans écrits par des écrivains de l'Europe de l'Est, dans le sens où la vue n'est plus seulement unilatérale, du point de vue des enfants survivants, et où les lecteurs peuvent se lier à plusieurs personnages. À travers la narration polyphonique qui permet une introspection dans l'esprit et les pensées de nombreux personnages, les auteurs montrent en un seul ouvrage la dimension effrayante du régime duvaliériste. En outre, la présence de plusieurs trames qui s'enchaînent, s'entrelacent et s'enchevêtrent invite les lecteurs à reconstituer le puzzle des intrigues tout en découvrant graduellement la portée transgénérationnelle de ce leadership terrifiant.

### **Briser le silence**

Les enfants survivants dont nous avons fait connaissance dans les romans mentionnés font partie de ceux qui ont retrouvé leur voix pour briser le silence et laisser libre cours à leur souffrance. Bien qu'il s'agisse de personnages fictifs dans un monde fictionnel, nous nous retrouvons face à face avec les voix et les émotions d'êtres humains qui pourraient être nos voisins. De la sorte, nous pouvons constater que grâce à ces représentations fictionnelles de tragédies, les lecteurs, éloignés dans le temps et dans l'espace des conflits évoqués, peuvent prendre connaissance de la manière dont ces « enfants du silence » ont conçu l'inconcevable. À travers les « lunettes » des protagonistes appartenant à la génération 1,5 qui ont survécu à la Deuxième Guerre mondiale et au régime duvaliériste, il est possible de ressentir les conséquences de la guerre, de la persécution ou de la perte des parents sur la jeune génération des témoins. Dans toutes les œuvres analysées, la rupture avec la famille, la culture, la langue et les valeurs prédominantes – bref la rupture avec la mémoire collective – devient apparente. Perdre ses parents, observer la dissolution des structures sociales et grandir dans un environnement mortel entravent le développement psychosocial des enfants et les laissent souvent avec de graves traumatismes. En outre, la perte d'un parent ou de toute la famille correspond à la perte des racines et de l'identité généalogique.

De plus, les lecteurs peuvent constater que pour la plupart des protagonistes, la narrativisation de l'expérience traumatique est advenue tard dans leur vie, mais qu'il s'agissait pour tous d'un acte incontournable et d'un pas élémentaire dans leur travail de mémoire qui équivaut à un travail de

résilience. La tentative de rétablir ses origines s'est effectuée dans les exemples mentionnés à l'aide de la narrativisation des moments clés de la vie. En se narrant, les protagonistes ont pu réorganiser et mettre en ordre (au moins partiellement) leurs expériences traumatiques ainsi que leur attribuer un certain sens. De la construction du récit autobiographique a résulté, au mieux, la re-construction d'une identité cohérente, étant donné qu'au cours de la narration un « remaniement cognitif » (Cyrulnik, *La mémoire traumatique* 194) du passé traumatique a pu avoir lieu. En d'autres termes, « à force d'agencer le récit, de le travailler avec des mots, à force de l'adresser à quelqu'un [aux lecteurs dans les cas présents], de chercher à comprendre, [les protagonistes ont fini] [...] par redevenir maître de [leur] émotion » (Cyrulnik, *La mémoire traumatique* 194). Et c'est exactement ce travail sur l'émotion montrée par les protagonistes qui est le plus essentiel pour une personne traumatisée parce que, « si nous ne le faisons pas, si nous ne gouvernons pas notre passé traumatique, c'est lui qui nous gouvernera » (Cyrulnik, *La mémoire traumatique* 201). De la sorte, la lecture de ces romans renforce non seulement nos connaissances sur les atrocités des conflits armés et leurs répercussions sur la santé des concernés, mais nous montre également l'importance de briser le silence et nous donne des pistes pour interagir avec des personnes traumatisées.

Dans l'ensemble, il nous paraît non seulement un impératif éthique pour Régine Robin de faire entendre la voix immigrante au Québec, mais plutôt une nécessité pour chaque auteur de faire entendre les voix des personnes non écoutées dans la littérature francophone à travers leurs œuvres. Étudier ces voix des « enfants du silence » traumatisés par leur survivance à la Deuxième Guerre mondiale ou au régime duvaliériste constitue donc un pas important dans la compréhension du traumatique chez d'autres groupes que les adultes.

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## LA GUERRE PERÇUE PAR DES ENFANTS DANS LE ROMAN *GUERRES* DE CHARLOTTE GINGRAS

### Abstract

Charlotte Gingras in her novel *Guerres* (2011, Courte échelle), gives voice to two children whose father left for Afghanistan. The novel offers a different perspective on the war seemingly distant but affecting the whole family. The children and their mother are struggling to get used to the new reality marked by the father's absence and the family life becomes a kind of mirror of the distant war.

The paper demonstrates how the departure of the father destroys the family balance and analyses the consequences of the absence for the mother and the children. Furthermore, the article aims at answering the question how children struggle to repair this disrupted balance and if this reparation is possible.

**Keywords:** war, Charlotte Gingras, *Guerres*, youth, novel

### Résumé

Dans son roman *Guerres* (2011, Courte échelle), Charlotte Gingras donne la parole à deux enfants dont le père est parti pour l'Afghanistan. Ainsi le roman offre-t-il un autre point de vue sur la guerre apparemment éloignée mais atteignant toute la famille. Les enfants et leur mère ont du mal à se retrouver dans cette nouvelle réalité marquée par l'absence du père et la vie de la famille devient une sorte de miroir de cette guerre lointaine.

Nous essaierons de montrer comment le départ du père détruit l'équilibre familial et d'analyser les conséquences qui retombent sur la mère et les enfants. Nous tenterons aussi de répondre à la question comment les enfants s'efforcent de reconstruire cet équilibre perturbé et si cette reconstruction est, somme toute, possible.

**Mots-clés :** guerre, Charlotte Gingras, *Guerres*, jeunesse, roman

Le monde occidental reste souvent indifférent aux atrocités des guerres qui lui paraissent lointaines. Ce que Wajdi Mouawad a constaté après les attentats du 11 septembre 2001 n'a rien perdu d'actualité : « [...] plusieurs personnes ont le sentiment d'avoir vécu en Occident dans une espèce de parenthèse historique, pendant laquelle la sécurité, le confort et la richesse semblaient des denrées inépuisables », et l'écrivain ajoute : « La guerre est partout. La mort est partout... » (cité dans Boulanger). Les parents de Mouawad, quand il était enfant, ont décidé de quitter le Liban pour fuir la guerre mais les traumatismes des drames vécus dans son enfance persistent toujours dans sa mémoire. Cependant, il n'est pas nécessaire d'être témoin oculaire de la guerre pour en être victime et pour en subir les traumatismes, ce que Charlotte Gingras montre par le biais de son roman *Guerres* (2011, Courte échelle).

D'après les données du Ministère de la Défense nationale du Canada, de 2007 à 2011 (l'année de la publication du roman de Charlotte Gingras), 114 soldats canadiens sont morts dans le conflit en Afghanistan, dont 94 dans les années 2007-2009, ce qui signifie que presque trois fois par mois les médias transmettaient des informations concernant la mort de soldats canadiens. Ainsi, avec la mort de soldats canadiens, la guerre s'avère être une menace bien réelle, plus proche et plus dangereuse que ce que l'on pouvait imaginer. Elle bouleverse aussi la vie de ceux qui sont restés au pays, les transforme et modifie leur perception du monde et de la guerre elle-même.

Parmi plusieurs images de la guerre, les médias transmettent aussi l'arrivée des cercueils des soldats tués en mission. C'est cette image qui a bouleversé Charlotte Gingras, écrivaine et photographe québécoise, la poussant à écrire son roman *Guerres* (cf. Lapointe). Elle ne sait pas rester indifférente aux images transmises par la télé, sensible aux inquiétudes de tous ceux qui écoutent le journal ayant peur d'apprendre la mort de leur mari, père ou fils parti en mission pour l'Afghanistan.

Gingras, avant tout auteure de livres pour la jeunesse, donne la parole à deux enfants dont le père est parti pour l'Afghanistan. Nous observons les préparatifs du départ, le temps de l'absence du père et le moment de son retour, tout cela du point de vue de deux jeunes qui découvrent que bien que la guerre soit apparemment éloignée, elle atteint toute la famille. Les enfants ont du mal à se retrouver dans cette nouvelle réalité marquée par l'absence du père et la vie de la famille reflète cette guerre lointaine.

Dans un premier temps, nous voudrions nous concentrer sur la structure du roman pour passer ensuite à l'analyse des personnages, de leur perception de la guerre et de leurs guerres personnelles. Nous tenterons de montrer comment les personnages du roman deviennent les miroirs de la guerre, quelles sont les conséquences qu'ils subissent, comment la guerre (voire les guerres) les transforme(nt) et influence(nt) la vie de toute la famille détruisant l'équilibre familial. Nous examinerons les conséquences qui retombent sur la mère et les

enfants qui s'efforcent de reconstruire cet équilibre perturbé et nous vérifierons si cette reconstruction est, somme toute, possible. Nous terminerons notre étude en essayant d'analyser les valeurs artistiques et éducatives véhiculées par le roman.

L'histoire n'est pas très compliquée : Nathan, réserviste, ira en mission en Afghanistan. Avant son départ, il prépare les enfants à ce temps de séparation, achète des ordinateurs, choisit un chien pour son fils et, finalement, il part. Sa femme Karine et ses trois enfants (Laurence – 15 ans, Luka – 9 ans et Mathilde – 10 mois) restent, suivant l'actualité à la télé et tremblant à chaque fois que les médias parlent des soldats morts en mission. Une fois, après l'information sur la mort de deux soldats dans une explosion, la famille apprend que l'un des deux morts était l'ami de Nathan, Kevin, mari de l'amie de Karine.

La guerre devient plus proche, elle enlève Kevin, change pour toujours la vie de sa femme et de ses enfants. Nathan revient en permission mais à ce moment-là, sa femme déménage, il reste seul avec les enfants desquels il ne sait pas s'approcher, comme s'il avait peur de renforcer les liens, sachant qu'il doit encore retourner en mission. Laurence prend soin des enfants, soutenue par son copain, elle introduit un nouvel ordre dans la famille, devient ce bras sur lequel la famille peut s'appuyer, elle se révolte mais elle se sent responsable des petits et se charge de tout ce à quoi sa mère a renoncé (repas pour les enfants, problèmes scolaires de Luka, même l'éducation du chien, ce berger allemand offert par le père à son fils). Finalement, le père revient à la maison, mais, à son tour, la mère décide de quitter la famille. Nathan redevient le pilier de la famille qui se retrouve dans cette nouvelle réalité et réapprend à coexister.

Le roman s'intitule *Guerres* au pluriel. La guerre à laquelle partent Nathan et Kevin c'est la guerre en Afghanistan, mais il y a d'autres guerres : tout d'abord celle de Bosnie, à laquelle Nathan et Kevin ont participé, et ensuite, les guerres, les conflits quotidiens, les luttes et les combats dans lesquels s'engagent des personnages du roman. A chacun sa guerre. A chacun son ennemi. Le quotidien des personnages devient une sorte de champ de bataille. Qui plus est, ces guerres menées par les personnages les réduisent très souvent à la solitude, ils sentent qu'ils affrontent les obstacles tout seuls, ne pouvant compter sur personne.

Le roman se compose de six parties : « Le décompte » (avant le départ), « Planète Solitude » (pendant l'absence de Nathan, quand les enfants se sentent abandonnés), « La permission » (relatant un court séjour de Nathan en famille), « Le refuge » (quand Laurence se concentre sur la protection des enfants), « Le retour » (quand la mission de Nathan est finie) et « L'avenir » (annonçant les projets des personnages).



Ces six parties sont composées de passages alternés dans lesquels s'expriment les enfants : « Laurence, qui écrit au tu, Luka raconte au je ; deux récits qui se croisent. La famille vit une crise, mais chacun réagit à sa façon parce que blessé différemment » (Aubin). Luka parle de son papa et il raconte comment il se débrouille pendant son absence. Laurence s'adresse au père, très souvent elle l'appelle par son prénom, ces passages sont remplis de « tu », mais il ne s'agit ni de lettres ni de courriels. L'alternance de ces deux narrations est marquée par la taille de la police des passages respectifs. Quand c'est Luka qui parle, le caractère de la police est le plus grand. La narration de Laurence est soulignée par le caractère plus petit de la police. Le poème qui se termine par « t'es parti, papa » (58) est écrit en caractères encore plus petits, on a l'impression que c'est Laurence qui s'exprime par les paroles de ce poème et qu'elle s'efface petit à petit. Il y a aussi des passages en italique présentant le séjour de Nathan à la guerre. Les lettres de ce dernier sont aussi en italique.

Même si dans le roman, la guerre et ses conséquences sont racontées par les enfants, nous voudrions commencer par la présentation des personnages adultes.

D'abord Karine, la femme de Nathan, dont les paroles et pensées sont relatées dans les récits des enfants, avec leurs commentaires et analyses. Elle n'est pas très bavarde, même avec ses propres enfants, comme si elle avait déjà tout dit ou comme si elle ne croyait plus que ses paroles, ses gestes puissent changer quoi que ce soit. De ce fait, les enfants subissent non seulement l'absence de leur père parti pour l'Afghanistan, mais ils sont privés aussi de la présence réelle de leur mère, probablement atteinte de dépression, retirée dans sa chambre et dans son désespoir. Karine ose seulement exprimer ce qu'elle éprouve quand elle s'adresse à son amie Valérie, la femme de Kevin, le frère d'arme de Nathan. Ses paroles ne sont pas destinées aux enfants, mais quand Laurence les entend, elle reste terrifiée :

– Nathan m'avait promis de ne plus jamais partir en mission, mais il a rompu sa promesse. Jamais je n'aurais mis au monde un dernier enfant si j'avais su. J'aurais choisi l'avortement. Il m'a trahie. [...] Je ne ressens plus rien pour mes enfants. Comment ça se fait, Valérie ? Je suis devenue une espèce de morte vivante. Je les vois de loin, par le petit bout de la lorgnette, ils bougent comme des automates aux gestes saccadés, leurs voix semblent métalliques. Des fois, je ne peux plus les supporter (99).

Quelque temps après, Laurence intervient quand elle voit Karine secouer Mathilde et lui donner des raisins secs pour que la petite étouffe avec. Laurence se révolte et déclare que désormais elle seule prendra soin de la petite, elle installe le lit du bébé dans sa chambre, elle la nourrit, la change et

l’emmène à la garderie. A partir de ce moment-là, Karine est perçue par Laurence comme une ennemie, une rupture définitive entre la mère et la fille se produit. Laurence constate :

Oui, Nathan, la guerre est partout, pas juste là où tu es, pas juste avec des AC-47, des tirs de roquettes et des engins explosifs improvisés. Là où tu es, des enfants sautent sur des mines. Ici, des bébés maltraités se font casser les os. Dans cette maison, non seulement nous n’avons pas de parents, mais nous avons maintenant une ennemie (105).

Et pourtant Karine était une autre femme avant. Quand Laurence découvre une vieille lettre de son père, écrite de Bosnie, à l’époque où Karine attendait son premier enfant, sa fille qu’elle voulait appeler Laurence, elle est étonnée en apprenant que sa mère l’aimait tellement fort : « Est-ce que c’est possible, ça ? J’ai déjà eu une mère qui m’aimait et je n’en garde aucun souvenir » (144). Quant à Luka, il se souvient d’une mère heureuse, souriante et belle, bien que fatiguée, après son retour de l’hôpital avec Mathilde, quand toute la famille était réunie (Gingras 56). Mais une année devait s’écouler après le retour de Nathan pour que Luka puisse constater que « maman a retrouvé le chemin des gestes tendres » (152) et pour que Laurence découvre qu’elle a arrêté de haïr Karine. Finalement, elle comprend que sa mère éprouvait une colère semblable à la sienne pendant l’absence de Nathan :

Cette vieille colère rentrée des femmes envers leur mari, leur père, leur frère, leur fils guerriers, qui les abandonnent pour se jeter dans l’aventure de la guerre. J’aurais préféré une autre mère, c’est sûr. J’aurais aimé compter sur elle. Mais voilà... Elle souffre en silence. Elle espère très fort qu’elle pourra aimer à nouveau (150).

La dépression de Karine résulte de son impuissance face à la guerre qui lui enlève son mari. Elle se sent abandonnée et la situation la dépasse. D’une mère tendre elle devient une froide ennemie et elle aura besoin de beaucoup de temps pour s’en remettre.

La guerre a transformé Karine comme elle a transformé d’autres membres de la famille, même si, comme dans le cas de Nathan, le lecteur ne découvre les raisons de cette transformation qu’à la fin du roman.

Nathan (aussi bien que son frère d’arme, Kevin) revient démoli de la mission de paix en Bosnie et il déclare qu’il ne supporte plus ce type de vie et qu’il ne pourrait plus retourner en mission. Cependant, juste après la naissance de son dernier enfant, il s’engage de nouveau. Tous en famille essaient de comprendre pourquoi. Laurence formule tout un tas de questions qu’elle n’ose pas poser à son père, entre autres elle se demande si son père aime plus l’adrénaline que ses enfants (Gingras 48). La lecture des lettres de Bosnie, une

photo du garçon nommé Luka (avec un « k », comme le fils de Nathan, qui souligne toujours cette particularité de son prénom) et un aveu que Nathan fait à ses frères d'arme expliquent pourquoi il a décidé de reprendre son service. Il a connu un petit garçon qui venait le voir chaque jour et quand, une fois, les soldats ont entendu des coups de feu dans le village, ils ont dû obéir à l'ordre de ne pas intervenir. Ce jour-là, le garçon, le petit Luka, a été tué, ce que Nathan ne s'est jamais pardonné, persuadé que sa mission était de protéger le petit. Vers la fin de son séjour en Afghanistan, Nathan est de nouveau démoli. Il ne comprend plus pourquoi il est en mission, il se reproche de tuer les pères des enfants qu'il voudrait protéger, il découvre qu'il n'est plus capable d'écrire à ses propres enfants de peur de leur transmettre toutes les atrocités auxquelles il assiste, de peur de les contaminer (Gingras 115). Cependant, il voulait protéger aussi ses propres enfants, avant le départ il a offert à son fils un petit berger allemand, dans le but que l'animal protège et réunisse le troupeau qui reste sur place. Mais le berger, censé être protecteur et guide du troupeau, s'avère le chien le plus désobéissant du monde, il veut protéger les enfants, mais son comportement agressif envers les étrangers attire des problèmes. Le berger ne peut pas remplacer les parents. Après son retour, Nathan redevient père (et mère) de la famille, il travaille comme professeur d'éducation physique, il est adoré des élèves. Mais il ne reparle jamais de son séjour en Afghanistan, gardant pour lui les souvenirs douloureux. La guerre l'a transformé, elle a laissé son empreinte sur lui. Malgré sa promesse de ne plus revenir en guerre après sa première mission, il a repris son service, persuadé que sa présence en Afghanistan était indispensable, qu'on avait besoin de lui, qu'il y avait des enfants comme le petit Luka de Bosnie ayant besoin de son aide, de sa protection. Mais confronté aux atrocités de la guerre, il ne voit plus de sens à son engagement. Il retourne protéger sa famille. Son travail à l'école et la vie quotidienne en famille l'aident à retrouver l'équilibre intérieur et contribuent à assurer l'équilibre de la famille.

Passons à Luka qui, contrairement à Laurence, ne s'adresse pas à son père dans ce qu'il raconte, mais il parle sans cesse de son papa qu'il aime le plus au monde et qu'il veut aider dans sa mission. Cependant il choisit une drôle de façon de manifester son aide : il commence à se battre avec ses copains. Il devient ami de Dany, fils d'un prisonnier et le plus méchant garçon de l'école. Il voit tant de ressemblances entre eux : leurs pères sont absents et ils ont tué quelqu'un. Au début, Luka joue à la guerre, mais au fur et à mesure, les bagarres deviennent de plus en plus graves, il revient blessé à la maison, avec les vêtements déchirés, persuadé que par le fait de tuer des insurgés dans ses combats, il aide son père et le protège. Grâce à Jamie, copain de Laurence, lui et Dany améliorent leurs notes à l'école et ils dépensent leur énergie dans des activités sportives.

Après le retour du père, Luka paraît retrouver son équilibre, mais il déclare que l'esprit guerrier est toujours en lui, comme un virus endormi. Il essaie de maîtriser ce virus, mais il rêve déjà de son avenir, il veut former une équipe avec son chien et partir à l'étranger, dans un pays en état de guerre, pour détecter les bombes artisanales et pour les désamorcer (Gingras 152).

Finalement, passons à Laurence. Au début, le lecteur a l'impression que Laurence s'adresse à Nathan, comme si elle lui écrivait des lettres, mais on découvre que dans ses courriels au père elle écrit autre chose, qu'il y a des sujets, des informations qu'elle évite, consciente qu'il vaut mieux les garder pour elle-même, en dépit du besoin d'en parler. Même quand le père séjourne en permission à la maison, elle garde pour elle toutes les difficultés, expliquant que : « Pendant ta permission, moi et Luka, on ne voulait pas te donner à porter notre vie parce que la tienne était remplie à ras bord de bombes artisanales et du corps déchiqueté de Kevin » (89).

Elle fait des reproches à son père : « Notre famille ne tenait qu'à tes bras [...] Sans toi on vacille, notre radeau part à la dérive » (72). Laurence est désespérée, elle pleure devant son copain, elle se reproche cette faiblesse et se sent impuissante, incapable de remplacer le bras du père, d'assurer cette stabilité à la famille, à son petit frère et à sa sœur. Bien qu'elle soit toujours la première de classe, après le départ de son père, elle néglige ses devoirs scolaires pour prendre soin des petits. Elle se sent incomprise par ses amies qui ne veulent pas partager ses inquiétudes et chaque fois qu'elle parle du départ de son père, de la guerre en Afghanistan, elles changent de sujet. Elle se sent seule et abandonnée.

Le séjour temporaire du père à la maison, pendant la permission, ne soulage pas Laurence. Sa mère déménage, les petits ne reconnaissent plus leur père qui s'isole devant la télé et dont le comportement les étonne.

Laurence qui continue à s'occuper des petits et qui est aussi terrifiée par cette présence fatigante, se révolte contre cet état des choses, mais sa révolte est juste intérieure, elle ne le dit pas à haute voix : « Je suis trop jeune pour porter le poids de vos angoisses, de vos chicanes, comprends-tu ? J'ai juste quinze ans ! » (81). Juste après le départ de son père, elle sent qu'un serpent s'installe dans sa poitrine, ce serpent grandit, l'envahit, parfois il se calme (comme au moment où elle apprend que son père n'a pas été tué), mais c'est seulement après le retour définitif du père que le serpent se dissout et qu'elle peut respirer tranquillement (Gingras 146). Cependant, on ne sait pas si le serpent de Laurence, tel le virus de guerre dont parle Luka, disparaît définitivement ou s'il s'endort seulement pour quelque temps...

Parmi tous les personnages, c'est Laurence qui se comporte de la manière la plus adulte, la plus responsable. Elle renonce à son enfance et à ses aspirations pour s'occuper du troupeau abandonné. Premièrement, ses récits expriment un fort désaccord, elle déchire le collier nomade envoyé par son

père, le collier que celui-ci a reçu en cadeau pour avoir sauvé la vie d'une fillette. Mais quand elle apprend que la veuve et les orphelins de Kevin passeront Noël dans leur maison, elle change complètement. Elle crée une sorte de refuge, de camp de survie pour tous les enfants, elle achète des cadeaux, fait réparer le collier déchiré, elle range tout dans la maison et, quand tous les petits s'endorment dans sa chambre, après avoir écouté l'histoire du Chien Bleu (il s'agit d'un album de Nadja, *Chien Bleu*, racontant l'histoire d'un chien protecteur), elle découvre que quelque chose d'heureux vient de leur arriver et elle se sent apaisée. Désormais, elle trouve naturel de protéger les petits, réalisant sa propre mission de paix et rétablissant, aidée par son amoureux, un nouvel ordre dans la maison.

Quand son père revient, elle avoue qu'il lui est très difficile d'abandonner son rôle de protectrice. Elle retrouve sa position de première de classe et elle n'ose pas trop penser à l'avenir et à sa vie avec son amoureux. Le seul objectif qu'elle se fixe est de partir en Afghanistan pour retrouver la petite fille sauvée par son père et pour lui rendre le collier nomade qu'elle porte avec affection.

Laurence essaie de comprendre la guerre, mais elle remarque que celle-ci reste une énigme, que même si les gens désirent la paix, ils choisissent souvent la guerre : « Nous sommes ainsi faits, nous, les humains, pleins de contradictions. Toi, Nathan, qui veux protéger les faibles, tu as tué d'autres hommes. Karine, qui déteste l'armée, cette machine à tuer, a mis en danger la vie de son propre bébé. Et moi, entre vous deux, comme vous deux » (149). Elle sait que la guerre peut atteindre chacun, elle se questionne : « Est-ce que la guerre est partout, en nous tous, tout le temps ? Et Mathilde, tantôt, à la garderie, je l'ai vue mordre un plus petit qu'elle pour une histoire de jouet. Personne n'est donc à l'abri du mal et de la violence ? » (110). Pourtant, Laurence croit qu'il est possible de retrouver l'équilibre, qu'après le retour du père, leur famille sera de nouveau une famille heureuse, appuyée sur le rocher – Nathan.

Force est de remarquer que la guerre transforme non seulement ceux qui participent aux combats et assistent directement à leurs atrocités. Qui plus est, on n'a pas besoin de partir à l'étranger pour réaliser des missions de paix. Et même si parfois les adultes veulent protéger les enfants contre la guerre, ils ont eux-mêmes besoin de protection, besoin de retrouver leur paix intérieure pour pouvoir réaliser des missions de paix auprès de leurs proches, dans leurs familles et partout dans le monde.

Gingras écrit son roman avec beaucoup de réalisme, son écriture est directe et vraie. Son style permet de toucher aussi bien les jeunes que les adultes. Ses personnages sont authentiques. La lecture des témoignages des soldats d'Afghanistan ou de leurs familles (comme des témoignages réunis par Magdalena et Maksymilian Rigamonti qui donnent la parole aux soldats, aux parents, aux épouses ou aux enfants des soldats tués ou blessés en

Afghanistan) permet de constater que le roman de Gingras reflète parfaitement des inquiétudes, des comportements ou des réactions face à la guerre, comme si l'écrivaine avait introduit des passages des témoignages des soldats ou de leurs familles. Ainsi, Beata, femme d'un soldat tué en Afghanistan en 2013, se souvient qu'il y avait un psychologue, un prêtre et deux soldats qui sont venus frapper à sa porte pour lui annoncer le décès de son mari (Rigamonti 163). De même, dans le roman, Laurence rassure son frère, inquiet en voyant les nouvelles télévisées au sujet de la mort de soldats canadiens en Afghanistan, en lui disant que si leur père était décédé, ils auraient été prévenus personnellement auparavant par un officier de l'armée (Gingras 54). C'est en effet ce qui arrive après la mort de Kevin, quand Laurence note que ses petits garçons et son épouse se trouvent au Centre de la famille avec le psy et le *padre* (Gingras 73).

Le mari de Beata, après ses trois séjours en Afghanistan, avait déclaré qu'il n'y reviendrait plus, évoquant des actions inutiles pendant lesquelles les soldats exposaient leur vie en vain. Mais une année plus tard, il a décidé de retourner en Afghanistan (Rigamonti 171-172). Sa femme ne donne pas les raisons claires de cette décision. Qui plus est, la plupart des soldats veulent retourner, même malgré leurs blessures graves et malgré toutes les pertes subies à cause de la guerre. Ils sont incapables de donner les raisons de leur décision. Marcin, un des soldats, constate que c'est plus fort que tout (Rigamonti 144). Gingras ne donne pas de réponse non plus. L'écrivaine, elle-même constate en parlant de l'écriture de son roman :

« Je voulais montrer les effets collatéraux lointains de la guerre, et la famille en devient le miroir parce qu'une autre guerre s'y déroule. Il y a la grande guerre, et toutes les autres », explique l'auteure, qui se demande encore aujourd'hui : où est la guerre en nous ? « Je n'ai que des pistes de réflexion. Mais ce n'est pas moi qui vais régler le pourquoi de la guerre... » (cité dans Lapointe).

Les lecteurs peuvent suivre ces pistes, inspirés par ce ton réaliste des récits enfantins qui se croisent et qui ne touchent pas seulement des adolescents, comme le remarque Danielle Laurin : « D'accord, *Guerres* s'adresse aux adolescents. En principe. Mais en principe seulement. Disons simplement qu'il s'agit d'un grand roman. Un grand roman sur la guerre en Afghanistan vue autrement » (Laurin).

Passons à l'aspect éducatif du roman qui s'inscrit dans la lignée des œuvres québécoises à thématique guerrière destinées à la jeunesse. Yan Hamel, ayant analysé un large éventail de ce type de livres, constate que ces œuvres présentent presque uniquement « des conflits qui se situent soit au loin entre des groupes étrangers, soit en des époques révolues » (94). Dans son analyse, il ne mentionne qu'un seul roman qui parle des soldats canadiens qui

meurent pendant la guerre en Afghanistan au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle : *Des étoiles sur le lac* de Michel Lavoie (94). Il en résulte que les jeunes, tel le personnage de Michel Lavoie, sous l'influence des médias, ont du mal à comprendre où se déroule la guerre. D'une part, ils sont inondés par les images et par les commentaires terrifiants, d'autre part, ils ont l'impression que la guerre ne les concerne pas : chez Lavoie, un garçon de neuf ans est effrayé en entendant les commentaires du lecteur du bulletin de nouvelles car ceux-ci lui font croire que la guerre (et il s'agit de la guerre en Afghanistan) se déroule tout près de chez lui. Il se calme seulement après avoir appris que le frère de sa maîtresse d'école a été tué par une mine artisanale en Afghanistan et respire avec soulagement, heureux que la guerre ne menace pas son village (Lavoie 62-63). Toutefois, la peur du garçon et sa compassion pour la maîtresse dont le frère a été tué, permettent aux jeunes lecteurs de comprendre que la guerre, même si elle paraît éloignée, continue à entraîner la mort et les malheurs. Hamel termine ses réflexions en remarquant que

[les] œuvres de la littérature québécoise de jeunesse à thématique guerrière contribuent moins à faire progresser le monde vers plus d'humanité et de paix qu'elles ne confortent les jeunes lecteurs [...] ainsi que les parents et les éducateurs qui achètent les livres, dans l'idée fort satisfaisante que chacun d'entre nous rejette la guerre par grandeur d'âme et force de caractère et que, ce faisant, nous donnons le bon exemple (94).

Le roman de Gingras, publié quelques années après le texte de Hamel, paraît confirmer cette thèse grâce à son aspect réconfortant et éducatif. Destiné aux jeunes, ce roman est souvent lu et étudié dans les écoles québécoises, sujet d'analyses et point de départ pour les discussions. Sa lecture permet non seulement aux adolescents de réfléchir sur plusieurs aspects de la guerre, mais elle permet aussi de les sensibiliser au drame des enfants dont le père soldat est parti, a été blessé, voire tué en mission. Les amies de Laurence évitent le sujet parce qu'elles ne savent pas comment réagir, comment consoler leur amie ou apaiser ses inquiétudes. Elles ont besoin d'apprendre comment parler de la guerre, de ses dangers et de ses conséquences. Il est vrai que le roman de Gingras n'apporte pas de réponses toutes faites, mais il permet aux adolescents de se rendre compte de l'existence du problème, les oblige à s'y pencher et montre que même s'ils ne peuvent pas comprendre, ils peuvent toujours compatir et soutenir ceux que la guerre atteint.

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## LA GUERRE DANS *LIGNES DE FAILLE* DE NANCY HUSTON

### Abstract

The central problem of Nancy Huston's novel *Lignes de faille* (2006) is perhaps not war as such, but rather the search for identity and knowledge of the past, as well as the desire to reconstruct a family history. Nevertheless, war is the source of the story and it is presented in the text in different ways: directly, as echoes or traces of the past perfectly perceptible in the contemporary world, or through intergenerational relationships. The experience of war stimulates reflection both on memory and on human condition in general. First, the aim of the article is to examine the image(s) of war in Huston's text. Then, the article tries to analyze the problem of memory, referring to some concepts of Marianne Hirsch and Henri Raczymow. Finally, the analysis is focused on the narrative strategies employed to recount war experience.

**Keywords:** war, memory, Nancy Huston

### Résumé

La problématique centrale du roman *Lignes de faille* (2006) de Nancy Huston n'est peut-être pas la guerre en tant que telle, la quête de l'identité et du savoir sur le passé, le désir de reconstruire l'histoire familiale se plaçant au premier plan de la narration. Néanmoins, la guerre est à l'origine de l'histoire racontée et elle est présente dans le texte sous différents aspects : soit de manière directe, soit comme les échos ou les traces du passé parfaitement perceptibles dans le monde contemporain, ou encore à travers les relations intergénérationnelles. L'expérience de la guerre est ainsi à l'origine de la réflexion d'une part sur la mémoire, de l'autre, sur la condition humaine en générale. Le but de la présente communication est donc, dans un premier temps, d'étudier l'image ou les images de la guerre dans le texte d'Huston. Dans un deuxième temps, en nous référant à quelques concepts de Marianne Hirsch et d'Henri Raczymow, nous essayerons d'analyser le problème de la mémoire, pour étudier, finalement, les stratégies narratives mises en œuvre afin de transmettre l'expérience de la guerre.

**Mots-clés :** guerre, mémoire, Nancy Huston

Dans l'article « La guerre dans la littérature québécoise », Michel Biron et Olivier Parenteau posent la question :

Comment la guerre est-elle représentée dans les romans, les poèmes, les pièces de théâtre ou les essais ? La question peut sembler piégée dans la mesure où les différentes manières de raconter, de penser ou d'imaginer la guerre ne sont nullement spécifiques au corpus québécois et, par là, ouvrent le grand récit national à un contexte transnational. Or c'est là justement leur intérêt, nous semble-t-il : l'imaginaire de la guerre tend à déterritorialiser la littérature québécoise. [...] ...la guerre a lieu ailleurs, sur un autre continent, et déplace le grand texte national. [...] Dans tous les cas, les guerres du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle ne cadrent pas avec le discours de l'enracinement auquel on associe l'essor de la littérature québécoise (9).

Quoique Nancy Huston ne soit pas une écrivaine québécoise (elle est née dans un contexte anglophone et écrit en anglais et en français), la question de Biron et Parenteau semble actuelle dans le cas de son roman *Lignes de faille* (2006, Prix Femina, Prix Goncourt : le choix polonais), qui, d'une part, interroge l'identité, donc en quelque sorte s'inscrit dans « le discours de l'enracinement » (Biron, Parenteau 9), compris pourtant de manière plus intime, dépassant ainsi le contexte national québécois et canadien<sup>1</sup>, mais de l'autre, la représentation romanesque de la guerre, ou des guerres, introduit le contexte transnational et met en place le mécanisme de la déterritorialisation (aussi dans le sens que donnent à ce concept Deleuze et Guattari), la déterritorialisation de la littérature canadienne<sup>2</sup>, mais aussi du discours même sur la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Celui-ci s'approprie, dans le texte de Huston, le terrain de l'Amérique du Nord, quoique la vision générale de l'espace romanesque soit très large et reste, au moins en partie, à l'image de la biographie nomade de l'écrivaine. En effet, le cadre spatial du roman n'a pas de limite et à part de multiples espaces où se déroule l'histoire (le Canada, les États-Unis, l'Israël, l'Allemagne), les évocations d'autres pays (le Liban, l'Irak, la Pologne, l'Ukraine, etc.) donnent au livre le caractère cosmopolite, si non universel.

Le traitement de la temporalité est tout aussi intéressant que l'extension de l'espace. Or, la chronologie a été renversée : le récit commence en 2004 et finit dans les années 1944-1945. Il se compose de quatre parties où à chaque fois, la narration est assumée par un autre narrateur – toujours un enfant de six

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Huston avoue : « Le roman est construit autour de réflexions [...] qui sont aussi liées à ma propre enfance [...]. Je me suis demandé comment on se reconstruit quand on est complètement déraciné dès l'âge de cinq ou six ans » (cité dans Cliche 14).

<sup>2</sup> Par ailleurs la romancière « échappe à bien des égards à toute tentative de classification nationale de la littérature » (Lepage 80).

ans<sup>3</sup> : d'abord Sol, puis son père Randall, ensuite la mère de Randall – Sadie et finalement, l'arrière-grand-mère de Sol – Kristina-Erra<sup>4</sup>. Les histoires des récits particuliers sont linéaires et ils s'engrènent en apportant de précisions à ce qui a été déjà dit, ils dévoilent progressivement le secret qui est au cœur du roman. La perspective d'enfant, ainsi que la question de liens familiaux, de l'abandon, de l'identité, sont probablement dictées par la biographie et les préférences thématiques de l'écrivaine. Mais dans le contexte de ce roman, il importe aussi de reposer la question évoquée par Biron et Parenteau : comment la guerre est présente dans ce texte ? Le but de cette communication est donc, dans un premier temps, d'étudier l'image ou les images de la guerre dans le texte de Huston et de réfléchir sur la finalité du choix d'une telle représentation fictive des conflits militaires. Dans un deuxième temps, nous essayerons d'analyser le problème de la mémoire, pour étudier, finalement, les stratégies narratives mises en œuvre afin de transmettre l'expérience de la guerre.

### **Comment la guerre est-elle présente dans le roman ? Manière de représentation directe**

Quoique la guerre semble servir de prétexte à la réflexion sur l'identité problématique et douloureuse, elle est pourtant largement présente dans le roman de Huston et cela de manière bien complexe, ce qui exige, de la part du lecteur, une lecture active consistant à reconstruire une image de la guerre des éléments éparpillés d'un puzzle. On peut noter, en fait, deux moyens de parler de la guerre : direct et indirect.

La guerre (pourtant comprise non pas comme les combats entre soldats, mais comme la réalité ambiante) est mise en place de manière directe, et cela aussi sur le plan temporel de la narration (le temps de la narration correspond à celui de l'histoire), surtout dans la dernière partie du roman (et la première s'il s'agit de la chronologie) consacrée à Kristina alias Erra. La fille a été enlevée par les Allemands à ses parents en Ukraine et placée d'abord dans un *Lebensborn* (fr. fontaine de vie), puis dans une famille allemande ce qu'elle découvre au fur et à mesure de son enquête. Le lecteur sait plus que la narratrice de six ans parce qu'il apprend quelques événements de son histoire grâce à des récits précédents, surtout celui de Randall où la fille d'Erra, Sadie, fait des recherches sur les origines de sa mère, vu que celle-ci ne parle jamais

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<sup>3</sup> Une sorte d'arbre généalogique qui reflète le changement de narrateurs précède le texte romanesque dans l'édition d'Actes Sud / Leméac 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Pour l'écrivaine, « [n]ommer est un acte magique », par conséquent, les prénoms dans son roman sont symboliques (Cliche 14).

du passé. Le récit insiste sur les conséquences, y compris la désintégration de l'identité, dues à la politique eugénique des nazis, notamment le programme *Lebensborn* visant à créer une parfaite et pure race aryenne. L'image des fontaines de vie dans le roman est fragmentaire et d'autant plus effrayante que la perspective est celle d'une enfant hantée par la réalité, peut-être en partie imaginée (vu que Kristina est trop petite pour s'en souvenir avec exactitude), mais sûrement cauchemardesque. Malgré le mode onirique, dans toutes ces descriptions il y a un réalisme aigu, voire un naturalisme, obtenu grâce à l'accentuation du côté physiologique et sensuel : l'omniprésence des excréments, la nudité, les grossesses, les suggestions concernant les accouchements et actes sexuels (Huston 417). Mais c'est surtout l'humiliation subie par les enfants qui y frappe. L'accent est mis dans le roman aussi bien sur le côté physique que sur les dégâts psychologiques :

Des cauchemars me viennent. Je suis assise sur un pot et une dame qui porte une jupe et des chaussures blanches passe près de moi et me frappe sur la tête, si fort que je tombe et le pot se renverse, je patauge dans le pipi. Me voyant assise au milieu de la flaque jaune, un petit garçon éclate de rire en me montrant du doigt, d'autres enfants tournent en rond en traînant des couvertures, ils sont nus et ils ont le nez qui coule, ils geignent et braillent, leurs couvertures sont trompées du pipi par terre.

Dans un autre rêve je grimpe sur une chaise pour regarder par la fenêtre et je vois un bébé qui tremblote et pleurniche dans la neige, il a la peau toute bleue, on l'a laissé là pour mourir (412-413).

Le placement de l'enfant dans une famille allemande permet, par contre, d'observer le conflit mondial de la perspective de l'agresseur qui est d'ailleurs en train de perdre. Le combat n'est pas mis en scène, mais la situation de cette famille est marquée par l'absence : l'absence du père et du fils (qui sont sur le front), mais aussi l'absence de moyens pour vivre (nourriture, argent), etc. Le lecteur se surprend à sympathiser, voire à compatir avec cette famille en difficulté surtout qu'elle est chérie et admirée par Kristina, elle-même, jusqu'au moment de la découverte de ses vraies origines. La question qui s'impose est de savoir si cette perspective est intentionnelle et sert à relativiser, donc à effacer la frontière entre les victimes et bourreaux ? La réponse n'est pas évidente vu la polyphonie narrative du texte qui empêche le jugement moral. À partir de ce moment (la découverte des origines), les relations entre la fille et la famille adoptive se dégradent et Kristina se lie d'amitié avec Janek, un orphelin polonais également accueilli au sein de ce foyer allemand puisqu'il répond parfaitement au modèle aryen.

La présence de la guerre se manifeste aussi dans les corps mutilés des gens qui passent par le village où habite Erra. Le motif des corps estropiés revient à plusieurs reprises dans le roman (aussi dans les récits précédents) parfois de

manière apparemment innocente comme un dessin d'enfant ou un jeu (« le bois de la luge se met à vibrer et on pense qu'on va se faire mal mais non, ouf, la luge se retourne dans une congère, arrêtée net, et il y a le choc mat de tous les corps entassés ensemble » (133)), parfois, de manière brutale comme l'entassement de corps dans la guerre au Liban, ce qui amène à penser que toutes les guerres se ressemblent les unes aux autres. Randall constate : « Peu à peu je comprends que mes dessins sont devenus réalité : on est en train de déchiqueter les corps des gens là-haut au Liban, il y a des bras et des jambes et des têtes qui volent dans l'air, des centaines de corps morts des milliers de corps morts des enfants morts des chevaux morts des vieillards morts des morceaux de familles qui empestent » (233-234)<sup>5</sup>.

Et parfois encore, ce motif apparaît comme la juxtaposition de la subtilité de l'art et la laideur des corps humains sous formes d'opposition de deux activités de l'homme : la culture et la destruction, la première rendant l'homme éternel et la seconde l'anéantissant : « Dans notre ville les gens sont vivants et laids comparés aux nymphes et aux anges de Dresde [...], beaucoup d'hommes ont perdu un bras ou une jambe ou les deux – et les membres ne repoussent pas, bien sûr » (384).

Ceux dont les corps sont restés intacts, comme celui de Kristina, portent pourtant une autre sorte d'handicap, psychologique, qui est tout aussi inguérissable.

### **Les conséquences de la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Manière de représentation indirecte**

Quoique de manière indirecte, la guerre est présente tout au long du récit, chaque partie du roman y fait référence. Souvent il s'agit des conséquences et traumatismes tant individuels (comme par exemple le suicide de Janek dont les circonstances n'ont pas été révélées) que collectifs, l'histoire mondiale étant confrontée aux destins des individus<sup>6</sup>.

À part l'évocation de la guerre froide, conséquence directe de la Seconde Guerre mondiale (Huston 354), les répercussions de la guerre sont aussi visibles dans le paysage multiculturel de l'Amérique du Nord. Le partenaire

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<sup>5</sup> Il s'agit du massacre de Sabra et Chatila. Le chaos de ce fragment dû au manque de ponctuation est intentionnel.

<sup>6</sup> Sadie apparaît comme le personnage dans lequel convergent la mémoire individuelle et collective. Comme le remarque Élise Lepage : « Il est évident que cette reconstruction de la mémoire de l'aïeule et de la mémoire collective revient à Sadie, passionnée par ce travail d'érudition et l'imbrication des dimensions individuelle et affective, d'une part, collective et historique, d'autre part » (89).

d'Erra d'origine juive emmène sa fille Sadie dans le quartier juif et peu à peu lui fait découvrir d'abord les coutumes et la cuisine de son peuple (« Ça devient une tradition entre nous de descendre jusqu'au coin de Houston et Ludlow le dimanche matin pour prendre le petit déjeuner chez Katz. Papa me laisse goûter à tout ce que je veux : cornichons à l'aneth et les tomates vertes en saumure... » (347)), puis, il lui parle de l'histoire, y compris une progressive disparition de la langue<sup>7</sup> :

Je prends une énorme bouchée de mon bagel et je dis "Ouais, j'ai remarqué qu'ils parlaient allemand" et, au lieu de me dire de ne pas parler la bouche pleine, papa dit : "Ce n'est pas de l'allemand, Sadie, c'est du yiddish" et je dis "C'est quoi le yiddish ?" et il dit "C'est la langue que parlaient jadis les juifs de l'Europe de l'Est. Tu as intérêt à bien l'écouter maintenant, parce que ces hommes sont les derniers du monde à le parler" (346-347).

À un moment donné, incertaine de ses origines et craignant d'être allemande, Sadie commence à s'identifier aux Juifs (348), elle épousera un Juif et se convertira au judaïsme le pratiquant plus assidûment que son mari. Sadie devient universitaire dont les recherches portent sur la question du Mal. Elle se rend également en Israël pour y travailler dans les archives.

Le séjour en Israël donne la possibilité de mettre au jour un autre problème né après la guerre, notamment le conflit entre les Israéliens et les Arabes. Le déplacement géographique introduit le déplacement de l'optique où les Juifs ne sont plus montrés comme victimes, mais comme responsables du massacre de Sabra et Chatila à Beyrouth. Ce problème est présenté sous forme de dialogue entre Sadie et son mari qui tourne en dispute. Paradoxalement, l'intérêt de cette situation d'énonciation réside dans l'échec de transmission de message, en fait, chacun des époux veut annoncer une nouvelle que l'autre n'écoute pas : Sadie parle de sa découverte concernant le *Lebensborn*, son mari est accablé par le massacre à Beyrouth qu'il vient d'apprendre. Dans leur dialogue, la stratégie des nazis et les effrayantes nouvelles du Liban alternent comme si l'on tissait toujours la seule et même histoire bien que le conflit actuel puisse paraître plus poignant par sa proximité temporelle et spatiale (les protagonistes sont en Israël). Dans ce dialogue, c'est Sadie qui défend avec acharnement la cause juive contre son mari qui est Juif. Ce petit conflit familial est à l'image de la guerre mais en miniature qui éclate au moment où la communication échoue<sup>8</sup> :

<sup>7</sup> La question de langue occupe une place considérable dans l'œuvre de Nancy Huston qui se déplace entre deux langues (anglaise et française) et traduit elle-même ses récits. Voir à ce sujet l'article de Jane Elisabeth Wilhelm et celui de Britta Benert.

<sup>8</sup> La guerre au Liban et le massacre de Sabra et Chatila ont été récemment abordés dans le roman *Le quatrième mur* (2013) du journaliste français Sorj Chalondon. Il a nourri,

- Habib a trahi. Weinberger a trahi. Ils avaient promis de rester là après le départ d'Arafat pour protéger les réfugiés.
- En raison de ses cheveux blonds et de ses yeux bleus. Parce qu'elle était si jolie, si parfaitement aryenne. Tu m'écoutes, Aron ?
- Reagan et Begin ont mis leur Gemayel en place.
- Alors il l'a refilée à un de ses potes, un gros bonnet de SS que sa fille tannait pour avoir une petite sœur. Sa femme ne pouvait plus avoir d'enfants.
- Les tanks de Tsahal sont stationnés autour de Beyrouth-Ouest (226).

Pour la même raison, une fille arabe que Randall a connue à l'école et dont il est clandestinement amoureux doit mettre fin à leur amitié à cause des tensions entre les peuples dont ils sont représentants.

Mais l'univers des enfants est infecté, disons, aussi de l'intérieur par la guerre. Les jeux évoqués par chaque narrateur du récit ressemblent aux guerres des adultes : « Parfois à la récré les garçons poursuivent les filles, les bras tendus en avant, en disant : "Juive ! juive !" et les filles font semblant d'avoir peur, elles piaillent et se sauvent en disant "Nazi ! nazi !", ce qui est un mot nouveau pour moi » (351). Dans le contexte contemporain, les jeux de vidéo et l'accès facile aux médias familiarisent très tôt les enfants à la brutalité. La première partie du livre en est exemplaire : « Barry a toutes sortes de jeux de guerre où on s'amuse beaucoup » (154) et « [j]e vais dans ma chambre et me mets à jouer à la guerre avec mes Play-mobil, je n'ai pas le droit d'avoir des soldats parce que m'man est contre la guerre, elle ne veut pas que je devienne un macho brutal et borné comme la plupart des hommes » (155).

Dans son compte rendu, Julie Sergent constate que l'histoire de Sol, le premier narrateur, est une « fascinante illustration de ce que peut faire l'accès désormais sans restriction aux actes de violence et aux abus de toutes sortes, combiné à la célébration de l'enfant-roi et à la propagande prévalant depuis le 11 septembre contre les ennemis des USA » (28). Sans doute, la question de l'éducation des enfants-rois (d'ailleurs le prénom du premier narrateur renvoie au roi biblique Salomon et au Roi Soleil) y est soulevée et mise en discussion, néanmoins, le problème de la violence semble bien plus important. Cela est visible aussi bien dans la fascination manifestée par Sol d'Arnold Schwarzenegger, de *La Guerre des étoiles* que dans la thématique des sites Internet qu'il consulte : « J'adore cliquer aussi sur les cadavres des soldats irakiens dans le sable, c'est tout un diaporama. Parfois on ne sait même pas ce que c'est, comme partie du corps. Un torse, peut-être ? une jambe ? » (26). De plus, la guerre infantilisée ou banalisée parce que réduite

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dans son texte, le rêve d'une entente qui pourrait s'établir entre les peuples ennemis grâce à l'art, plus particulièrement, la pièce de théâtre *Antigone* d'Anouilh.

aux jeux ne semble pas constituer un danger réel. Ou bien elle apparaît comme un jeu des adultes.

Certes, les jeux de vidéo ne sont qu'un substitut de la guerre, mais la frontière entre le monde virtuel et réel ne semble pas très solide. Le travail de Randall en témoigne : il fabrique les robots guerriers sophistiqués qui « sont assez fantastiques. On dirait qu'ils sortent tout droit de *La Guerre des étoiles* » (93). Cette scène met à nu le paradoxe de l'homme qui met son intelligence et ses talents au service de la production et du perfectionnement des assassins mécaniques dont le modèle est un nazi. Sadie coupe net la conversation : « Le parfait nazi, voilà ce que tu décries. Le parfait macho : dur, en acier, dépourvu de sentiment. Rudolf Hoess, voilà ce que tu décries [...]. Surtout pas de sentiment ! Les sentiments c'est mou, c'est féminin, c'est répugnant » (94-95).

La réplique de Sadie est peut-être représentative de la position des femmes face à la guerre dans ce roman. La violence relève de l'univers masculin, et cela à différents niveaux : les combats, la production de l'équipement guerrier, les héros du cinéma évoqués dans le texte comme Terminator, Eraser, les coups donnés à Kristina par son faux grand-père, etc. Quoiqu'il y ait de symétrie entre les narrateurs féminins et masculins, l'écrivaine suggère peut-être que l'univers des femmes est plus pacifique et la seule violence qu'elles soient capables de faire est l'auto-violence (comme dans le cas de Sadie). En même temps, l'omniprésence de la guerre sous différentes formes et à toutes les époques autorise la conclusion que la guerre est, depuis et peut-être pour toujours, inscrite dans la condition humaine. Le présent de la narration de tous les quatre récits les place sur le même plan temporel et ainsi les actualise, mais il semble avoir aussi une valeur gnomique, c'est-à-dire, la guerre indissociable du destin humain devient une vérité générale quoique chaque génération (représentée par quatre enfants dans le roman) déploie vis-à-vis d'elle une « stratégie de survie » bien particulière vu que l'expérience et les personnalités des enfants sont différentes : « Ce changement de tempérament chez les enfants s'explique en partie par le changement radical de contexte : de 2004 à 1944, on passe de la côte ouest américaine à l'Allemagne nazie, d'un lieu protégé de tout conflit au point focal de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale » (Cliche 14). Comme le conclut Nancy Huston,

la différence la plus fondamentale est qu'aujourd'hui, les enfants sont très au courant, ils écoutent la télé, la radio, vont sur Internet [...]. Ils n'arrivent pas à donner un sens à toute cette information, mais ça leur donne un sentiment d'autonomie, peut-être même de puissance. Alors que dans le passé, surtout en temps de guerre, les enfants étaient maintenus dans l'ignorance, on ne leur disait rien (cité dans Cliche 14).



## Mémoire et stratégies narratives

Nancy Huston est née en 1953 au Canada, donc elle n'a pas eu l'expérience de la guerre et il paraît qu'aucun membre de sa proche famille n'ait participé au conflit mondial pour pouvoir lui transmettre l'héritage de ce vécu et le trauma avec. Mais que ce soit seulement pour le besoin de l'écriture, elle s'est tout de même approprié cette partie d'histoire et s'est identifiée aux traumatismes de la guerre au point qu'elle a su montrer dans son texte les mécanismes de la transmission intergénérationnelle de cette expérience. Son entreprise romanesque peut être donc interprétée à la lumière de la notion de la « post-mémoire » forgée par Marianne Hirsch puisqu'elle a adopté comme sienne la mémoire des générations précédentes. Mais plus intéressant que le contexte extralivresque semble le projet du roman lui-même qui constitue l'illustration, la mise en scène du concept de la post-mémoire, et cela à travers quatre générations. Celui-ci doit être compris comme suit :

Le terme de postmémoire décrit la relation que la « génération d'après » entretient avec le trauma culturel, collectif et personnel vécu par ceux qui l'ont précédée, il concerne ainsi des expériences dont cette génération d'après ne se « souvient » que par le biais d'histoires, d'images et de comportements parmi lesquels elle a grandi. Mais ces expériences lui ont été transmises de façon si profonde et affective qu'elles *semblent* constituer sa propre mémoire. Le rapport de la postmémoire avec le passé est en vérité assuré par la médiation non pas de souvenirs, mais de projections, de créations et d'investissements imaginatifs. [...] C'est être formé, bien qu'indirectement, par des fragments traumatiques d'événements qui défient encore la reconstruction narrative et excèdent la compréhension. Ces événements sont survenus dans le passé, mais leurs effets continuent dans le présent. C'est là la structure de la postmémoire et le processus propre à sa *génération*.

Cependant, la postmémoire n'est pas une position identitaire, mais une structure générationnelle de transmission ancrée dans de multiples formes de médiation. La vie familiale, même dans ses moments les plus intimes, est enracinée dans un imaginaire collectif façonné par des structures générationnelles universelles d'imagination et de projection et par un fonds d'histoires et d'images partagé qui infléchit le transfert et la mise à disposition plus vaste de souvenirs individuels et familiaux. Alors, si nous adoptons les expériences traumatiques d'autrui comme expériences *à travers lesquelles nous pourrions avoir vécu*, si nous les inscrivons dans l'histoire de notre propre vie, pouvons-nous pour autant le faire sans les imiter ou nous les approprier indûment ? (Hirsch ; italique dans l'original).

Marianne Hirsch souligne donc qu'une telle expérience des événements traumatiques, qui ne sont pas vécus mais transmis, donc qui ne constituent pas de vrais souvenirs mais « de projections, de créations et d'investissements imaginatifs », nécessite la mise en récit, la reconstruction par la narration. Cela

paraît, peut-être, encore plus important dans le contexte de la réflexion que Huston développe dans son essai *L'Espèce fabulatrice* (2008) où elle appelle l'humanité « l'espèce fabulatrice » qui « se différencie des autres par sa capacité de narration, celle d'inventer des histoires pour donner sens au réel qui l'entoure » (Sakho Jimbira 2). Elle considère la littérature (ou en général, la possibilité de raconter des histoires) comme le moyen d'investigation anthropologique et de l'auto-conscience.

Dans *Lignes de faille* de Huston, la narration est à la première personne bien que l'identité du narrateur change. Chaque récit de l'enfant (à part celui d'Erra) met en plus en scène l'enfant du récit qui suit mais comme personnage adulte en donnant ainsi au lecteur la possibilité de connaître la suite de l'histoire (quoique la chronologie soit à rebours). Donc, d'une part, le lecteur observe comment l'enfant est formé par « des fragments traumatiques d'événements » (Hirsch), de l'autre, comment ces événements du passé « continuent dans le présent » (Hirsch) et quels sont leurs effets (ex. la pratique orthodoxe du judaïsme de Sadie).

L'enfant semble donc incarner la mémoire, ou servir de dépositaire de mémoire, celui qui adopte « les expériences traumatiques d'autrui » (Hirsch) comme siennes, le cas de Sadie l'illustre le mieux, puisqu'elle entreprend encore les recherches personnelles sur le passé familial. L'héritage de cette mémoire se manifeste dans le roman de manière encore plus évidente : le corps de chaque enfant-narrateur est marqué par un grand grain de beauté. Il a d'ailleurs permis à Sadie de reconnaître l'identité d'Erra dans les archives sur le *Lebensborn*. Chaque personnage a un autre rapport à cette petite déformation (ou à ce don), pourtant il en est toujours que ce grain de beauté est une marque de l'altérité, de l'étrangeté et/ou de l'exception. Cette marque a une signification particulière pour Erra : en la touchant elle semble atteindre la profondeur de son âme où sont enfouis ses souvenirs. Elle croit que dans ce grain de beauté réside le pouvoir de son chant. Par contre, l'essai de l'enlever chirurgicalement du visage de Sol tourne mal, la blessure ne veut pas guérir et on a l'impression que, tout comme le Samson biblique après avoir perdu ses cheveux, Sol n'est plus le même. Donc, l'essai d'enlever une part du passé et une marque de l'appartenance familiale semble impossible, ou du moins douloureuse.

S'inspirant de l'ouvrage de Régine Robin, Élise Lepage appelle deux romans de Nancy Huston, *L'empreinte de l'ange* et *Lignes de faille*, « les romans mémoriels » qui « reposent sur la pluralité des mémoires, leurs mises en récit croisées, leurs rencontres, mais aussi leurs lacunes. [...] ...l'enjeu consiste [...] à combler les silences et les oublis de l'Histoire » (79-80). Dans le roman de Huston, il ne s'agit pas de combler toutes les lacunes puisque les silences et les failles font partie de la stratégie narrative du texte. Le mécanisme de l'écriture ressemble peut-être plus à ce que Henri Raczymow

appelle « la mémoire absente » ou la « mémoire trouée » (parce que transmise « par le silence et la non-transmission » (cité dans Schulte Nordholt 217)), comme il constate lui-même : « Mes livres ne cherchent pas à combler cette mémoire absente – je n'écris pas banalement, pour lutter contre l'oubli – mais à la présenter, justement, comme absente » (cité dans Schulte Nordholt 217). Le texte de Huston en tant que « roman mémoriel » est une enquête ou une quête du savoir, mais il est en même temps l'écriture de l'absence.

La langue est aussi touchée par cette absence. On observe une certaine insuffisance du langage qui, d'une part, tend à remplir des lacunes par le surplein, c'est-à-dire par le recours à plusieurs idiomes : yiddish, polonais, français, allemand, anglais, etc., et de l'autre, il se maintient dans l'impossibilité de tout dire. La question linguistique nourrit en même temps la réflexion sur l'identité et sur l'incapacité d'articuler la douleur. Les chansons d'Erra n'ont pas de paroles, elle n'utilise que le langage de sa musique, pourtant, elle remporte un succès mondial. Tout comme Raczymow, elle ne lutte peut-être pas contre l'oubli, mais montre la « non-transmission » discursive de la mémoire. Certes, elle est admirée par un large public (peut-être à cause du contenu émotionnel de ses chansons) sans être pourtant comprise pour de vrai. De plus, dans son étude sur le rôle de la musique comme « pivot de la narration » dans l'œuvre de Nancy Huston, David A. Powell constate que dans la musique, l'espace et le temps se confondent et que « l'écoute idéale de la musique déplace le locuteur de son milieu spatio-temporel vers celui du rêve, de la mémoire ou, tout simplement, de l'évasion dans la sphère de la musique » (50). Cette caractéristique semble décrire le personnage d'Erra elle-même et le rôle de la musique dans sa vie.

La structure narrative du roman où on donne la parole à l'enfant tend à illustrer cette mémoire trouée<sup>9</sup>. Chaque narrateur-enfant dévoile, de façon fragmentaire, les paradoxes du monde des adultes et la démesure du mal que les gens sont capables de s'infliger et essaie de s'y confronter à sa manière.

La polyphonie du roman de Huston ne consiste pas seulement à faire entendre la voix des quatre enfants mais aussi à multiplier les perspectives : l'univers vu de la perspective d'une famille allemande, d'une mère qui a perdu son fils au front, d'un Polonais enlevé à sa famille, d'une fille arabe qui habite en Israël, d'un Juif de l'Amérique, cette polyphonie donne une vision globale et universelle, mais en même temps ces différentes perspectives brouillent la

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<sup>9</sup> Une pareille stratégie a été aussi très bien mise en place par un écrivain israélien contemporain (qui a d'ailleurs perdu son fils dans le conflit israélo-libanais en 2006 et qui dénonce les comportements de l'armée israélienne), David Grossman, dans son roman *Voir ci-dessous : amour* (1991) où l'enfant percevant les bribes des conversations des adultes, survivants de la Shoah, essaie de découvrir leur mystère avec la naïveté et l'imagination propres à son âge.

certitude d'un jugement moral et montrent la complexité des relations interhumaines et internationales. Reste pourtant à apprécier la cohérence de cette structure narrative.

Le projet romanesque de Nancy Huston vise à démontrer la prédominance de la violence dans les relations entre les humains. La vision est globale aussi parce que le texte favorise la rencontre du présent et du passé qui devient présent grâce au temps grammatical, la rencontre de l'Europe, de l'Amérique et du Proche-Orient, enfin, la rencontre des victimes et des bourreaux qui, à leur tour, deviennent victimes de leurs propres décisions. Malgré la facilité de la lecture du texte, qui, dès fois, a le caractère oral, propre à l'enfant, et manifeste par cela, une certaine légèreté, le sujet est bien grave et son analyse faite dans le roman ne laisse pas d'espoir. Tout comme le montre le passé, même le passé assez récent (comme l'attentat du 11 septembre 2001), le futur est sans cesse menacé par la violence qui a le caractère anthropologique. Pourtant, par le fait de ne pas montrer les combats, mais plutôt les gens pendant divers conflits et de choisir la narration à la première personne qui donne accès aux pensées et sentiments, l'écrivaine suscite la réflexion que le premier acte de violence est à chercher non pas dans les champs de batailles, mais dans l'esprit de l'homme censé être *homo sapiens*.

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## THE MATERIAL OF MEMORY IN HELEN HUMPHREYS' *THE LOST GARDEN*

### Abstract

Taking as its intellectual premise Robert Pogue Harrison's observations about how, by giving voice to mortality, literature reveals man's kinship to *humus* through their shared capacity to care for life and death, this paper examines the correlation of place and memory in Helen Humphreys' WWII novel *The Lost Garden*. Insofar as the narrative is subtended by a redemptive attempt at a restoration (both literal and imaginary) of the past, the central trope of the garden calls for a Bachelardian reading of the oneiric dimension of material experience. Thus by focusing on the material imagination that shapes the figural system of the novel, this paper shows how Humphreys conveys the humic depth of human life and turns the horror of death into homage to life.

**Keywords:** material imagination, memory of place, *humus*, reverie, ascending flame

### Résumé

Puisque cet article prend comme sa prémisse intellectuelle les observations de Robert Pogue Harrison sur la façon dont, en donnant la parole à la mortalité, la littérature révèle l'affinité de l'homme à l'humus par leur capacité commune à prendre soin de la vie et la mort, il examine la corrélation entre l'endroit et la mémoire dans le roman de Helen Humphreys *The Lost Garden*. Dans la mesure où le récit essaie de restaurer le passé, la figure du jardin est interprétée dans la perspective de la phénoménologie de Gaston Bachelard et de l'accent qu'il met sur la dimension onirique de l'expérience matérielle. Ainsi, en se concentrant sur l'imagination matérielle qui soutient le système figural du roman, cette interprétation vise à montrer comment Humphreys révèle la profondeur humique de la vie humaine et transforme l'horreur de la mort en hommage à la vie.

**Mots-clés :** imagination matérielle, mémoire d'endroit, *humus*, rêverie, flamme ascendante

## Introduction

Historical fiction thrives on memory tropes. By marshaling the resources of the vocabulary of memory, narratives attend to the modes and registers of remembering and forgetting to negotiate the epistemological and ethical distance between words and experience. Writing about the past effectively constitutes a process of mourning wherein, because of the loss of the referent, recollection always remains open to oblivion. In this regard, then, the act of memory is *aporetic* by nature, which is what Jeremy Fernando *pace* Jacques Derrida observes in *Writing Death*: “For, if memory was complete – if one could know for sure – then by extension, possibility is governed by correspondence: the fact that we can never be sure, that we can never control forgetting, suggests the possibility of changes occurring whilst remaining exterior to our cognition, to our scope of knowing” (38). This is to say that every attempt to retrieve the past is circumscribed by its own failure, which both gives it impetus and cancels it out, whilst also nourishing the human imagination that transubstantiates the inwardness of mortal time into material inscriptions. As a consequence, the ethos of finitude that guides a historiographer’s hand is inevitably bound up with the hermeneutic imperative, forging ethical links between material durability, historical durations, and human endurance.

## Memory as a Moral and Material Bond

The moral tension at the heart of the quest for epistemological certainty has implications for translating memory into history. Dylan Trigg’s distinction in *The Memory of Place: A Phenomenology of the Uncanny* is instructive here:

With individual memory, we are in the region of a highly specific frame that is brought alive through recall, remembrance, and the imagination. Individual memory is irreducible to experience, yet fundamentally rooted in lived experience. Individual memory, moreover, is forever in process, constantly modifying its contents as the remembering subjects themselves are modified. Lived from the inside out, individual memory obtains a deep affective quality by dint of its intimacy with the rememberer... History, on the other hand, appears to objectify and render the individual aspect of memory external. History does this by articulating the past into an ordered unit, allowing us to confer the title of ‘event’ upon the past (73).

As a structuring principle, the collision between personal recollection and public record has been used to expose and examine the tenets of official history in many postmodern novels. Linda Hutcheon described as *historiographic metafiction*s, fictions that are “both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages [...]”

(5). In fact, novels such as Timothy Findley's *The Wars*, Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*, and Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace*, to name but a few, have called upon literary scholars and cultural critics to enquire into the ideological grounds of all discourses – literature and history, among them – that give shape to social formations by institutionalising modes of thought. It is in this context that the symbolic value we attach to materiality that predicates the narrative act of remembering brings ethical vigilance to discursive practices, which seek to restore lost bodies and places to their existential plenitude.

In Trigg's phenomenological account, memory is spatially and temporally configured through the body of the remembering agent, who holds a place for the past in reciprocity to the haptic incursions of the material world. This embodied materiality of the past, which manifests itself through physical or spectral traces, explains why Trigg sees *place* as both "a receptacle of memory" and a site "to signify a public event" (xix). In other words, the sensual qualities of a place make it amenable as much to (re)storing lived experience as to converting it into a communal value. As Trigg elaborates, "This elevation of materiality to an event brings the memory of place and the place of memory together, each attesting to the peculiar power of place to seize time in its tracks" (xix). In these terms, *placing* memory entails analysing how different modes of materiality correlate with different modes of remembering, to the effect that the spatial language of memory shows its capacity to unsettle the enduring ties between body and consciousness and call into question the moral foundations of our subjectivity as mnemonic agents.

From a phenomenological point of view, the figuration of *place* in historiographic reflection has both epistemological and ontological implications. Insofar as "being-in-the-world means being placed" (Trigg 4), our bodies are responsible for the epistemological limitations we confront in the present as much as the past. Understood experientially, *place* uncovers the paradox of the body as that which opens the world to us and orients us in it, at the same time as it shapes and delimits our being in the world. It is the motility of the body, which accounts for the materialising of temporal experience that enables us to trace "an arc of time" (Trigg 7) in the lived moment and in sensual recollection. More significantly, though, the materiality of place speaks *of* and *to* our own mortal materiality as human beings, for, as Robert Pogue Harrison cogently argues in *The Dominion of the Dead*, "The historical unfolding of what passes away comes to rest in the earth, its humus" (49). In Harrison's reading, although part of nature, "places have human foundations" (18) because they are receptacles of our bodies in dwelling and dying. This earthly correlative of time accords with the etymological bond between *human* and *humus*, verbally reminding us of our earthly constitution and destination as finite beings. For Harrison, seeing as we live within the boundaries of our own mortality, it is our burial practices that reveal the humic depth of our human existence as creatures



of legacy. Conceived as primordial houses, graves testify to the ways in which the living depend on the presence of the dead, whose place of memory shares the soil of harvests (Harrison, *Dominion* 38), thus visualizing the human responsibility as caretakers of *humus*.

Because *humus* conserves the accretions of human history, writing about the past ritualises an act of mourning which creates a metaphorical crypt for the past to rest in and for us to tend to. To quote Harrison, "Just as burial lays the dead to rest in the earth, mourning lays them to rest in us. The analogy between these two parallel rites of internment rests on an intimate and age-old kinship between the earth and human inwardness – a kinship that makes the earth the caretaker of cultural memory, and cultural memory the caretaker of the earth" (*Dominion* 50). With this in mind, we are invited to recognise the retentive powers of literature and the restorative modality of grief, which, in giving voice to mortality, creates a place in time where the living and the unborn may share their common humanity. Where the materiality of place receives human care, it reciprocates not only by rewarding human labour and life, but also by rendering solidarity between memory and the imagination, so that writing death need no longer be thought of as a blind response to a lost presence (Fernando 58), but, perhaps more accurately, as an act that "constitutes a gift of the dead to the future" (Harrison, *Dominion* 14). More than anything else, by assuming responsibility of the past, our verbal inscriptions reveal that we ourselves, in fact, are the place of "an imaginary afterlife" (Harrison, *Dominion* 149), which is to say, finite mediums of infinite re-presentation, restoration, and renewal of legacy.

### Cultivating Legacy

Insofar as all landforms find their source in *humus*, the power and presence of place have a particular resonance in Canadian literature. Because of Canada's political and economic role in the expansion of European imperialism, the conceptualisation of land that was enforced on the colony stemmed from a binary logic where Europe was pictured as a place of civilisation as opposed to the savage state of the Canadian wilderness. W. H. New explains it well in *Land Sliding: Imagining Space, Presence, and Power in Canadian Writing*:

The land is one of these European visual codes, an indicator variously of nature and morality – one that, by differentiating between a paradisaic earthly garden and a savage earthly wilderness, encoded what was taken to be the 'natural right' to territorial expansion. By the terms of this code, those who lived in the garden were manifestly good and deserved to acquire more territory; those who lived in the wilderness, if anyone lived there at all, deserved to give their territory up to those who were morally superior (22).

The evocative image of the Canadian wilderness is congruent with the wider social assumptions and practices that advocated European racial superiority throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by systematically depriving the Aboriginal people of their human identity in the form of land, home, and children. In conceptualising land as simultaneously virgin territory and imperial property, settlers-colonisers relied on discourse to institute a dominant social order that would appear natural because its authority derived from the place of European cultural origins. The power that land held in the imperial agenda shows the extent to which *humus* was used in the humiliation of the racial and cultural Other, whose memory was deemed deserving of a place in national history only in the second half of the twentieth century.

New's intellectual reminder of the social system of attitudes and judgments that established the colonial rule over what used to be Aboriginal territory offers us some understanding of the dearth of gardens in Canadian literature. As an imperial form of land ownership and its cultivation, gardens may be seen as part of the ideological apparatus that contributed to the imbalance of the dominant power relations in the North American colonies. In New's words, "as terms in a recurrent binary paradigm – garden vs wilderness, heavenly vs hellish, clean vs dirty, orderly vs chaotic, lawful vs lawless, mature vs childish, moral vs savage, natural vs unnatural – they emphasize the persistence of an existing hierarchy by constructing limits to social and intellectual options, as though these limits were given or 'natural' or axiomatic" (22). In New's astute critique, the garden gains its substance as an element in a signifying system which grants meaning by virtue of relying on a mode of thought that conceived of land as power, privilege, and property rather than kinship and custody. Divested of the primary human values associated with *humus*, the garden becomes a memory place that speaks of painfully conflicting historical existences and experiences. It is for these reasons that Canadian literary engagement with the garden as a memory trope is always a considerable undertaking.

Helen Humphreys' historical fiction *The Lost Garden* (2002) is an interesting case in point. While setting the story in England is not new to Humphreys – her other novels, *The Frozen Thames*, *Coventry*, and *Afterimage*, have also been situated in English locales – the choice of garden as a historical landmark, a cultural form most firmly associated with "a sanctuary from history" (Harrison, *Gardens* ix), is compelling. Looking at England through Canadian eyes, one may expect the narrative to submit its central image of the garden to a critical inquiry into the practices of cultural appropriation, erasure, and substitution that made gardens a colonial legacy in Canada. Humphreys, however, turns away from the explicitly ideological concerns explored in most historiographic metafiction, gravitating instead towards the issue of the moral retention of memory, which is conveyed through the narrative's engagement

with the material imagination, the dynamics of reverie that, in penetrating the ontological constitution of the universe, materialises the memory of place. In phenomenological terms, the garden trope in Humphreys' fiction has significance as a historical agent of restoration and replenishment. In other words, rather than expose the ideological underpinnings of historical discourse that both provide and obstruct our access to the past, Humphreys' novel mobilises visual materiality as made manifest in the images of air, fire, earth, and water, to reveal what Gaston Bachelard calls "the worldly weight" (*Poetic Imagination* 44) of the past. As readers, then, we are invited to ethically re-imagine, rather than confront the representations of, the past by stepping into the sensory and sensual life of place and the elements as contemplated by the consciousness of the narrator.

### The Estate of Memory and the Material Imagination

The economy of memory in *The Lost Garden* is defined by the transformative power of the gardens that the narrator, a 35-year-old female horticulturalist named Gwen, takes on to restore on a rural estate in the middle of the Second World War. For her, the garden is the key material and metaphorical source of her narrative recollections as well as the ultimate repository of her emotional life: "Is it really possible to think in abstract terms when we are using our bodies so completely? Is it possible to do something 'for the war' and not attach it to one's personal life?" (Humphreys 107). Metaphorically, she is the voice of the garden, which is one way to understand why her memories unfold in the present tense: as a material site of time, the garden enables a creative alliance between life and death so that Gwen's memory of place becomes coeval with place memory marked by the lives lost during the war. In more practical terms, though, the garden is envisioned as a source of nourishment, bearing the promise of social recovery from nutritional scarcity and wartime suffering. This is why, having become disillusioned with her laboratory attempts to cure parsnip canker, Gwen volunteers to go to the countryside to help the Women's Land Army grow potatoes for the war effort: "I wanted to escape the inevitable decline of my parsnip specimens" (Humphreys 31). The gardens she finds at Mosel, however, exceed the narrator's initial moral commitment, calling for her skills as a caretaker of *humus* in its full power as a *topos* of material memory.

The materiality of place in *The Lost Garden* finds a correspondence not only in Gwen's professional life as a gardener, but also in her female subjectivity as an emotional orphan, a woman who has never known love: "No one has ever said that they love me" (Humphreys 29). For Humphreys, the garden is a material cognate of Gwen's body, in which her memories are

grounded and regenerated: it is because the novel's gardens operate as a crypt of the senses as much as of reminiscences that Gwen's narrative reveals the extent to which her own body remembers and relives the past. More precisely, the act of memory in the novel is subtended by the discourse of desire, which is made manifest most explicitly through the opposition between the phenomenological experience associated with potatoes, on the one hand, and flowers, on the other.

Upon arrival to Mosel, the narrator learns that not only has she arrived too late to claim any authority over the Land Girls, but her work discipline – her gardening – is somewhat upset by the presence on the estate of Canadian soldiers waiting to be posted. Predictably, the Land Girls would rather enjoy the company of the young men than spend their time ploughing the fields and planting potatoes. As a result, Gwen is confronted with mild hostility: “The girls regard me suspiciously” (Humphreys 32). In Bachelardian terms, this initial tension between the narrator and the Land Girls may be understood through the correlation between the terrestrial realm and the dynamics of verticality in *The Lost Garden*. From the outset, Gwen accepts as her responsibility the cultivation of the land on the estate and the planting of potatoes, to which the girls are expected to contribute. Gwen's thinking about the Land Girls, though, shows that she relies on analogy, tethering them to the earth and even giving them potato names: “Doris, I have rather unkindly called ‘The Lumper’. The girl with reddish hair I have nicknamed ‘Golden Wonder.’ The two who seem the least amenable, and who have potential for disobedience, I have named ‘British Queen’ and ‘May Queen.’ The black-haired girl is ‘Vittelette Noir’ (‘Vittellete’ for short)” (Humphreys 54). The idea of equating humans with potatoes is hardly novel. In their examination of the cultural attitudes to the potato in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth-century Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt note that the chthonic power of the potato to conjure forms from the ground fomented anti-potato sentiment which insisted that “potato eaters... undergo a peculiarly quick transition from plant to person [...]” (111). Because, as a staple food, the potato was traditionally compared and contrasted to bread, it always had an unstable meaning in the English cultural imaginary, seen as the food of plenty by some and as the food of misery by others. Most often, though, because of its autochthonous origin in the earth, the potato came to be associated with “physical wretchedness, filth, and infirmity” (Gallagher and Greenblatt 113), especially when considered its importance to the Irish. By contrast, in the moral economy of *The Lost Garden*, the potato gathers up the symbolic meanings usually associated with bread, “including human community, mutual nurturance, and reliance on natural cycles of death and resurrection” (Gallagher and Greenblatt 114), all of which result from, what Harrison may call, their shared humility in the face of *humus* (*Gardens* 28).

Gwen's own memory testifies to her understanding that in ploughing the potato field, the girls reorganise the social body and institute a new order of being: "But, as we all bump along the ground together, all of us connected to the fragile machine we've barely mastered, all of us connected to each other, there is a feeling of strength among us" (Humphreys 104). In Bachelardian terms, then, Gwen's potato analogy speaks of her terrestrial imagination, the girls' (and her own) need to take root in a place they may call home. As such, planting potatoes on the estate literalises the narrator's desire to belong, both physically and emotionally.

If we are to accept Martin Heidegger's claim that man's Being rests in his capacity to dwell, "to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, specifically to till the soil" (245), then it seems reasonable to suggest that by cultivating the Mosel gardens – particularly planting potatoes – Gwen and the Land Girls rediscover the hospitability of Nature and learn to dwell. For Humphreys, much like for Heidegger, the cultivation of soil and the cultivation of spirit are "connatural activities" (Harrison, *Gardens* 33), bringing into relief the codependence of human and *humus* in their shared capacity to host life. To the extent that every garden is modelled on Eden – and Gwen's gardens hold a giant yew in the shape of an angel – it should not be surprising that the act of planting potatoes in *The Lost Garden* brings to light the humic depths of human activity that give the novel's characters spiritual sustenance. For it is the life-forming gestures of gardening that allow them to sculpt a suspended island of idyllic time untarnished by the devastations of war: "It is now easy for us to ignore the war. Our work on the estate has shifted from war effort to restoration. We live at Mosel as though it is where we really live, not merely where we are posted" (Humphreys 189).

At the same time, though, the narrative's dream of the earth's fertility is a sensual dream. In cultivating the soil of the gardens, Gwen not only nurtures the ground that gives nourishment and the promise of plenty in the war economy, but also tends to Nature's terrestrial and aerial instincts that reciprocate her own flaming passions, most notably her growing love for Raley, the officer responsible for the Canadian troops stationed at Mosel. Throughout the novel Gwen is aligned with the element of fire, which transforms the durability of *humus* into the evanescence of air and vice versa. The element of fire connects Gwen and Raley both literally and metaphorically. We learn that the room she inhabits on the estate was the one where Raley slept and burned all the candles: "In fact, I almost set fire to the place. Lay down in one of the rooms with some candles burning. I woke up and the timbered arch above my head was on fire" (Humphreys 52). Similarly, at a dance where the Land Girls invite the Canadian troops to their quarters, Raley offers Gwen a flask with alcohol, whose fiery spirit gives her "a flush right away" (Humphreys 153). Her social meetings with Raley, especially his

emotional reading of Tennyson's *In Memoriam* make her long for physical proximity: "I lie under *The Genus Rosa* and imagine it's Captain Raley on top of me, squashing the life out of me" (Humphreys 125). But it is only by way of caring after three secret flower gardens that the narrator learns to acknowledge her own identity as an awakened flame.

### The Body and the Gardening Ethos

Harrison makes an important point in saying that care "in its self-transcending character, is an expansive projection of the intrinsic ecstasy of life" (*Gardens* 33), because the passion Gwen experiences in tending to the blazing heat of her flowers is the only form of sensual pleasure she is allowed to behold. On the first night of her stay on the estate Gwen confronts an amorous couple: "There is a mad scramble and they unexpectedly shoot past me, clutching their undone pieces of clothing to their bodies. The soldier. The Land Army girl" (Humphreys 45). She also learns of the ghost that is supposedly haunting the estate, which later transpires to be an albino fox. The fact that it is a trickster figure, which is given to stealing fire in mythical stories (and has the colour of white ashes), should not escape our attention either. Humphreys draws our attention to the reverie of fire that speaks of how the garden accommodates and enhances desire in the spatial language of flower life: "The roses burn white in the darkness behind us. White as ashes" (Humphreys 198). We are reminded here of Bachelard's observation that "all flowers are flames – flames, that want to be light" (*Flame* 55), where the rose "is a veritable image-hearth for imaginary plant flames" (57). The images of flowers in Gwen's dreams also assume the ascending verticality of her desire to be deflowered: "I lie on my back and think of Raley's fiery roses above my head" (Humphreys 82). Metaphorically, Gwen herself is a human flame: while her potato patch dreams the dream of physical bounty, her flower gardens spell the dream of ascension that is consonant with Gwen's own need for physical love.

However, this is where the potato/flower dichotomy collapses: the potato ties in both with the parsnips Gwen experimented on in a London laboratory and the flowers she discovers in the lost gardens of the Mosel estate. Like parsnips, potato tubers "expand unseen in occulted darkness" (Gallagher and Greenblatt 113) and conceal repressed, subterranean dreams, but like flowers, they also sprout forth above ground, testifying to the dream of vertical ascension that Bachelard attributes to the aerial imagination. The irony may be that Gwen's reverie aligns with the potatoes more than she cares to acknowledge: the vertical vigour of the potato plant correlates with the moral uprightness Gwen embodies herself, its blossoms manifest the flame that has its substance underground. In recalling her war experience, then, Gwen relives

the vertical dream: the dream of humic depth as much as the dream of exultation. In this respect, perhaps we may think of Gwen's own life as a metaphorical transformation from the parsnip to a potato to a flower.

The narrator's sexual appetite finds an inverted mirror image in the attitudes to the body adopted by Jane, the oldest of the Land Girls and her closest friend on the estate: "Arms no wider around than the sticks of the bower. A collarbone protruding from the skin in all its detail" (Humphreys 183). Whereas Gwen is starving for sexual consummation, Jane literally starves herself as an expression of her moral commitment to Andrew, her fiancée, who is missing in action. Her refusal to eat is a form of resistance, repression, and remembering, by which she attempts to keep him alive: "Write letters to him in my head. Think of him always and everywhere. Love him fiercely and absolutely. Believe him alive" (Humphreys 133). In this, Jane's hope also mirrors the narrator's gardening ethos, which relies on humility. Like Gwen, Jane is held in suspension by the aerial imagination, only not her own, but Andrew's, whose plane, we later learn, was shot down over France: "His body had been found in the woods in France, hanging from a tree by his parachute. He had been dead for months. He had been dead the entire time of his having been reported missing" (Humphreys 207). In a radical act of absolute reciprocity that is reminiscent of Simone Weil Jane stops eating altogether and dies within two months, in the process calling the narrator to an intimacy she had not afforded her own mother, who had died in London before Gwen volunteered for Mosel: "Before she goes, I will sit beside her bed, hold her hand, and read the names of the roses to her from *The Genus Rosa*" (Humphreys 209). Her reading from Ellen Wilmott's encyclopaedia to Jane mirrors the intimacy she experiences when looking at the flowers in the gardens: "I look at the heads of the peonies, fallen to ground under the weight of themselves, under the weight of a grief too heavy to bear. How they become their own grief and then can no longer bear it" (Humphreys 203). The emotional force of the pathetic fallacy here highlights the link between the material and the spiritual order, whereby Gwen's reading is aligned with her restorative gestures and works to reinforce the phenomenological truth of the mutual constitution of humans and *humus*.

The significance of loss and grief in *The Lost Garden* calls our attention to the phenomenological implications of Gwen's memory narrative as an embodied past. In this respect, the garden looms as a material site that, much like the human body, accommodates both death and desire. The Mosel gardens of Gwen's memory are engulfed by internal heat: towards the end of the novel the narrator herself takes Raley to fulfil her yearning: "The roses have made this happen before. They are burning above me. Raley is burning above me. 'I love you,' I say" (Humphreys 196). Sadly, she learns that Raley loves his childhood friend, a young man who lost his life on his first day in training:

“My friend who died. Peter. He wasn’t just my friend. He was my lover. We have been, had been, lovers since we were young. I’ve tried, while I’ve been here at Mosel, I’ve tried to get over it. But I can’t” (Humphreys 197). Lost in the vertical dream, Gwen uncovers the transformative power of the flame, for, as Bachelard notes in *The Flame of a Candle*, “Verticality tears us apart; it puts both the high and the low within us” (156). In the end, the only way she achieves consummation is through aesthetic sublimation – her gardening, which is also a means of purgation through the act of remembering.

### From Crypts to Scripts

As an elegiac inscription of the past, Gwen’s narrative finds its source and its destiny in the material presence of the garden. In fact, the garden offers itself as an analogy to writing itself, which brings forth the intimate ties between modes of materiality, memory, and the imagination. Throughout the novel the narrator interprets the gardens she is restoring as a foreign script: “I have discovered it in a foreign script and I have tried to translate it so that it makes sense to me, in this world, but it won’t come down to me. The past won’t come down to me as I sit in the middle of this bright June afternoon in 1941. The past is a language I don’t know how to read or answer” (Humphreys 180). Importantly, the past to which Gwen alludes holds its material trace in a ledger that covers the years from 1914 to 1916, which helps her to reconstruct some of Mosel’s original look, but also illuminates the uncanny pattern of historical time: “I’m beginning to feel as though everything has happened before, that our story has already been told” (Humphreys 188). For the gardens are not only home to the narrator’s memories, but also a place that has a memory of its own, connecting the lives the Mosel gardeners lost in WWI to the sacrifice of Raley and his Canadian troops during the Second World War. In recognising this material bond, we are invited to read Gwen’s own narrative as a mode of reliving the past, one that honours the dead by giving presence to absence through embodied memory as repetition.

As much as the garden in *The Lost Garden* unfolds as a narrative, so books gain their significance as garden structures. This metaphor is particularly evident in Gwen’s commentaries on the novels of Virginia Woolf, to whom she writes letters in her head: “Dear Mrs. Woolf. Of your books, I must say that I like *To the Lighthouse* best of all. It is a perfect garden” (Humphreys 42). The parallel between the material acts of writing and gardening nurtures a codependence between memory and reverie. Like Bachelard, Humphreys is concerned with the imagination “educated by reading” (*Poetic Imagination* 37), where reading is thought of as an oneiric act, a practice of daydreaming, of reverie. The state of reverie, in fact, is assumed as a metafictional



framework in which the narrator's memories unfold. The novel opens with a paratext in italics, where the narrator draws our attention to the act of memory as reverie: "*We step out into lamplight and evening opening around us. This felt moment. Our brief selves. Stars a white lace above the courtyard*" (Humphreys 1). The image of lamplight here is central to the narrator's reminiscences because it is by partaking of the light shed by the lamp, a flame of sorts, that she herself brings to light the events of the past. Effectively, the narrator meditates on the creative promise of the light, which grants ponderous luminescence to her narrative:

*We walk the streets of London. It is seven years ago. We didn't meet, but we are together. This is real. This is a book, dusty from the top shelf of a library in Mayfair. The drowned sound of life under all that ink, restless waves breaking on this reading shore. Where I wait for you. I do. In a moment. In a word. Here on the street corner. Here on this page. But it is shutting all around me, even now, this moment that I stopped. The story disappears as I speak it. Each word a small flame I have lit for you, above this darkened street* (Humphreys 1, italics in the original).

While the narrative shows a self-awareness of its linguistic nature, indicating its status as a book, the correlation it establishes between the material and the formal imagination – water and fire, on the one hand, and the ink images, on the other – speaks of its interest in the relation of remembering to daydreaming rather than in probing factual truth. This is to say that Humphreys does not question our ability to remember or the veracity and reliability of memories so much as unfolds mortal time in subordination to oneiric time. Reverie has no time for suspicion, it "assumes the whole universe in its images; simultaneously creative and natural, its value is indissolubly aesthetic and ontological" (Bachelard, *Poetic Imagination* 37). At the same time, though, the narrator's admission that she never met the person she is waiting for, the only reality being the presence of a book, calls for Gwen's imaginary double, Virginia Woolf, whose books kindle the narrator's memory as well as her imagination. Her own narrative, then, in using the elegiac medium, reaffirms the power of poetic images as "agents of elevation" (Bachelard, *Air and Dreams* 41). In this, Humphreys' novel does not seek to examine the act of writing history as a discursive practice, rather, it uses the figural structures of daydreaming to explore the analogies between memory, reverie, and storytelling. "The flame of the candle", Bachelard observes in *Air and Dreams*, "summons reveries from memory" (23). Because Gwen is a human flame, her words blaze with the interior light the narrator sustains to reignite the hearth of her recollections.

It is significant that Humphreys associates mourning with the cultural practices of reading because it shows not only how her novel assumes its place in the literary tradition, but also how it employs poetic codes to derive a sense of historical aptitude associated with the war trauma. Appropriately, Gwen, Jane, and Raley hark back to Victorian and Modernist sensibilities as mediums of spiritual nourishment and emotional endurance. While Gwen and Jane read *To The Lighthouse*, whose author's death is lamented throughout the novel, Raley partakes of Tennyson's "psychic warfare" (Cole 51) in *In Memoriam*, which anticipates the literal warfare that will claim his own life, an episode Humphreys' novel glosses over. Far from just offering a hermeneutic system through which to interpret its characters' lives, however, the intertextual references in *The Lost Garden* participate in a larger network of cultural history as intellectual symptoms of historical decline, one that saw how the philosophical tenets of the Enlightenment paved a way for the two World Wars. Inevitably, the lost garden, which is associated with peace in Europe, is also paradise lost.

### Memory as Restorative Reverie

The material of Gwen's memory derives its substance from the regenerative powers of *humus*, which is why the poetic images that bespeak her reverie are sites of convergence and conversion, where the elements assume one another's identity in the narrative recovery of lived experience. In particular, the image of the magnolia tree, which Gwen brings as a gift to Raley so he could plant it in commemoration of his dead friend, unfolds in the full ambivalence of *humus* as a place for dwelling and dying. On the one hand, the tree may be seen as "the father of fire" (Bachelard, *Flame* 205), which manifests its kinship with death in the form of a coffin or "the tree of the dead", in Heidegger's terms (245). Read in this light, Gwen and Raley's planting of the magnolia marks the vertical promise of humic depth that reconciles mourning to emotional mending. It is the light of the funeral pyre that Raley, too, seems to recognise in the magnolia: "Sad candles, that's what they look like. A magnolia is a tree lit with sad candles" (Humphreys 121). On the other hand, we are reminded of Bachelard's claim that "The Imagination is a tree. It has integrative virtues of a tree. It is root and boughs. It lives between earth and sky. It lives in the earth and in the wind." (*Poetic Imagination* 139), in which case the magnolia tree constitutes the miniature axis of Gwen's memory, thus showing us how "[o]ur bodies have their source in the soil" (Gallagher and Greenblatt 134), but our imagination has its destiny in vertical dreams that follow the axis of the ascending flame. In Bachelard's words, Gwen, is "the protagonist in an uprooting, [she] is the being who raises [her] head up out of

matter, the strange being that unites two dynamics: coming out of the ground and taking off into the sky" (*Air and Dreams* 78).

The ascending flame of Gwen's recollections moves her towards a catharsis, revealing the imagination's power to enlighten and regenerate, i.e. to give spiritual illumination that is best summed up in Bachelard's *Psychoanalysis of Fire*: the reverie of fire "magnifies human destiny; it links the small to the great, the hearth to the volcano, the life of a log to the life of a world. The fascinated individual hears the call of the funeral pyre. For him destruction is more than a change, it is a renewal" (16). We may think of the narrator's consciousness as a metaphorical crucible, a vehicle of alchemical transformations, where fire works as the ultimate purifier, converting matter to spirit, Eros to ethos, and death to life. At the end of the novel the narrator resumes the logic of the eternal return: "The thing about gardens is that everyone thinks they go on growing, that in winter they sleep and in spring they rise. But it's more that they die and return, die and return" (Humphreys 212). For Humphreys, the durability of the garden binds place to time and honours man's and Nature's capacity to transform the material absence of the deceased into their invisible presence in our imagination, so that the place of memory can assume the concerns of the heart.

The metaphor of alchemy allows us to consider the image of the garden as a figuration of alchemical processes in botanical terms. Like the alchemical crucible, it reconciles disparate elements – air, water, fire, and earth – to achieve a transfiguration of matter and spirit. Because Humphreys approaches the past through the ethos of gardening, where the gardener-narrator is cultivating the ground of the past through the hands of material imagination, we may think of her as writing with light. Which is to say that in assuming the image of language as a flame, the narrator projects the narrative as a photograph, i.e. a trace of light. This goes in line with the novel's elegiac spirit, photography, as Susan Sontag reminds us, being "an elegiac art, a twilight art" (15). In this respect, the novel is a testimony to how life depends on death, the garden offering a visual manifestation of the natural cycle of life and death as well as the ontological codependence of man and Nature.

## Conclusion

Unlike postmodern historiographic metafiction, *The Lost Garden* does not flaunt the internal contradictions of historical discourse; by contrast, the image of the alchemical garden speaks of Humphreys' trust in the linguistic power of correlation and reconciliation. The act of daydreaming-remembering that gives the novel its shape replicates and doubles the restorative promise of the Mosel estate itself. The narrator cultivates the past much like she cultivates the

elements, language being the ultimate garden in which man's Being, to use Heideggerian terms, dwells. In this respect, Humphrey's novel celebrates *ontophany*, whereby the past comes to light in the splendour of its Being through the infinitely renewed consecration of dwelling in the commemorative garden. In doing so, *The Lost Garden* highlights the healing power of literature to bring home those who are absent and create for them a permanent place of residence among all of us as descendants of *humus*.

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**THE IMPACT OF (GLOBAL) CONFLICTS  
ON CANADIAN LITERATURE  
AND SOCIETY**

**L'IMPACT DES CONFLITS (GLOBAUX)  
SUR LA LITTÉRATURE ET LA SOCIÉTÉ  
CANADIENNES**





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**“GIT-MIT, GIT-MIT TALK”:  
A WOMAN’S PERSPECTIVE ON THE PARTITION OF  
INDIA IN SHAUNA SINGH BALDWIN’S  
*WHAT THE BODY REMEMBERS***

**Abstract**

The article examines the way in which the historical event of the Partition of India – 15th of August, 1947 is represented by a Canadian-born writer Shauna Singh Baldwin in her critically acclaimed novel *What the Body Remembers* (1999). In order to conduct this analysis, the article concentrates first on a brief description of the Partition event and its reflections within the canon of Indian literature. Then, introductory information about the writer and the novel is provided. Finally, the article focuses on the representation of the event by the writer on the basis of selected passages from her work, analysing the Partition from a woman’s perspective.

**Keywords:** the Partition of India, post-colonialism, postcolonial literature, Shauna Singh Baldwin, *What the Body Remembers*

**Résumé**

Cet article examine de près la manière dont l’événement historique de la Partition de l’Inde (le 15 août 1947) est représenté par l’écrivaine d’origine canadienne Shauna Singh Baldwin dans son roman *La Mémoire du corps* (1999). Pour bien analyser le thème évoqué ci-dessus, l’article se concentre d’abord sur une brève description du fait de la Partition et de ses reflets dans la littérature indienne. Ensuite, il présente des informations sur l’écrivaine, elle-même et son œuvre. Finalement l’article se propose d’examiner les représentations de l’événement historique dans une perspective féminine que l’écrivaine inclut dans son œuvre.

**Mots-clés :** la Partition de l’Inde, post-colonialisme, littérature postcoloniale, Shauna Singh Baldwin, *La Mémoire du corps*

## Introduction

The Partition of India was an event of such a great historic significance that it inspired a variety of representations in non-fictional accounts, literary fiction, and on-screen visualisations. Its double nature shows that modern perception of the event is far from being unambiguous. On the one hand, there was the liberation, achieving long-awaited independence, and, on the other, the atrocities, violence and brutality among the communities of different religious and ethnic backgrounds. In consequence, the Partition still is an extremely significant cultural subject, constantly inspiring new literary and cinematic reinterpretations. Nevertheless, the producers of the Partition narratives choose to focus on disparate aspects of the event, providing in this way their own evaluations or, even, criticism of the division of the subcontinent and its long-lasting effects. The subject of the herein article is to analyse the way in which the historical event of the Partition of India – 15<sup>th</sup> of August, 1947 is represented by a Canadian-born writer Shauna Singh Baldwin in her critically acclaimed novel *What the Body Remembers* (1999).

The Partition of India marks the end of the colonial period in India and the dawn of the British Empire in general. After decades of continuous struggle conducted by Gandhi's civil-disobedience movement, Jawaharlal Nehru's Indian National Congress, and other leaders of religious and ethnic groups, the last Viceroy, Lord Louis Mountbatten, finally granted independence to India. Nevertheless, due to the quarrels of the political groups over who would be in charge of the country after the British left, the concept of creating a separate land for Muslims, known as Pakistan, was put forward. In consequence, a special commission headed by Sir Cyril Radcliffe divided British India along the lines dividing specific religious communities which constituted a majority in a given area. As a result, India underwent the Partition. About 12 to 14 million people had to flee from their homes when they discovered that the new boundaries left them in the "wrong" country (Das 276-277). Due to outbreaks of violence and retaliation, approximately 500,000 people died in the process of migration and millions more were injured (Lapierre and Collins 183-186).

The event has been reflected in literature since various works of fiction were devoted to it throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first texts that took the Partition as their subject matter were mainly historical accounts in the form of personal memoirs written by the survivors of the event. However, due to the controversial nature of these texts, which exposed the violence and brutality of the Partition, they were systematically disregarded and ignored by the official line of Indian historiography.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, fictionalised accounts of the

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the Partition memoirs please refer to Panhuree R. Dube's article "Partition Historiography" (75-77).

Partition transpired around the same time as personal memoirs, yet they were fiercely suppressed by the governments of both India and Pakistan. The most prominent writer of “Partition fiction” (Dube 75), who paved the way for later authors of that genre, was Saadat Hasan Manto (Kumar 213). He started off as a journalist and literary translator only to begin writing fiction as a response to the struggle for independence and later the division of the subcontinent. His novels and short-story collections, the most prominent one being *Kingdom’s End and Other Stories*, were inspired by truthful accounts of the survivors of the Partition and caused such a controversy that Manto was prosecuted for his works six times in a court of law (Shivpuri).

A string of other literary works about the Partition ensued after Manto’s. These were most notably written in the languages of Hindi (*This is Not That Dawn* by Yashpal, *The Divided Village* by Rahi Masoom Reza, *The Broken Mirror* by Krishna Baldev Vaid), Urdu (*The Weary Generations* by Abdullah Hussein, *Basti* by Intizar Hussain), and Muslim (*Khaak aur Khoon* by Nasim Hijazi, *Bano* by Razia Butt). Whereas the majority of these novels often comprised fictionalised accounts of what indeed happened in reality, some of the texts were obtrusively biased, due to their emphasis on assigning blame for the tragedies to particular religious groups.

Kushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* (1956) was the first work in English to provide a balanced viewpoint on both the causes and the effects of the Partition and on how the lives of ordinary citizens were affected by it. In the example of a fictional village of Mano Majra, the author provides the image of peacefully co-existing Muslim and Sikh communities until the division of the subcontinent, which changes them and incites to violence, proving in this way that the responsibility for the atrocities is equal on all sides (Roy 367). The critically acclaimed novel, still popular in India due to its 1998 film adaptation,<sup>2</sup> initiated the trend of highly successful novels about the Partition written by Indian authors in English. As a result, well-known works following *Train to Pakistan* were created, such as, for example, Anita Desai’s *Clear Light of Day* (1980), Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981), Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Cracking India* (1988), and Shauna Singh Baldwin’s *What the Body Remembers* (1999).

### ***What the Body Remembers (1999)***

*What the Body Remembers* is the debut novel written by Shauna Singh Baldwin, a second generation Canadian, raised in India, and currently living in the United States. Though residing permanently within the sphere of Western

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<sup>2</sup> *Train to Pakistan*. 1998. Dir. Pamela Rooks. National Film Development Corporation of India (NFDC).

culture, Baldwin has been greatly influenced by the past experiences of her relatives in India and Pakistan. As a result of her migratory experience and Indian background, the writer frequently explores the Indian dimension in diasporic terms. For instance, in 1996 she published *English Lessons and Other Stories*, a short-story collection which dramatizes the lives of Indian women in Indian and Canadian contexts; whereas in *We Are Not in Pakistan* (2007), another set of short stories, she examines the issues of cultural co-existence, terrorism, and globalisation in a post-9/11 North America.

Following its release in the year 1999, *What the Body Remembers* was awarded the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for the Canadian/Caribbean region and is regarded as the first work of fiction that tells the story of partitioning from the perspective of the Sikh community (Baldwin, "What the Body"). In terms of structure, the novel is arranged into dated chapters which cover the time span from 1928 to 1947. The writing style is largely descriptive, suffused with words in the Punjabi language that come with no glossary, but are defined by the context.

The novel tells the story of Roop, a 16-year-old Sikh girl from the village of Pari Darvaza in Punjab Province. Together with her older siblings, sister Madani and brother Jeevan, Roop is raised by their widowed father Bachan Singh, a farmer with a modest income who is a respected elder in the village. After marrying-off Madani and having paid her dowry, the father does not have enough money to support the matrimonial status of Roop. Unexpectedly, Bachan Singh is approached with an offer of marrying Roop; however, it turns out that it is not a proposal from a trusted friend's son, but an outsider. Sardarji is a prosperous executive engineer from the city of Rawalpindi who, due to having a barren wife, desperately wants to have a male heir, and, thus, he resorts to marrying for the second time. Doubtful at first, the father is eventually persuaded by Roop to let her become Sardarji's second wife, because the girl is convinced that she will communicate with the first wife like with an older sister. Needless to say, Roop is mistaken. Satya, the first wife, treats the newcomer with secret hatred and disdain. A kind of competition ensues between the two women for Sardarji's favours. As Roop bears two children, a daughter and a son, they are ruthlessly taken away by Satya and fostered by her. When the mother fights to reclaim her children, the changing socio-political situation in India quickly sets the stage for the Partition.

### **Marriage as an Allegory of the Partition**

A common observation found in the analyses devoted to *What the Body Remembers* is that of the institution of marriage serving as the mode of "self-division" in which the clash of feudal and secular values inevitably leads to the

destruction of a family and the outbreak of communal violence as well (Anjana in Purohit 92). This phenomenon is exemplified by the three protagonists of the novel. Firstly, there is the character of Roop (her name meaning “beauty” in Punjabi). We observe her growing up in Pari Darvaza as she turns from a spoiled and an inconsiderate girl into an obedient housewife. After the sudden death of her mother, Roop is looked after by three other women in the family: the housekeeper Gujri, her father’s sister Revati Bhua, and Jeevan’s wife Kusum. The three women teach Roop how to manage a household, to be well-behaved, to never cause any trouble and, most importantly, always say “achchaji” never “nahin-ji”<sup>3</sup> (Baldwin 288). Initially, Roop struggles with that last rule. Evidently suffering from the lack of mother, she is unwilling to embrace the image of a submissive spouse. Yet, she eventually complies due to her desire to get out of Pari Darvaza and not end up as a lonely woman like Gujri or Revati Bhua. When married off to Sardarji, a man 25 years older than her, she does everything that is expected from her. She is attentive, dutiful, kind, even knows certain English phrases like “How do you do?” and “Delighted to meet you,” but essentially, she fulfils her duty as a vessel which provides Sardarji with an heir. Therefore, Roop experiences subjugation and her body might be interpreted as “colonised” just like India (Carlson).

Satya (her name meaning “truth”), on the other hand, is the total opposite of Roop. She is a strong, independent woman who cannot “lower her eyes” before Sardarji (Baldwin 151). Known for her bitterness and brutal honesty, she always talks back to her husband, defying in this manner the stereotype of a compliant woman. She wants to walk equally with Sardarji, not two steps behind him, thus displaying quite a feminist approach. In addition to this, Satya has a very anti-colonial attitude towards the British. The wife mocks the English language by saying that it is a “git-mit, git-mit talk” (Baldwin 165) and claims that Sardarji’s posting is “another bone” with which “the British [are] hoping to [...] justify the blood spilled” (Baldwin 171). Yet, she is not at all gullible to the uplifting speeches of Gandhi, Jinnah, and Master Tara Singh, almost foreshadowing the outbreak of violence across the country: “There is Hindu Raj coming [...] Jinnah understands that, I understand better than you know... but someday you will remember my words” (Baldwin 206). It is because of Satya’s rebellious nature that she loses her status of a wife and eventually commits suicide by voluntarily contracting tuberculosis.

Sardarji is a hardworking engineer who was educated in England. During his youth, he became obsessed with the English culture and developed an inner alter-ego called Mr Cunningham,<sup>4</sup> with whom he engages in frequent

<sup>3</sup> “Achchaji” meaning *yes* and “nahin-ji” meaning *no* in Punjabi (<http://northview.org>).

<sup>4</sup> An intertextual reference to Joseph Davey Cunningham (1812-1851), a British historian who published *History of the Sikhs* in 1849 (Baldwin 226).

discussions about his concerns. Not interested in politics, Sardarji thinks that the future of India lies in its reliance on technology, not tradition. Moreover, in spite of his Western education, the husband proves incompetent in the handling of the two wives. As observed by Anurima Banerji in her review of the novel, Sardarji is like “the patriarchal conqueror who divides and rules Roop and Satya” (Banerji 39). He falls for Satya’s intelligence and Roop’s beauty, yet, at the same time, he undermines Satya’s righteous position of a wife by marrying Roop, and later, he hurts the latter by giving her children to the first wife as a way of remuneration for his negligence: “Satya was Sardarji’s tool, the instrument by which he tortured Roop. [...] But so too was Roop the instrument by which he tortured Satya” (Baldwin in Jamal and Singh 57). The clash of these characters illustrates the process of the Partition. Satya and Roop epitomise Truth and Body respectively, which are divided by the thoughtlessness of Sardarji. As a result, the women seem to symbolise the division of India by the British, out of which the hostile lands of Pakistan and the Republic of India were created (Banerji 39; Purohit 95).

### **Reincarnation as a Means of Body Memory**

Another important theme in Baldwin’s novel is that of the body as the physical carrier of memories. The significance of this notion cannot be undermined due to the novel’s title being *What the Body Remembers*. With such a thought-provoking phrase, Shauna Singh Baldwin refers to the concept of reincarnation. Baldwin presents the concept of soul’s rebirth as a way of memorising the past. Apart from the traditional ways of remembering through writing memoirs and telling oral testimonies, the journey of the soul serves as an alternative for channelling the past by “non-verbal” and “non-textual” means (Lee 20). In other words, the writer goes back to the religious notion of *atma*, the soul, which after the death of a body moves on to the next one, yet this other place of her never-ending journey is determined by her *karma*, also known as deeds from the past (Lee 20). Consequently, the idea of body memory transmitted through reincarnation has a very spiritual representation in the novel embodied in Satya (Jamal and Singh 54). It has to be noted that the novel begins and ends with the first-person perspective of this character. In the prologue entitled *Undivided India, 1895*, she describes her coming into this world and laments about being born again as a woman:

If the circle that is your body falls on a ladder inscribed on the game board of time, you climb. If it lands on a snake, you slip-slide back. Resume your journey again. And if you do not learn what you were meant to learn from your past lives, you are condemned to repeat them. This is karma. [...] I have slid down the

snake’s tail and for all the money and temple offerings I lavished on pandits the last time round, here I am again... born a woman. [...] If I find any of those pandits, I’ll tear their hearts out (Baldwin 1).

This stark description epitomises the issue of gender discrimination still present in India. With Buddhist imagery of reincarnation, newborn Satya vehemently rejects her female gender in patriarchal society. She perceives being a woman as a punishment for her past misdeeds, which pushes her to anger towards the oppressive men. She refuses to be submissive and obedient, to conform to patriarchal rules, which inevitably condemns her to death (Anuma 16). This rebellious viewpoint is only amplified in the epilogue of the novel when the woman undergoes another rebirth, this time in *New Delhi, Divided India, 1965*:

I, Satya, return from silence. [...] Too late, I remember: never open your eyes in a new life without forgetting your past one. [...] Aaaaaiiiiiiiiiieeeeeeeeeee! [...] Again am I born a woman. [...] Foolish girl-child with two whole lungs to scream and a body that remembers, remembers the thought, remembers the un-thought, the good deeds and the bad, even as others remember only the bad. This is my karma. [...] And I know, because my body remembers without benefit of words, that men who do not welcome girl-babies will not treasure me as I grow to woman. [...] I have come so far, I have borne so much pain and emptiness! But men have not yet changed (Baldwin 517).

These closing remarks of Satya provide a vital insight into the history of India and its current sociological situation. Namely, in spite of the passage of 70 years, Satya’s fate did not change due to independence, and the violence ensuing from the Partition remained in the country as well (Friedman 6). Even though modern India can be regarded as a Third World’s superpower, it still displays a visible gender prejudice towards women, which is adequately reflected in the Indian sex ratio which amounts approximately to the number of 908 females per 1000 males. Needless to say, the ratio is still uneven because of the family’s preference for boys over girls. Additionally, the rate of crimes against women remains high in India and includes such discriminatory practices as acid throwing, domestic violence, child marriage (prevalent in rural areas), sex-selective abortion, dowry demands (violating the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1965), sexual harassment, and human trafficking (<http://ki-wie.blogspot.com>). That is why, as Baldwin suggests, “men have not yet changed” (Baldwin 517). Although, the treatment of women in India has significantly progressed over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there is still much to be done in order to entirely erase the discrimination. On the other hand, despite the fact that the Republic of India is an independent country, its history has proven to be filled with brutality. Satya was originally born in

1895, hence she had witnessed the British rule and the independence movement leading up to the disastrous Partition, nevertheless, her situation had not improved when she reincarnates as a baby in 1965. New Satya has yet to experience such events as the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, the State of Emergency, Indira Gandhi's assassination, the anti-Sikh riots of 1984, Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, and the on-going dispute over the territory of Kashmir. In other words, Shauna Singh Baldwin implies that *India has not yet changed* either. Despite overcoming the colonial hegemony, the country is still struggling with the outcomes of the Partition in the forms of constantly arising cultural and religious clashes.

### **The Trauma of Memory Inscribed on the Body**

The above analysis of the body as the storage of memory is by no means exhaustive. J. Edward Mallot in his interpretation of the novel points out that "for Baldwin, the body of one often becomes emblematic of the bodies of many, allowing a single victim's story to make claims for a much broader group" (Mallot 166). According to the researcher, the characters choose to write memories on their bodies as a way of dealing with experienced traumas; for example, Roop's grandmother rather than traditionally mourning the mother's funeral, kills herself with an iron lock. Thus, following Veena Das' reflections on how mourning Indian women beat their bodies in order to symbolically transfer the mental pain onto the flesh, a conclusion can be reached that "women's bodies became the text onto which the trauma of communal violence was inscribed" (Das in Mallot 170). That is to say, women were the most vulnerable and numerous victims of the Partition. Their abused bodies served to reflect the brutality of nationalism which apart from acquiring territories also usurped them. Raped and disembodied women were often an inciting factor for the relatives to retaliate on the criminals, propelling in this manner the circle of violence. In addition, we can refer in this instance to Cathy Caruth's conception of trauma as a belated experience. At the time of its happening, the event is not fully acknowledged by the mind and only later on does it resurface through fragmented memories, nightmares, and repetitive actions (Caruth in Alexander 6-7). In consequence, the act of body writing may be perceived as the inadvertent re-enactment of violence, due to the survivor's inability to cope with a traumatic event.

The concept of trauma in *What the Body Remembers* goes beyond the factors of witnessing and oral passing of painful memories. As mentioned in the antecedent paragraph, the novel's heroines voluntarily choose to inscribe the past onto their bodies. For instance, young Roop decides to memorise her grief in the form of a painful tattoo on her wrist, baring her own name written



in Urdu. Satya, as described in the previous subsection, has a more spiritual approach to the body. Yet she hates her flesh because it did not give her children, therefore she commits suicide as a way of liberation. Nevertheless, the transgression of her memory also occurs sideways. That is, Roop acquires her strength and hears her voice in moments of need. Consequently, one of the premises of reincarnation is fulfilled since individuals are able to transfer their emotions to another living person (Lee 21). Satya passes her emotions and memory to Roop, hence her “corporeal experience” can speak through another woman (Mallot 174): “Satya will live on in Roop [...]. Sister and sister they will truly be, the way they could never be when Satya was alive. Roop will be Satya’s vessel, bearing Satya’s anger, pride and ambition forward from this minute” (Baldwin 358).

Additionally, the death of Roop’s sister-in-law Kusum is the most shocking and visual exemplification of trauma in the novel. It is described in the concluding chapters and is told through the accounts of Kusum’s husband Jeevan and Roop’s father Bachan Singh, after they have reached safety in New Delhi. Roop fulfils the role of a witness as she hears the accounts and thus takes in Kusum’s trauma. Firstly, Jeevan tells his side of the story. When he arrived in Pari Darvaza on the eve of the Partition, he found the abandoned and plundered family house with dead Kusum inside:

A woman’s body lay beneath, each limb severed at the joint. This body was sliced into six parts, then arranged to look as if she were whole again. [...] To cut a woman apart without first raping – a waste, surely. [...] This woman’s body – he began to disbelieve his eyes, it could not be Kusum – was also cut just below the ribs. Looking closer, he realized that he, like her assailants, could put his hand into her very flesh the way a European surgeon might. [...] He received the message. Kusum’s womb, the same from which his three sons came, had been delivered. Ripped out. And the message, ‘We will stamp your kind, your very species from existence. This is no longer merely about izzat or land. This is a war against your quom, for all time. Leave. We take the womb so there can be no Sikhs from it, we take the womb, leave you its shell (Baldwin 490-491).

As it is visible in the quoted fragment, Kusum’s body has become “partitioned” as the place on which the trauma and brutality of nationalism have been inscribed (Lee 19). The removal of the womb and the message that comes to Jeevan’s mind are signs of the vicious circle of violence, the call for retaliation (Lee 19). Needless to say, Jeevan desires to retaliate; however, he is surprised by the fire in the house. That is to say, Bachan Singh’s jealous brother, Shyam Chacha, set the house on fire but his own mansion burnt down as well. Devastated and disturbed by this display of violence Jeevan does not engage in the spilling of blood, but leaves the village never looking back.

Nevertheless, the father also has a secret that he wants to preserve from his son. On the infamous day of independence, Muslim invaders raided Bachan Singh's household. The patriarch hid the children, but realised that Kusum was also his responsibility:

Kusum was entrusted to me by Jeevan, she is young, still of childbearing age. I cannot endure even the possibility that some Muslim might put his hands upon her. Every day I had been hearing that seeds of that foreign religion were being planted in Sikh women's wombs. No, I said: I must do my duty. [...] I took her into my sitting room and I told her what Sant Puran Singh said we Sikhs must do, and that I had to do it now. She understood. Always she made no trouble. She said I should take her into the front room, your mama's room, so her sons, on the terrace with Revati Bhua, should hear no cry from her lips. [...] I raised my kirpan high above her head. [...] Her lips still moved, as mine did, murmuring, 'Vaheguru, Vaheguru,' as her head rolled from my stroke. [...] I felt the warm splatter of her wet blood here, through my kurta. [...] I didn't know one woman could have so much blood inside her. Blood arced, spouted, gushed everywhere. I opened the wedding trunks and pulled out clothes as fast as I could, my tears mingling with it (Baldwin 499-500).

Rather than trying to hide Kusum, Bachan Singh is unwilling to take any chances and resorts to the simplest option, killing the daughter-in-law on his own. As a result, Kusum does not fulfil her duty, but his wishes. The irony is that Bachan Singh manages to safely transport the children to India and, if he had not killed Kusum, the daughter-in-law would have undoubtedly escaped as well.

However, Roop plays the vital role in the process of remembering Kusum's death. Her act of witnessing the two accounts that the son and the father will not reveal to each other guarantees that the woman's trauma will not be forgotten: "This telling is for Roop to tell [Jeevan's] sons, and her sons. [...] *I must remember*, thinks Roop. *I must remember Kusum's body*" (Baldwin 488, 495), and when she later wonders about why women choose to die, dead Satya whispers in her ear that "sometimes we choose to die because it is the only way to be both heard and seen" (Baldwin 505). In consequence, the bitter conclusion which Baldwin poses is that Indian women have to die in order to mean anything in the patriarchal society (Mallot 173-174). With Kusum's story, the author emphasises that only through the process of remembering do female victims survive.

### **The Image of the Partition in *What the Body Remembers***

The division of India is presented in a highly explicit fashion in *What the Body Remembers*. The history of the independence movement is structured

and it intermingles with the lives of the characters throughout the dated chapters. First of all, the colonial context is established. Before Jeevan Singh leaves the family house to join the Punjabi regiment of the British Indian Army, his father recollects the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar, 1919 in order to reaffirm the son’s Sikh identity amongst a multinational group of soldiers. Simultaneously, Sardarji develops his career as an engineer under Mr Farquharson who, although having been born in India, despises the subcontinent and the Indian people. Moreover, Sardarji converses with Mr Cunningham who corrects his reflections about the British and points to the flaws of the Sikhs, Master Tara Singh, and the Akali Dal party who do very little to create “Sikhistan” (Baldwin 371). The situation escalates in Chapter 37 – *Lahore, March 1947*, when Sardarji’s workers at the flour mill in Rawalpindi go on strike and attack him. Seeking help from the police is futile, because all the officers are Muslim and they know that a new country is going to be created for them. Of interest in the novel is also the usage of “Vayu,” a Hindu lord of the winds, as a literary device that spreads the news about political matters and massacres across India. Through *the wind* the readers and the characters are informed about the Quit India movement of 1942, the Congress’ approval of Pakistan in 1944, and Jinnah’s Direct Action Day in 1946, and “tales reeking of death and horrors” (Baldwin 471). The utilisation of Vayu as the messenger of significant events and outbreaks of violence exemplifies the cultural construction of trauma. That is to say, as introduced by Jeffrey C. Alexander, the concept of “cultural trauma” focuses on the ineradicable impact of trauma on the collective. Contrary to the idea of “lay trauma” which concentrates on the intrinsic traumatic nature of a certain event and its immediacy (affecting right here, right now), “cultural trauma” gradually roots itself in the consciousness of the oppressed group by permanently staining its members’ memories as well as destroying the social relationships between them, leading in this way to the degradation of communality. Such traumas are constructed and contested by various social agents (Alexander 1-8). Thus, as Baldwin suggests in her novel, in view of numerous personal tragedies which the people of India had endured in 1947, the trauma of the Partition was indeed constructed collectively by various sides and its atrocities irreversibly changed the memory and identity of the victims.

In chapter 39 of the novel entitled *Lahore, August 14, 1947*, Baldwin engages into a full description of the event. The Partition is told from two viewpoints, those of Roop and Sardarji. The husband has sent the wife with his children away on the day of independence while he himself patiently waits until midnight to pass on his engineer post to a Muslim counterpart. When Sardarji is shamefully stripped off his duty, he awaits the arrival of Jeevan’s jeep but to no avail. In a city consumed by riots where protesters scream *Allah*

*akbar* and *Jai Hind*, Sardarji has to rely on the help of a Muslim hotel worker who escorts him and his servant through the dark backstreets of Lahore to the railway station. There, Sardarji has to fight for a spot in the train going to New Delhi, amongst masses of other desperate escapees. Even though he and the servant manage to get on the train, Sardarji knows that this is not the end of the horror, because the train will probably be assaulted numerous times by Muslims. Sardarji's situation exemplifies the classic hardships which the migrants had to endure during the Partition, when they had to survive not only the urban clashes but also train attacks.

Meanwhile, Roop travels in the Packard car with a female servant and two entrusted bodyguards of Sardarji. As they ride along the ancient Grand Trunk Road, Roop observes a caravan of refugees:

A woman with a bandage where her breasts should be staggers against the white-striped barrier arm. She falls. The crowd surges forward, around the fallen woman. Impatient, pressed from the rear. Bicycles and bullocks, tongas and pushcarts laden with accumulation of each man's past and his women's ambitions for his future move slowly over the tracks. The woman is left behind, where she lies (Baldwin 431).

The horrific depiction of migration is not limited to this paragraph. The whole chapter explores the hardships of the uprooted people. For instance, a frail elderly farmer knocks at Roop's windshield and asks her how far Sikhistan is. Roop at first is convinced that the farmer is her own father, but she kindly lies that she has no idea, knowing that there is no separate land for Sikhs. In addition, the woman's altruism is voiced as well. She wants to help the farmer, take him into the car, but it is simply too dangerous (Baldwin 439-440).

The climax of Roop's journey takes place when the car breaks down on the road. One of the bodyguards is sent to the nearest village to fetch water for the radiator, yet he does not come back. As night approaches, Roop decides to hide with the children, the servant, and a bodyguard in the fields; however, the heroine returns to the car in order to retrieve the holy scripture of the Sikhs, Guru Granth Sahib. All of a sudden, she and the servant are surprised by a lorry of Muslim soldiers. Roop realises that in order to survive she must behave as confidently and rebelliously as Satya so as to convince the attackers that they are Muslim women: "Don't die like this, like a dog smeared on the dirt road. If you die, let death have meaning, let it be for a reason," a voice from the afterlife whispers into Roop's ear (Baldwin 460). The soldiers drag the servant out and attempt to rape her, but Roop intervenes by charging at one of the officers and screaming in Urdu that she has a high-positioned relative in the army. Surprisingly, the Muslims calm down and they are ultimately convinced of Roop's religious affiliation when she shows to them

her old tattoo with the Urdu alphabet. Roop is so confident in handling the men that they even give her water for the radiator before leaving.

As a result, Roop’s inscription on her body as well as her embracement of Satya’s attitude seem to have saved her life. The above described situation could have ended differently in real life, but Shauna Singh Baldwin emphasises that only by voicing their resistance are women able to free themselves from the constraints of patriarchy (Chauhan 59). Contrary to Kusum who passively accepts her demise, Roop manages to save her children and the servant. In addition, she does not deny her true religion, but gives the false impression of being a Muslim. In consequence, Roop becomes an independent woman, a figure beyond male objectification and possession: “See me, I am human, though I am only a woman. See me, I did what women are for. See me not as a vessel, a plaything, a fantasy, a maidservant, an ornament, but as *Vaheguru* made me” (Baldwin 479). She patiently waits day after day for the arrival of Sardarji’s train in New Delhi, listening to the dreadful accounts of the victims as their trauma gradually develops. They talk about raped children and naked women forced to dance in front of their oppressors. After witnessing massacred passengers on the trains, Roop becomes worried about her husband. Finally, he arrives safe and sound and they are reunited, but irreversibly changed as well. Towards the end of the novel, the heroine delivers the following monologue about India:

Is this India we fought for God-chosen or Godforsaken? She is like a woman raped so many times she has lost all count of the trespassers across her body. Who will rescue and pyre the bodies of my quom? What use now to be Hindu, Sikh, Muslim or Christian, what use the quom, the biradari, the caste, the compartments that order our lives? What do they do us for now in time of chaos when person meets person and the question between us is only this: Can you feel as I feel? Do you agree to let me live if I let you live? And will you keep that promise even when no one watches, under cover of sandstorms, when the veil is snatched away, will you be kind? (Baldwin 468)

This commentary about India perfectly exemplifies the tragic situation of people during the Partition. The Indian land is compared to the body of an abused woman and the symbolism of such an analogy is unnerving. Like disembodied Kusum, the country cannot be unified again, or, similarly to the killing and abducting of women, the Indian multi-nationalism has been replaced by religious fundamentalism (Chauhan 59). With the land raided by the Persians, the Greeks, and the Mughals throughout the centuries and eventually conquered by the British, the conquests epitomise multiple rapes. Following this line of symbolic parallels, we can reach a conclusion that *What the Body Remembers* stands for the violence inscribed on women and the violence inscribed on India itself.

## Conclusion

In view of the presented material, we can conclude that Shauna Singh Baldwin successfully provides a stark representation of the Partition. Through the means of structured chronicles, reincarnation, and symbolically equating the Partition with the body of an abused woman, the author manages to criticise not only the historical event, but also the state of modern India. Baldwin illustrates the traumatic situation of people during the Partition and the continuing circle of violence that is present in India even today. As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the Partition of India to date serves as an inspiration for various literary and cinematic reinterpretations. Nevertheless, some still resort to remember only about its political significance, confirming the national metanarrative, whereas others focus mainly on ethnic violence. It should be remembered that the Partition of India is the embodiment of all these phenomena and constitutes a dramatic example of how things may spiral out of control even in spite of the goodwill and cooperation of political leaders. *What the Body Remembers* perfectly embodies this aspect of the event. All things considered, in the modern world of constantly growing tensions on the grounds of religion and ethnicity, the Partition might remind us how important it is to ensure that clashes between people representing different concepts of self-rule should be avoided. Therefore, following Baldwin's vision presented in the novel, the cultural reflections of the Partition of India should bring to the public attention the futility of violence among diverse communities.

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## CREATING CANADA ELSEWHERE: THE GLOBAL SPACES OF WAR IN CANADIAN HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION

### Abstract

In times of war, people from different nations move across great distances, and the spaces they inhabit span the entire globe. Transnational movement is therefore both the cause of and the solution for the trauma of war. This paper explores how Canada is imagined globally and created in spaces outside of its national boundaries. In historiographic metafiction, Canada is reimagined as a participant in war and as a destination for those fleeing from it. The genre reconstructs past events and self-consciously comments on the process of creating and disturbing national narratives. In Timothy Findley's *The Wars* (1977), the protagonist is constantly confronted with borders. The civilian population is at the center of Anne Michaels' *Fugitive Pieces* (1996) and Madeleine Thien's *Dogs at the Perimeter* (2011). Both illustrate the characters' migration to Canada as refugees and how their countries of origin contribute to shaping Canada. This paper demonstrates that the sources for Canadian history and identity are located globally and created in the context of war. Moving through global spaces is what constitutes war, but it also becomes a strategy for coming to terms with trauma and history.

**Keywords:** transnational spaces, spaces of war, migration, historical fiction, national identities

### Résumé

En temps de guerre, des peuples de différentes nations se déplacent, traversent de grandes distances et habitent les espaces qui s'étendent sur tout le globe. La migration transnationale est donc à la fois la cause et la solution des traumatismes de la guerre. Cet article explore la perception globale du Canada et sa création dans des espaces qui sont en dehors de ses frontières nationales. Dans la métafiction historiographique, le Canada est réimaginé en tant que participant à la guerre et comme une destination

pour ceux qui fuient les conflits. Ce genre littéraire reconstruit des événements du passé et commente consciemment le processus de création et de perturbation du récit national. Dans *The Wars* (1977) de Timothy Findley, les espaces transnationaux ne sont pas clairement identifiables comme appartenant à une nation et le protagoniste est constamment confronté à des frontières. La population civile est au cœur de *Fugitive Pieces* (1996) d'Anne Michaels et de *Dogs at the perimeter* (2011) de Madeleine Thien. Tous les deux textes illustrent la migration au Canada des personnages des réfugiés et la manière dont leurs pays d'origine contribuent au changement de l'image du Canada. Cet article démontre que les sources historiques et identitaires du Canada se retrouvent à une échelle mondiale et émergent dans un contexte guerrier. Les migrations à l'échelle mondiale sont symptomatiques de la guerre, mais elles deviennent aussi une stratégie pour accepter des traumatismes et l'histoire.

**Mots-clés :** espaces transnationaux, espaces de guerre, migration, fiction historique, identités nationales

## Introduction

In times of war, no one stands still. People from different nations move across great distances, and the spaces they inhabit span the entire globe. Soldiers move through foreign territory, and refugees are forced to escape the war zones to reach safer, yet unfamiliar destinations. War and military conflict play a central role in North American historical fiction, and in this context, the crossing of national borders and creating transnational spaces are often inevitable. Alongside soldiers who actively participate in war, the “most visible repercussions” (Rellstab and Schlote 4) are migrants and refugees fleeing from the spaces of conflict. Their perspectives in and through literature are crucial because

representations and texts are also necessary in order to find ways out of war [...]. Any simplistic representation of war, migration, and refugeehood in terms of conventional and problematic dichotomies such as ‘us versus them’ or ‘good versus evil’ need to be (en)countered in a spirit of critical contestation (Rellstab and Schlote 6).

Historiographic metafiction is in the unique position to offer a critique of literary (mis)representations and realise a contestation of cultural binaries as well as monolithic narratives. The genre is fundamentally interested in creating and subverting the ways in which historical events can be made sense of in literature. This article compares war narratives from Canadian literature

in which international relations, intercultural communication, and the crossing of national borders are at the center. The novels create a tension between the global spaces in which the war is fought and the cultural space in Canada that is shaped by the soldiers' and civilians' experiences in Europe. *The Wars* (1977) is Timothy Findley's seminal novel on the First World War in Europe and Canada's involvement in it. Within the narrative, there are spaces which are not clearly marked as a specific national territory, such as the Atlantic Ocean or the borderlands in Europe. These transnational spaces are ambiguous sites of cultural construction. The protagonist, Robert Ross, is constantly confronted with borders, which shape his conception of national identity. The civilian population is at the centre of Anne Michaels' *Fugitive Pieces* (1996) and Madeleine Thien's *Dogs at the Perimeter* (2011). The two novels are respectively about the Second World War in Europe and the civil war in Cambodia in the 1970s, and they both hauntingly illustrate the characters' migration to Canada as refugees and how their countries of origin contribute to shaping Canada. The novels are well suited examples for analysing literary representations of war, and this article is particularly interested in the global spaces occupied by the characters. These, I argue, are formative of the characters' conceptions of Canada and its cultures.

These historical novels belong to the narrower subgenre of historiographic metafiction, a term which goes back to Linda Hutcheon, who locates this form of writing in postmodern theory and practice (Hutcheon, "Canadian" 228). Such texts reconstruct historical events and self-consciously comment on the dynamic process of storytelling. Hutcheon argues that they are "historical and contemporary" (Hutcheon, *The Politics* 71), illustrating that the past continues to inform our present. Since her coinage of the term in 1984, the genre has developed further and adapted to contemporary discourses. The novels show that they are more than just postmodern, experimental play: they are influenced by postcolonial, feminist, and anti-racist discourses as well as an awareness of transnational relations and global entanglements of people.

A transnational perspective therefore offers a suitable framework for approaching and analysing the three novels. *The Wars*, *Fugitive Pieces*, and *Dogs at the Perimeter* recollect three different wars and are located in North America, Europe, and Asia. The dates of publication, a time span of almost three decades, indicate that war literature exists regardless of literary trends and periods although it is stylistically and thematically shaped by them. This article focuses on four aspects inherent to the novels. First, it explores the literary strategies for making sense of violence and military conflicts. Second, it traces how the characters conceive of themselves as Canadians while recognising their multicultural, global origins. The novels are all located in Canada as well as abroad and shape our understanding of Canada through their global perspective. Third, the article's interests lie with these transnational

spaces specifically and how they contribute to shaping Canadian identity. Finally, the novels are self-reflexive in constructing the historical content and their own textual form. Overall, this article demonstrates that the sources for Canadian history and identity are located globally and created in the context of war. Moving through global spaces is what constitutes war, but it also becomes a strategy for coming to terms with trauma and history.

### **Transnationalism and Canadian Historiographic Metafiction**

Canada as a nation does not exist in isolation. The fifteenth century marked the beginning of the invasive colonial voyages of Europeans to the North American continent. The current Canadian population certainly consist of the indigenous peoples, but has been also the result of the continuous movement of people to Canada. Considering Canadians' global origins, a transnational perspective shows how other cultures move into the discursive spaces of the country. While transnationalism has tangible consequences in political and economic relations, this article investigates a cultural dimension; in a literary context, transnationalism refers to two or more nations that inform one another, transform one another through cultural exchange. Canadian literature represents this condition of globality. Historiographic metafiction is acutely aware of these circumstances and actively constructs them in its contents. Kit Dobson argues that "writing in Canada has become transnational [...] in terms of its interests and politics" (Dobson x). In their novels, the writers which the present paper focuses on create national and international spaces and situate their narratives in changing locations. Migration and race are suitable for transnational readings, and there are but few novels the fictional worlds of which are created entirely within the nation's borders. Dobson considers this approach as a "means of recognizing and coping with the global world system into which people are increasingly interpolated as citizens, refugees, undocumented migrants, or otherwise" (Dobson xvii). As Canada remains attractive for migrants from around the globe, their narratives should not be unheard.

Whereas post-national readings work towards destabilising the significance of the nation, postcolonial literature and theory insist that the nation is an essential parameter to understanding a country's cultural identity and the "literature of the decolonizing world" (Szeman 29). The novels by Findley, Michaels, and Thien are not denationalised spaces void of national identifications, but the world is partitioned in nations which interact with one another. A transnational perspective towards historiographic metafiction therefore seeks to "look beyond the nation (without forgetting that it's still there)" (Dobson xvii) and makes a case for how Canada is created in and through global spaces.

It is in the context of war that transnational movement receives meaning which is loaded with conflict and violence. Historiographic metafiction aims at revising official histories and offers alternatives for the war narratives of literary romanticism or realism; the novels are not glorious stories of adventure or the fight for a good cause, but they are about displacement and exile. Since the publication of Findley's *The Wars*, the rewritings of history in post-1977 novels are partly motivated by their interest to "rework ideas of nation, national identity, and national memory" (Grace 78). The connection between places of war and their influence on a nation's collective memory has been established since Pierre Nora's term *lieux de mémoire*. Sherrill Grace employs the metaphor of a landscape of war and memory, arguing that "the landscape of war memory is, uncannily like an actual battlefield, still a mnemonic minefield" (Grace 30). Martin Löschnigg investigates the effect European spaces and their associations have had on Canada's memory of the First World War, illustrating "the way in which 'over there' [...] became part of the Canadian collective consciousness" (Löschnigg 107). The three novels in this article share the fact that, for the characters, war happens elsewhere but not independently of Canada. Canada is a participant in wars abroad as a direct military engagement in combat is filtered through the perspective of soldiers. *The Wars* problematises the soldiers' participation in the war and the narrators' interest in exploring it. Canada is also a recipient of people who experienced war as its victims. In *Fugitive Pieces* or *Dogs at the Perimeter* the country becomes a destination for refugees who were forcibly removed from their home and ended up halfway around the world. Their stories of migration reveal Canadian responses to its immigration policies, the cultural integration of the newcomers, and the emerging national self-conceptions.

The historical novels thus have in common their concern for making sense of contemporary Canada by going back in time and locating the country's cultural origins. The characters contribute to a culture that, although geographically and temporally removed from the theatres of war, is shaped by those remote events in the past. Sherrill Grace writes: "if war has taught us anything it is that battles and battle fronts never stay put *over there* or *back then*. The ghosts can never be simply pushed aside" (Grace 25, original emphasis), and she thereby underscores Hutcheon's argument that the historical past continues to influence our present.

### **Liminal Spaces and Borderlands in *The Wars***

Two of the main concerns of Timothy Findley's *The Wars* are Robert Ross's role within the military and his compassion for animals. Both are summarised within the protagonist's name. His last name, Ross, directly translates into

German as ‘horse;’ moreover one whose connotation evokes its rider to be a knight in armour. The narrative takes place in Canada, England, and France as well as in the spaces in-between, that is, on the Atlantic while the soldiers travel to Europe and in between the front lines. Two specific locations reveal the relevance of global spaces in the novel. The first is the soldier’s journey on board a ship from Canada to Europe, a place that is described as claustrophobic and liminal. The second location is the front in France, and the spatial associations here reveal the protagonist’s understanding of Canada.

In *The Wars*, Robert Ross’s self-characterisation as a Canadian and his conception of war are formed within those spaces that are not clearly marked as discernible nations, i.e., on the Atlantic and in the borderlands of France and Belgium. The journey to Europe can be described by the state of liminality, a transitioning from one place to another, in a place “neither here nor there” (Turner 95) and yet formative of the soldiers’ conceptions of nation and war. A liminal space is also where, “established paradigms become meaningless and hierarchies are leveled” (Gruber 359). On the Atlantic, there exists an intermediate realm, where the men discard their prior notions of war as they struggle to place themselves between the borders of nations. The soldiers in transit are not prepared for the liminal state they encounter on high sea. The conditions on board and the raging storm take a toll on all passengers, including the horses, and Robert Ross is acutely aware that with no solid ground underneath, “there was no survival in the water” (Findley 60). At this point, Robert must euthanise one of the animals, forcing him to readjust his notions of potential enemies and “whatever it was you killed in wars” (Findley 64). It is also an act that triggers a memory of home: “He fired. A chair fell over in his mind” (Findley 68); in his thoughts, he is in Canada, reminded of the accident that had killed his sister. Yet, despite the ship’s liminal location in international waters, the vessel is not a denationalised space; as a Canadian military ship, it is highly nationalised and infused with the politics of warfare. Upon arrival in England, the war takes its first human victim: Robert’s comrade and friend, Harris, dies of pneumonia due to the harsh conditions at sea. Robert’s expectations of his first contact with war and the first casualty are thus notably unrelated to combat or contact with the expected German enemies. In fact, Robert writes in a letter home: “The war seems awfully far away. Even further off than when we were at home” (Findley 71).

During his deployment, he finds himself not only amidst front lines, but also in the narrow borderlands of France and Belgium. The troops’ position is described thus:

The front, after all, was rather commonplace [...]. It was here that most of the Canadian troops were deployed. Their objectives were the towns and villages, ridges and woods for roughly ten miles either side of them. That was the larger

picture. In terms of individual men and companies, their worlds could be limited to quarter-miles. In Robert's case, the furthest extent of his world was the four miles back to Bailleul (Findley 90).

It is in this limited space in which he affirms his identity as a Canadian. In the borderlands, he encounters a French-speaking Flemish man who assumes Robert might be English and therefore insults him. Robert thinks: "if he could identify himself, it might explain his innocence. So he mustered the only coherent sentence he knew in a foreign language and shouted [...]: 'Je suis canadien!'" (Findley 78). The French language is foreign to this (Anglo)Canadian, yet unavoidable for his self-characterisation, echoing contemporary discourses of locating Quebec within the formation of national myths in Canada and a further self-differentiation from those aspects that are British or American. For Robert, these efforts are in vain since the Flemish man disregards his attempt at self-identification and continues to refer to him as "*maudit anglais*" (Findley 78, original emphasis). Robert's participation in the war in Europe strengthens his sense as a Canadian citizen. However, his national and personal identity become unstable in the presence of other people.

Robert is confronted with borders, both territorial and linguistic, of which he is constantly reminded. Those borders continue to reverberate and force him and others to reposition themselves, as Canadians, throughout the novel. Another character, Marian Turner, observes,

Language is a strange thing, isn't it. *Bois de Madeleine ... Magdalene Wood*. Take your pick. Now, I say *Mag-daleen* Wood if I'm speaking what you might call *Canadian*; you know, North American. But the English say it's *Maudlin* Wood. *Maudlin-Mag-daleen-Madeleine*. They're all kind of nice – but I like *Madeleine*. [...] I served at *Bois de Madeleine* from the spring of 1916 to the fall of 1917 (Findley 213, original emphasis).

The former nurse negotiates the different linguistic features of the French town's name and she favours a pronunciation she defines as neither Canadian nor British. To her, and to Robert in his encounter with the Flemish man, the process of formulating national identities demands language, communication, as well as discourse and is enabled by European spaces of war.

Ultimately, the novel's self-reflexive recreation of history and its locations outside of Canada are crucial for Canada's self-conceptions in relation to its southern neighbour in North America and among its European allies. Donna Pennee writes that "memory work is also crucial to the narration of nations" (Pennee 93) and that Robert's fictional biography "allegorizes a story of Canada's development" (Pennee 90). The main plot is set in 1916, notably before the battle of Vimy Ridge. The novel thus recreates a historical moment in Canadian history that adheres to narratives of "coming of age" while

refraining from this particular national event in the Canadian consciousness of the First World War. Simultaneously, however, this time also coincides with the absence of American troops in the war, and the Canadian soldiers are effectively the only North American forces in Europe.

An important literary strategy of the novel to make sense of war and trauma is the allocation of narrative power. Robert is unable to return to Canada to tell his perspective of the events; instead, the task is delegated to an unnamed researcher, who becomes the primary, and yet anonymous, filter of the story. One character, Bessie Turner, suggests that the researcher is male, when she speaks of “him” (Findley 215), but the text does not offer any definite markers for personal identification. Robert differs from his comrades not only in receiving a court-martial, but also because he, after surviving the war, never returns to Canada. Unlike other veterans who “return home bringing their memories and trauma with them” (Grace 25), he remains in his European exile. Due to his severe injuries, “he was tried *in absentia* and – since he could not be kept in prison” (Findley 216, original emphasis), he spends his last years under the care of nurses. Rather than importing his memories to a nation that might “create myths of a glorious past” (Grace 25), he is refused such a participation and withholds his experience from the post-war discourse in Canada. It is only decades later that the researcher investigates what happened to Robert. His initial interest in Robert and motivation to pursue the story remain unresolved in the narrative and the same is true for his identity and location. His nationality is never mentioned explicitly and to do research, he travels within Canada (assuming the location of the archive to be somewhere in Canada) and to England where he meets his interview partners. Within the logic of this article, he is another character whose transnational movement is enabled by war and its consequences. If, in fact, the archive is in Canada, this means Robert’s exile in Europe has not hindered his and his family’s memories from becoming a part of Canada’s memory of the First World War. However, if it is in Britain, like the researcher’s interview partners, it means that, in turn, Canada’s culture has manoeuvred its way into British memories of the war and created long-lasting transatlantic connections.

### **Global Migration and National Identity in *Fugitive Pieces***

In Anne Michael’s *Fugitive Pieces*, ‘mud’ provides the starting point for the story. The protagonist, Jacob, refers to himself as a bog-boy, “the boy in the story, who digs a hole so deep he emerges on the other side of the world” (Michaels 6). Mud and dugouts are also central places of war in Findley’s text; it is here where the earth collapses after an attack, burying the soldiers and



creating a place where all hierarchies become truly meaningless. *The Wars* takes an earthly stance in highlighting the significance of the four elements: earth, air, fire, and water. The mud of the dugouts, the deadly gas attacks, the rain and urine in the trenches, and the all-consuming fire are featured prominently in Findley's novel. Historical fiction is familiar with the trope of a buried past uncovered by archaeological means, one prominent Canadian example being Robert Kroetsch's *Badlands* (1975). Yet, *Fugitive Pieces* is unique and more encompassing in establishing a connection between the geography of the world and its human population. The spatial associations and metaphors are neither national nor international, but earthly, and the novel employs geology as an explanatory model for global migration and national identity.

In considering geographical and geological models, the novel argues that the land mass which would become North America and the cultures which inhabit the continent have geographically been created elsewhere. Athos, Jacob's foster-father, teaches him the history of the world, a "terra mobilis" (Michaels 21). By referring to plate tectonics, he explains that the earth is not stable but constantly and inevitably moving: "Imagine solid rock bubbling like stew; a whole mountain bursting into flame or slowly being eaten by rain" (Michaels 21). Moreover, this happens so slowly that it is barely noticeable, a gradual process of the earth's "staggering patience" (Michaels 35). In his teaching and education of the boy, Athos further provides a socio-cultural aspect of history and human migration, and his personal family history is likewise characterised by patterns of migration. Like "most Greeks, [Athos] rose from the sea" (Michaels 19), as he comes from a family of mariners dating back to the 1700s, "when Russian vessels sailed the Turkish Straits from the Black Sea to the Aegean" (Michaels 20). To Jacob he passes on his inherited sea charts, and the boy realises, "as my blood-past was drained from me [...], I was being offered a second history" (Michaels 20). By associating the transnational history of Athos and his family with the movement of continents, the novel calls into question the stability of national identities and the persistence of nationalist assumptions. If the rocks and ground underneath are not solid, how are nations supposed to be? And wherein lies the worth of waging war about an ever changing territory?

The novel's awareness and reconstruction of how the world came into being is mirrored by metafictional elements inherent to the text, which support the characters in their process of making sense of war and trauma and to position themselves as Canadians. Hiding becomes a strategy of survival for Jacob in Poland and later in Greece; he is a "hidden child" (Berger 13) of the Holocaust in the sense that the hiding experience "had a profound impact on [the children's] sense of identity and consequently, for a long time, left them uncertain as to what exactly they were bearing witness" (Berger 13). In Canada, Jacob learns to confront his spatial exile through an engagement with language.

First, after moving to Greece and then Canada, Jacob realises the importance of fluency in English not only for understanding the world but also for creating it. He practices his language skills by writing poetry, when “a quick clarity penetrated; the difference between a Greek dog and a Canadian dog, between Polish snow and Canadian snow” (Michaels 100). Language allows him to “restore order by naming” (Michaels 111), enabled precisely by the foreign English: “It was a revelation. English could protect me; an alphabet without memory” (Michaels 101). As Kandiyoti illustrates, Jacob not only finds solace in the new spaces but also “by immersing himself in the consciousness of his places of exile” (Kandiyoti 309). In literary language, he eventually finds a way to confront trauma, because “in poems [he] returned to Biskupin” (Michaels 111). Second, Athos’s pacifist stance echoes Canada’s perceived self-identification as a nation reluctant to go to war. Athos links geography and pacifism and he adheres to “the belief that science must be used as a peace measure” (Michaels 82). The fictitious book, *Bearing False Witness*, is about the German occupation of Poland and the rendering of archaeological facts in Biskupin. Written by Athos, *Bearing False Witness* highlights the construction of space through the distortion of historical facts, a recurring theme and concern of many examples of historiographic metafiction. Kandiyoti identifies one of the most fundamental lessons of the novel and argues that “the destruction of place does not signify its disappearance” (Kandiyoti 310). Finally, the third metafictional element is Jacob’s testimony in form of his journals. They are rediscovered by Ben, who restores the text while adding and integrating his own narrative to come to terms with his family’s memory of the war.

Places and their names are bound to a collective memory of trauma, and the distances between them cover the European continent, ultimately finding their way into Canadian narratives of the war. Spaces are not neutral, and the novel is conscious of the politics of space. The novel first offers the impression that global movement is natural and deeply human, that “we long for place; but place itself longs. Human memory is encoded in air currents and river sediment” (Michaels 53). However, it soon problematises this notion, because migration can be instrumentalised to serve colonial aims. The German territorial invasion during the Second World War and the falsification of archaeological evidence by the Nazis show that places are being appropriated for ideological reasons. Across Europe, *Fugitive Pieces* traces the deportation of Jewish people by train to the concentration camps,

that wailing migration from life to death, the lines of steel drawn across the ground, penetrating straight through cities and towns now famous for murder: from Berlin to Breslau; from Rome through Florence, Padua, and Vienna; from Vilna through Grodno and Łódź; from Athens through Salonika and Zagreb (Michaels 51-2).

The novel is a reminder that, in the context of war, territorial occupation forces people to relocate, because places are seized and spaces imposed upon existing cultures. The novel argues “history is amoral, [...] but memory is moral” (Michaels 138), and, to continue in that logic, I suggest that geographical places are amoral, but the social construction of space is moral and should be subject to contestation.

Eventually, it is this earthly movement that finally legitimises the characters’ move to Toronto, and the reason for going to Canada is “salt” (Michaels 79). Jacob emphasises that Athos and he were “invited” (Michaels 79) to the University of Toronto after his foster-father was offered a position at the department of geography, precisely because of his “geopacifism” (Michaels 82). The text evokes Canada’s multicultural make-up and describes Toronto as a city “where almost everyone has come from elsewhere” (Michaels 89). In the second part of the novel, Ben’s narrative begins by acknowledging Canada’s own colonial past involving land appropriation and genocide, when he describes communities of indigenous peoples: “for three thousand years, isolated communities, mills, and palisades were scattered along [the Humber River’s] banks” (Michaels 201). The significance of spatial representations is crucial in literary responses to the Holocaust as the survivors try to make sense of their trauma and their new environment. As Kandiyoti argues, “it is precisely because the disaster annihilated place that we need to consider how place figures in fictions of the Holocaust and of its survivors” (Kandiyoti 300-1). The characters’ places of origin are featured in Ben’s family’s Toronto apartment, where he is surrounded by “images of Europe, postcards from another world” (Michaels 217). Immigrants are “bringing with them their different ways of dying and marrying, their kitchens and songs” (Michaels 89) to this “city of forsaken worlds” (Michaels 89).

As a child of Holocaust survivors, Ben “confronts the problem of post-Holocaust spatiality” (Kandiyoti 301) and he is conscious of his parents’ sense of exile. Their new home in Toronto is meant to become a safe space, yet it is invaded by their memories and hostile fellow citizens. The novel’s most threatening moment occurs in Toronto, when Ben’s father applies for his senior’s pension. He is described as a man “who had erased himself as much as possible within the legal limits of citizenship” (Michaels 232), not fully accepting Canada or any other nation in formal terms. When he gathers all the necessary documents, he discovers that the officer in charge of his case is a former German soldier: “He handed his birth certificate to the man at the desk. The man said, ‘I know very well the place you were born.’ [...] The man lowered his voice, ‘Yes, I was stationed there in 1941 and ’42’” (Michaels 232-3). The novel acknowledges that Canada not only became a home for European refugees after the war, but also for the perpetrators, whether voluntarily or not, thereby creating a space for victims and agents of war.

The impact of the earth's geographical features on Jacob' and Athos's narrative has important parallels in Ben's story and his strategies to address his and his family's trauma. Upon arrival in Canada, spaces are relevant for the characters' sense of perceived security. Ben's parents had chosen their house for its location apart from other Jewish immigrants to avoid ghettoisation, and because "they wouldn't even have the trouble of rounding us up" (Michaels 243). The identity of the subject "they" in this quote is not further specified; while it evokes the family's memories of Nazi terror, it signals a mistrust towards national authorities and agents of power. Ben's parents do not perceive the Canadian nation-state as a protector of its citizens and refugees. Rather, the community's spatial, decentralised distribution of people is reassuring to the displaced characters. While Athos and Jacob are interested in the relation between geography and peace, Ben studies "weather and war" (Michaels 234). He focuses on weather-related phenomena used as means of warfare, and he understands that hurricanes, avalanches, and hailstorms have the potential to become the "real enemy" (Michaels 235). This conception widens the range of adversaries and extends it to ideologically unbiased but nevertheless malevolent forces of nature. This stance is reinforced, perhaps triggered, by the fact that his family's house in Toronto was destroyed by a hurricane. He describes the incident with language evoking elemental forces and movement, saying that the neighbourhood "floated away" (Michaels 245), was "washed away" (Michaels 246), and became "a night planet of water" (Michaels 245). Preceding the destruction of the Toronto home is an earthquake that destroyed Athos's house in Greece. Before he and Ben left for Canada, they had arranged for their books to be stored on the island Idhra, as a precaution of Zakynthos's notorious vulnerability to earthquakes. Jacob and Athos later learn that, in 1953, "the ground hoisted up Zakynthos in spasms like a car jack, then threw the entire town to the ground" (Michaels 83).

*Fugitive Pieces* establishes the Canadianness of the characters and the country's culture strongly in contrast to one American character, and her presence is crucial for Ben's ability to finally conclude his work on Jacob's biography. Petra is Ben's lover while he is doing research in Athos as well as in Jacob's house in Idhra, and "one could tell immediately from her clothes and manner that she was American" (Michaels 274). Elemental images are used to describe her appearance as "a sleek curve of water [...]. The sun was in her skin [...]. My desire a rough edge of metal" (Michaels 274). Moreover, Ben establishes a connection that was earlier introduced in Jacob's narrative: "single words rise into consciousness: Petra, earth. Salt" (Michaels 275), thus linking the United States and Canada. The earth serves as a site of transnational connection and is the foundation of both North American countries, without denying their cultural differences. Petra's importance lies at

the end of the novel, when she rummages through Jacob's study and "desecrate[s]" (Michaels 281) the carefully arranged bookcases. Mortified, Ben chases her away, but in assessing the extent of her rampage, he eventually finds Jacob's lost notebooks and can conclude his research as well as provide the beginning of *Fugitive Pieces*.

### **National and International Dimensions of War in *Dogs at the Perimeter***

*Dogs at the Perimeter* draws important parallels to *Fugitive Pieces* in its focus on refugees and immigrants arriving in Canada. However, while Athos and Jacob's flight from Poland to Greece and their moving to Canada are targeted at specific destinations, Janie is leaving from rather than going towards a specific place. While she leaves Cambodia on a ship, Thien's text evokes liminal spaces not unlike Findley's passage on the Atlantic. Janie comments that she moves through "a turbulent world, forever adrift" (Thien 137) and wonders if her "wandering would last forever" (Thien 74). She is moving in spaces whose boundaries are unclear. One of the dominating images in Thien's novel is that of borders, of perimeters within which the characters are trapped. The civil war in Cambodia and the totalitarian regime of the Khmer Rouge provide the context for the story, and the nature of the conflict emphasises that this war has both international and domestic dimensions. Moreover, all the characters have a history of transnational migration because of war, and the novel establishes contrasting continental spaces: Japan and Cambodia in Asia as well as Canada and the United States in North America. *Dogs at the Perimeter* not only compares the nations' responses to war, it also reflects upon the characters' conceptions of the cultures.

Janie introduces Canada as a space informed by her memories and inserts concepts of war into the landscape of Montreal, describing it as a "world of constant surveillance and high security" (Thien 1). This urban space is inhabited by police "officers" (Thien 1), thus highlighting a semantic proximity to the executive forces of the government and war. Further, the text uses binary oppositions to compare Canada with Cambodia: the "freezing rain" (Thien 5), the winter, and the cold in the urban spaces of Montreal against the heat and humidity in the Cambodian forests after the people were "expelled out of the cities" (Thien 79). Finally, the narrator's identification with Canada is double-coded. She emphasises that, after her arrival in Vancouver, she assumes a new "Canadian name" (Thien 64), but struggles to use it when she is confronted with Cambodians; during a phone call she says, "my English name feels awkward so instead I say, 'I'm calling from Canada'" (Thien 36).

Canada's role in international peacekeeping is highlighted by Janie's friend and his brother. Hiroji is a Japanese Canadian scientist who used to work in a refugee-camp on the Thai-Cambodian border during the war, and James worked for the Red Cross. Rellstab and Schlote comment on the administrative procedures and aspects of war and refer to refugee-camps as places of "standardized means of power" (Rellstab and Schlote 4). Canada is embedded in a system that creates the circumstances and reasons for migration as well as the procedures of dealing with refugeehood. Even while not on Canadian soil, the system applies for people abroad and processes the refugees within its own administrative conventions.

Through Hiroji's and Janie's experiences in Cambodia, the novel contrasts Canada and the United States to construct two opposing scenarios for how newly arrived immigrants can shape the nations' identities. None of the characters had any prior notions of Canada, and it is never depicted as a destination of choice. Hiroji recalls how his family had left Japan after the Second World War, how they were first denied entry to America, then England, and had eventually "settled for Canada" (Thien 182). Although the characters, upon their arrival in Canada, suffer from their traumatic war experiences, they make sense of their new home through their transnational memories. Hiroji's brother remembers a moment when he was smoking pot in Vancouver: "when he gets high it reminds him of how the air burned his throat in Tokyo, and then the long journey by boat and plane and bus that took them to Vancouver where everything was green" (Thien 182). Smells are independent of places, but can trigger the characters' spatially informed memories.

The United States is introduced as an active participant in the war, as an enemy perhaps just as threatening as the Cambodians: "people [were] mutilated by the Khmer Rouge or bombed into hysteria by the Americans" (Thien 177). While Canada contributes to the crisis by offering humanitarian aid, the United States has left the country "in disrepair" (Thien 80) after having "bombed our schools, our roads and reservoirs" (Thien 80). However, the United States also becomes a destination for refugees. Hiroji talks to a young boy, Nuong, who is sent to Boston to live with a foster family. When he leaves Cambodia, he asks Hiroji, "why are you so sad all the time? [...] Is it so very bad where you come from? [...] Thank you heaven I am not going to Canada" (Thien 233). In North America, however, he is distressed by "the vastness of this new country. America's bright smiles and proud efficiency, its endless flowing water, cinemas, fairgrounds, and easy optimism, shamed him. He felt out of place, unknowable" (Thien 162).

Later, the plot returns to Nuong, who never formally applies for US citizenship and is deported back to Cambodia after committing a felony. Thien's text offers two North American models for immigration and refugeehood by comparing the United States and Canada. Janie and Nuong's

final destinations in North America are chosen rather arbitrarily, but they reveal differences in the characters' long-lasting identifications with the newly chosen homes.

The characters' memories of their migration to Canada are passed on to the next generation, and the novel insists on mutual accommodations of Asia and North America in one another's discursive spaces. Janie's son, Kiri, is aware of her post-traumatic stress disorder, and has learned to understand "what we were going through" (Thien 153). Moreover, he grasps not only the spatial dimensions of the earth and the transnational interconnectedness of Canada and Cambodia, but the location of the earth within the universe. Before Janie returns to Cambodia, she explains to Kiri where she is going: "I put my fingers to the globe, turned the earth on its pedestal, and showed him the place. The names inscribed were in French. *Cambodge*, he read. *Viêt Nam. Laos*" (Thien 165, original emphasis). He then hands her one of his drawings and explains that the sky naturally "goes off the edge of the page [...]. Like a galaxy, and you can go forever but the universe, it just never ends" (Thien 166). Hers is a model that enables multicultural and multilingual readings and reflects the "cultural diversity and side-by-sidedness (of its separate components)" (Tunkel 104). Kiri recognises the potential of a transcultural understanding that "acknowledges difference and at the same time lays a stronger emphasis on complex cultural interactions and the resulting hybridizations" (Tunkel 104). He combines his mother's memories of migration with his knowledge of the world and creates the possibility for post-national realities in non-national spaces outside of the earth's boundaries.

The novel's location in transnational spaces of war is extended to other conflicts worldwide, and the characters mention other wars in Asia and, problematically, weigh them against each other. In Cambodia, James recalls his mother's testimony from Tokyo during the Second World War, wondering how she would respond to his situation. He thinks, "she saw the war in Tokyo. She saw much worse than this" (Thien 178). The current war is relativised with reference to global spaces and other conflicts. His own participation in the war suggests that his statement is an ironic comment on attempts to compare different wars with one another and he thereby problematises the ethics of narrating memory and trauma. He further criticises his own role in the Cambodian conflict by referring to himself as the "noble Red Cross doctor healing children who will be pushed to the front lines tomorrow" (Thien 177).

## Conclusion

A comparison of the three novels shows that Canada is home and exile for the characters in *The Wars*, *Fugitive Pieces*, and *Dogs at the Perimeter*, finally

raising the question whether “transnational” equals “placeless”. In this article, I suggest that the novels produce alternative spaces for those displaced from their home because of war. One strategy for the characters to cope with in the new environment is employing multiple languages for their self-identification. They speak Yiddish, Polish, Japanese, Cambodian, and, of course, French and English, at times even with Canadian features. Transcultural communication fails in *The Wars*, but it is necessary for Michaels’ characters to make sense of their adopted home. In *Dogs at the Perimeter*, the linguistic diversity of the world shapes how Janie and her son view themselves in relation to Canada and Cambodia. All the novels contribute to an awareness that many people in North America have more than one or two sets of linguistic and cultural patterns to create transnational and transcultural spaces. The characters not only import their customs to Canada, but their languages and cultural concepts contribute to forming a multicultural Canadian society.

The textual strategies to approaching violence and war lie in accommodating various perspectives that ultimately cooperate to form a consistent, yet diverse set of narratives. Typical of historiographic metafiction, each of the three novels is layered with numerous perspectives and competing histories. They force the reader to accept that there is no final solution for the causes of and responses to war, but also serve as warnings of authoritative positions that distort the representation of historical reality. The metafictional elements immediately evoke a response from the readers, urging us all to make sense of wars of the past and to participate in the ongoing creation of Canada. History and memory are not imposed upon the reader by an authoritative voice, instead, their creation is a process of constant negotiation.

Transnational spaces are most explicitly employed in the borderlands of nations, and they are decisive markers of national identifications; here, national distinctions become culturally blurry and reasons for conflict, but this is also a realm that enables the characters to form their identities as Canadians. Those spaces support a transnational argument that insists on national distinctions, while also allowing for mutual constructions of cultural identities. *Dogs at the Perimeter* shows that borders are vulnerable points but have the potential to build up strength. In captivity, Janie’s brother finds a map and remembers his mother while studying it: “our mother had told him that a rope almost never breaks within the knot itself. Instead a rope is the weakest just outside the entrance to a knot, where the load is the greatest. The map showed a way to the heavily guarded Vietnamese border (Thien 112). The image of borders is useful as a model for cultural understanding, but also for understanding the formal strategies of the texts. By brushing up against and crossing generic boundaries, these historical fictions mirror postmodern aesthetics by diverging from static, conventional forms.



In *Dogs at the Perimeter*, Janie's father regrets not having fled Cambodia sooner and gone to France: "I should have carried your mother to Paris and we would have been poor together. You two, you and Sopham, you would have been born in the West, like champions! [...] We would have flown Air France [...], on top of the world, sipping champagne" (Thien 66). *Fugitive Pieces* and *Dogs at the Perimeter* demonstrate that a culture can be enlightened by an influx from abroad; and this quote underlines that the novel continues to be relevant in light of ongoing and current movements of refugees worldwide.

Since the 1970s, Canadian historiographic metafiction has undoubtedly employed postmodern strategies and politics in its recreation of history, and over the past decades, it has proven to be a genre that is fuelled by more than just postmodern aesthetics and crossings of conventional formal boundaries. It shows that literature can be more than merely a mirror of one's society. In this self-reflexive form, literature is a warning, a moral compass that actively constructs spaces and cultures and connects us today to the wars over there, back then.

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**THE EXPERIENCE OF (PRE)EXILE:  
PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT EASTERN  
EUROPEANS IN TRANSIT THROUGH ITALY  
(1956-1989)**

**Abstract**

This paper is dedicated to the experiences of Eastern Europeans who transited through the refugee camp in Latina, Italy, between 1956 and 1989. It opens with a discussion on the relevance of past experiences and the importance of their transmission. Then theoretical considerations as well as the concepts of (pre)exile and (self)translation are introduced to address the articulation between the emigration (departure) and the immigration (arrival) processes. Finally, the last part focuses on the living conditions in the camp.

**Keywords:** (pre)exile; refugee camp; Latina (Italy); crossing the Iron Curtain

**Résumé**

Cet article est consacré aux expériences des Européens de l'Est qui sont passés par le camp de réfugiés à Latina, en Italie, entre 1956 et 1989. Tout d'abord, on se penche sur la pertinence des expériences passées en insistant sur l'impératif de les raconter, donc sur l'importance de transmission. Ensuite, les considérations théoriques ainsi que les concepts de (pré)exil et d'(auto)traduction sont introduits pour aborder le problème de l'articulation entre les processus d'émigration (départ) et d'immigration (arrivée). Enfin, la dernière partie est consacrée aux conditions de vie dans le camp.

**Mots-clés :** (pré)exil ; camp de réfugiés ; Latina (Italie) ; traversée du Rideau de fer

## From Experience to Narration

This paper is a preliminary analysis of the experience of thousands of refugees who transited through Italy between 1956 and 1989 while fleeing communist regimes. Those refugees had to spend some time – sometimes years – “behind the wall” in a refugee camp before they were allowed to reach their chosen host land. Although every story of exile is unique, the paper explores a pattern that takes shape during the initial stage of displacement – the (pre)exile – understood as a process located between post-emigration (after leaving the country of origin) and pre-immigration (before arriving in the host society). Whether they were positive or negative, the experiences occurring at that stage of migration may have an impact on one’s future in the country of destination in terms of capacity or incapacity to adapt to a new social and cultural environment.

Even though the story of former refugees from the camp of Latina still remains to be told, there exist at least three published accounts related to it. A scholarly article titled “Insights from Refugee Experience: A Background Paper on Temporary Protection” was published by Maciej Domanski in 1997, followed by two autobiographical books that appeared in 2010 and 2012. The first autobiography, titled *Une vie... un dossier*, was written by former Romanian refugee, Mihai Babeanu; the other one, *333 Days: Personal Memoirs from a Refugee Camp*, by former Polish refugee Jacek Laszkiewicz. A documentary by an Italian journalist Emanuela Gasbarroni is currently in production. Other accounts will hopefully follow – some have already started to trickle into the Internet through forums and blogs and help create a community of shared experiences that will unravel the deeply subjective dimension of the migratory process, especially at its early stage. The beginning is often a crucial moment because it leaves a long-lasting impression on the migrant, especially if initial experiences are dominated by insecurity or hardship.

Owing to the fact that only few stories surfaced in the public sphere during the last twenty-five years may be explained by a lack of an immediate audience. Indeed, in the days when Eastern Europeans were fleeing authoritarian communist regimes, refugees could not truthfully communicate the camp experience to their families for fear of worrying them or exposing them to political repression or harassment. Also, after immigrating, newcomers dedicated their time and energy to survival and adaptation; they gave little thought to unpleasant memories from the refugee camp in Italy. Later on, once the initial euphoria brought by the post-communist transition subsided, populations from the “other Europe” had no time to spare for their former fellow citizen’s stories, having themselves to endure tremendous

financial instability and the arduous task of rebuilding a new political and economic system. As for the diaspora, at least for the Polish community, they tend to weave their identities around ancient and heroic accounts of courage and victories, mostly from the World War I and World War II eras.

Another obstacle to non-mainstream migration stories is the focus on “normative success stories of crossing from margin to centre” (Karpinski 31). Indeed, immigrants are often compelled to misrepresent their migratory experiences to their friends and relatives back home, who are then left with an impression of success. Frequently, immigrants “being torn between two countries [...], try to conceal – and to conceal from themselves – the contradictions of their situation by convincing themselves of its “temporary” nature, even though it is very likely to be permanent or coextensive with their active lives” (Sayad 31).

According to Boris Cyrulnik, the inability to narrate one’s own life endangers the construction of the “narrative identity,” defined as the “scenario I imagine in my inner world of what happened to me” (27). Constant arrangements and re-arrangements of that scenario are necessary to understand the self and one’s own existence as a dynamic process that is challenged by change and new experiences as well as perspectives. To understand the self means “to be able to tell stories about oneself, stories that are both intelligible and acceptable – especially acceptable” (Ricoeur n.p.).<sup>1</sup> That notion of acceptability is crucial. While there is no story without an audience, the storyteller has to at least respect, if not share, the audience’s expectations: if the story violates these expectations (e.g., taboos, political agendas or censorship), it cannot be told; thus, it cannot be shared with others. Cyrulnik adds that, by telling a story, “the narrator enables both the self and the audience to relate to one another”; articulating one’s own experience hence creates “a shared experience (26, 27). Moreover, “as soon as the family’s and cultural context allows you to construct a representation of what you experienced, you’ll rework the representation and try to understand what happened” (Cyrulnik 32). In sum, what is untold remains unheard, and what is unheard, hurts.

Official recognition is, therefore, a crucial step in the healing process – or those who experienced the camp as a traumatic event and not as an exciting adventure – because it gives the opportunity to share the story beyond a small circle of relatives and friends. Hopefully, it might set the former refugees free from “being fixed in the position of the ‘other’” (Karpinski 220) that can persist in both the country of transit and the host society. Therefore, any experience of displacement should be addressed from a larger perspective and

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<sup>1</sup> “[...] être capable de raconter sur soi-même des histoires à la fois intelligibles et acceptables, surtout acceptables.” (Translation mine).

in close relation with “its successive developments in the light of a complex web of relationships, feelings and contexts – personal, cultural, geographical – of migrants and those who remained at home” (Varisco 19).<sup>2</sup> Public interest in those stories might further become a narrative catalyst, a trigger inviting both former and current refugees to reflect on their personal experiences, if only to become aware of their own strength and ability to deal with difficult life situations and to find necessary resources to overcome them. Finally, the changing, sometimes chaotic, scenarios of migration may provoke a lasting feeling of spatial and temporal fragmentation, social disjunction and uncertainty in terms of identity and sense of belonging. The attempt to reconstruct one’s own experience thus allows to retroactively reconsider the past in search of meaning and coherence.

### **The Immigration Process from a Theoretical Perspective**

Displacement consists of a “break with the group, with its spatio-temporal rhythms, its activities and, in a word, the system of values and the system of communitarian dispositions that are the group’s foundations” (Sayad 298). In a recent publication dedicated to mental health issues of Italian migrants in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century Australia, Simone M. Varisco adds that even the “crucial moment of arrival” is not the end of the migratory trajectory but only the beginning of a long and sometimes painful process of adaptation to the new environment (18). For some migrants, the initial departure and the arrival to the host country are separated by a (pre)exilic transit phase – a stay at a refugee camp being the canonical example – that adds an additional delay to the nesting process and another source of burden: feelings of isolation, alienation, powerlessness, and anxiety.

The concept of (pre)exile allows to capture a uniquely deregulated time-space reality: the apparent spatial mobility of being already abroad coinciding with a temporary immobility of suspended time without a home. Importantly, (pre)exile must be contrasted with pre-exile, which is the first phase of emigration filled with hopes and dreams that takes place before leaving one’s own country of origin in anticipation of departure (Klimkiewicz 3-5). Pre-exile begins as soon as the immigrant-to-be puts in motion a plan to leave the country of origin, a plan that involves financial, professional, administrative and personal matters. It creates a chronotope of virtually open space that allows one to project him/herself into the future new life abroad before

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<sup>2</sup> “[...] i suoi successivi sviluppi alla luce della complessa rete di relazioni, sentimenti e contesti - personali, culturali, geografici – dei migranti e di quanti rimasero in patria.” (Translation mine).

actually crossing the border. As such, while the hyphen in “pre-exile” represents the anticipated border crossing, the parentheses in “(pre)exile” reflect a suspension, which can last only for the duration of the (pre)exilic phase, or psychologically follow an individual for the rest of his/her life.

While one could easily assume that moving from one country to another, even if passing through a refugee camp, would be a linear matter, there are many stories of unfinished journeys and broken dreams.<sup>3</sup> Some refugees moved from and to the camp, others wandered across Italy or Western Europe; if they did not return of their own volition, they were forcefully brought back by the police. Many others, after a few months in the camp, asked to be repatriated to their home countries. Some even disappeared from the camp, leaving their belongings behind. On a few occasions, the camp authorities had to deal with refugee family members looking for their loved ones who had vanished. In other cases, refugees stayed at the camp for years (up to nine), their immigration applications being repeatedly rejected. Some even returned to the camp after emigrating, this time illegally, as they no longer qualified for a refugee status and were thus not eligible for further humanitarian assistance from the Italian government. Unexpectedly, a number of refugees refused to emigrate at all or changed their minds, sometimes a few times during their stay at the camp. There were also cases of refugees who ran away from the airport just before taking off for the country of immigration.

Those stories attest to the fact that (pre)exilic experiences can be significant for a migrant, perhaps more so than arrival in the host country. According to Thomas Nail, the successful outcome of immigration does not always eliminate the cost:

even if the end result of migration is a relative increase in money, power, or enjoyment, *the process of migration itself* almost always involves an insecurity of some kind and duration: the removal of territorial ownership or access, the loss of the political right to vote or to receive social welfare, the loss of legal status to work or drive, or the financial loss associated with transportation or change in residence. [...] The gains of migration are always a risk, while the process itself is always some kind of loss (2).

As such, taking into account the entire process and trajectory of emigration/immigration, instead of a narrow focus on departure or arrival, not only reveals the hidden or untold aspects of one’s story of migration, but also

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<sup>3</sup> This paragraph is based on information gathered at the Public Archives in Latina. In the spring of 2014, I spent a week exploring the collection *Centro assistenza profughi stranieri Rossi Longhi*. After the closure of the camp, all the administrative documents were sent to the Archives. Today, a total of 186 boxes are available for public consultation as well as personal records of former refugees.

sheds light on factors that may contribute to the immigrants' potential suffering and failures in the host society.

Translation – a movement and circulation of meaning across languages and borders – plays a central role in the experience of exile that is embedded in intercultural dynamics, in which transfers of meanings can be limited and sometimes impossible. Moreover, translation actively contributes to the construction of the self and the perception of others, both running the risk of being distorted in a struggle to maintain a sense of stability as well as to overcome language and cultural barriers in an effort to reach out to others.

The Bakhtinian notion of “tripartite structure” of selfhood provides insight into the exilic and dislocated self (Nealon 41). It comprises the three following categories of selfhood: the “I-for-myself” (my own perception of myself), the “I-for-others” (others' perception of myself), and the “other-for-myself” (my own perception of others). The “I-for-myself” is “related to the openness and creativity” of myself and is thus “inexorably dependent on the others.” (Nealon 41); as such, alterity and outsidership allow the self to endlessly redefine itself in the dialogue with others. However, in the context of exile, the tripartite structure of the self is deregulated because the meaning that should flow between the three axes is disrupted by the language and/or cultural barrier that obstructs the dialogue with others, the foreigners. Indeed, the creative force of the other, as an active and necessary participant in the construction of myself, can play a destructive or counter-productive role. Until social bonds are established in the host society, the balance between the self and the other can hardly be achieved especially when the other is the “dominating force” to which the newcomer must surrender. In her autobiographical book *Lost in Translation* in which she analyses her own immigration from Poland to Canada, Eva Hoffman discusses at length what she refers to as the “immigrant rage” in the face of the host society (203). This term expresses both the frustration, stemming from the inability to adjust to a new culture, and the contestation of “the structure of the norms” imposed on newcomers by the host society (Hoffman 203). Given that the “I-for-myself” depends on others for an excess of meaning of myself that I do not master, an asymmetrical power relation may affect social and existential stability of the newcomer.

Translation and self-translation play a vital role in counteracting the destabilizing effect of the host society on the newcomer because they improve communication with others and help to generate a sense of belonging as well as an understanding of one's own existential place within a foreign country. The newcomer will use translation and self-translation first to translate the cultural other to him/herself, then to capture the other's opinion of him/herself as a foreigner, and finally, to self-translate between his/her old self and the new one living abroad. However, in the context of (pre)exile, the translation



and self-translation processes are not yet fully developed: the circulation of meaning is slow, if inexistent, or lacks at least one of the axes from the triangular relationship between the self and the other. At this stage, the rapport with others is still limited and rather instrumental given that everyday life revolves primarily around basic needs and immediate problems that stem from the process of adaptation. But in a long run, the failure to establish a full relationship with others through translation and self-translation can eventually lead to a strong sense of loss, alienation and separation. In such cases, the normal transition from (pre)exile to exile – and eventually to post-exile – can be interrupted, or worse, lead to despair, melancholy or even anger. In this respect, the departure can be easier than the arrival: while the former depends on one's own resourcefulness, the latter is conditioned by someone else's benevolence and rules. The gap between the two can be short and smooth, or long and chaotic; it can be filled with danger, obstacles and anxiety. Some never make it to their final destination. In the long run, (pre)exilic experiences can have a positive or a negative impact on the immigration process, especially in its early stage. For some, it boosts self-confidence and helps to embrace the new life with hope, determination and enthusiasm; more often, though, as in the case of Tarkovsky, it overwhelms the migrant and poisons his/her life.

For the average individual living in exile, overcoming the challenges of (pre)exile requires synchronizing the movement of both time and space, as well as ongoing translation and self-translation to ensure that shifts between different people, contexts, and subject positions are smooth and efficient. However, it is important to recognize that not every country receives and integrates newcomers equally well and that some ethnic groups are more welcome than others. There can also be a discrepancy between an immigrant's interactions on a human level and on the institutional one. For instance, there can be social segregation despite a country's sound institutional integration policy. In the end, it is the quality and coherence of exchanges and interactions between all the involved parties – natives, newcomers, institutions and enclaves – that dictate the success of immigration as a transformative force on all parties.

In sum, the problem of emigration/immigration is not a one-way displacement to the host society in which newcomers face only two options: assimilation or exclusion. In reality, there is a complex and an ongoing process of negotiating issues related to origin, identity, memory, and sense of belonging. As such, the process of exile needs to be examined from the perspective of change, shift, and transformation that occur during the life-long process of navigating a divided space, different temporalities, a potential loss of language and the overall issue of instability of the subject position situated between two or more social spaces.

### **The Refugee Camp in Latina – a Case of (Pre)Exile**

From the 1950s (Attanasio and Strangio 125) until the end of the Cold War, Italy was a major first asylum country, welcoming approximately 80 thousand refugees fleeing the Eastern Bloc in hopes for a better life in the Free World. According to Giovanni Ferrari (2), a total of 122 362 foreigners asked for political asylum in Italy between 1952-1989. Those included 3 336 boat people from Indochina; 609 Chileans; 110 Kurds and 43 Caldenians from Iraq; and 35 Afghans. In those days, there were many refugee camps across the country. Agosto Attanasio and Donatella Strangio explain that “in addition to the existing camps of Aversa, Capua, S. Antonio in Pontecagnano, Salerno, Farfa and Fraschette, opened in 1951, others will be added between 1956-57: receiving camps in Trieste (Padriciano), Udine and Cremona, and resettlement camps in Gaeta, Bari, Altamura, Naples, Brindisi and Brescia” (Attanasio and Strangio 125). With the reduced inflow of refugees between 1958 and 1961, the number of camps decreased from 16 to 3 in Trieste, Capua and Latina.

Located approximately 60 km South of Rome, the immigration center in Latina was opened on October 1, 1957, in the former 82<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment. The city of Latina itself, founded by Mussolini in 1932 after the drainage of the Pontine Marshes, has preserved until today its unique character with its recent foundation, fascist architecture and increasingly diverse social fabric. Its first settlers came from the North of Italy. Years before the old barracks hosted refugees from the Soviet Bloc, hundreds of Italian war victims found refuge there during WW2. They were later followed by other Italians who were displaced from Istria and Dalmatia lost to communist Yugoslavia, in compliance with the post-war Treaty of Peace signed between the Italian government and the Allied forces in 1947.

As a refugee camp, it initially accommodated Hungarians who fled the bloody uprising of 1956. Then came Czechoslovaks following the Soviet invasion that ended the Prague Spring of 1968. In 1979-1980, the camp also received an important number of boat people, mainly from Vietnam and Cambodia, who had to flee their countries for political reasons after having been told to “[t]ake to the sea or die.” (Paris n.p.) Finally, thousands of Poles found refuge fleeing political instability in their country during the strikes in Gdańsk in 1980, followed by martial law declared a year later. After the dismantlement of communism in 1989 and the ensuing economic crash, many of them left the country in search of better work opportunities.

The refugee camp in Latina, both the biggest and closest to the Immigration Offices of the Embassies and International Organizations in Rome, was “entrusted with the task of concentrating all operations relating to migration” (Attanasio and Strangio 126). Under the umbrella of the Civil

Services Administration of the Ministry of the Interior and the *Prefettura of Latina*, the administration worked closely with the following organizations: The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), The Intergovernmental Commission on Migration (ICM), Ufficio Centrale Emigrazione Italiana (UCEI), the World Council of Churches (WCC), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the Polish American Immigration and Relief Committee (PAIRC), and the Tolstoy Foundation. Those organizations were in charge of the administrative procedures and decisions until the refugees' departure for their final destination, most often Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, but also South Africa, Germany, Sweden, Belgium, Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, or Uruguay. The average waiting time for an immigration visa was from a few months to a year depending on volumes of applicants. However, it fluctuated between six months in 1984, and 295 days up to two years in 1987 (Costantini, Aug. 12, 87, n.p.).

Among refugees who transited via Latina, there were, among others, workers, farmers, artists, intellectuals, teachers, doctors, engineers, and athletes. The most famous of them was probably the Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky (1932-86), who had travelled to Italy to shoot the film *Nostalghia*. In 1983, a year after the film's release, Tarkovsky asked for political asylum with the hope to move to the United States. Although he was among the most privileged and famed refugees, and despite his incredible work opportunities and support of many influential people, he still suffered from insecurity, anxiety, and exhaustion. Reflecting on both the film and his own condition of exile, he expressed the following in his book *Sculpting in Time: Reflection on the Cinema*: "How could I have imagined as I was making *Nostalghia* that the stifling sense of longing that fills the screen space of that film was to become my lot for the rest of my life; that from now until the end of my days I would bear the painful malady within myself?" (202)

Overall, living conditions in the camp were harsh. In his book *333 Days: Personal Memoirs from a Refugee Camp*, Jacek Laszkiewicz, a former Polish refugee emigrated to Canada, recalls his own arrival on Friday, March 22, 1985: "At 4:20 p.m., I enter the gate of the camp. After surrendering my Polish passport to the Italian authorities, I am directed to a so-called 'transit area,' an area where all the newcomers spend the first few days after arrival. [...] My first night is on a bunk bed" (5). The following day, after legal formalities, Laszkiewicz would move to another room inhabited by eight other people, a room that is "filthy with a cold cement floor, dirty windows and rusty steel cabinets" (5). In another barrack, there were "common bathrooms with no windows; a hot water supply that lasts on average two hours a day; and restroom cabins that are long-drops with no doors" (6). David Kilgour, a former Canadian politician, similarly recounted hearing stories about people living in "long rows of dilapidated structures divided into small rooms, often

with broken windows and missing doors” (n.p.). Yet, beyond such material concerns, he also expressed horror at the testimonies of degenerate behavior within the camp:

rapes, assaults, thefts and fights were daily camp occurrences. Even murder had been reported to the local police, although no suspects were ever arrested and the Italian police rarely bothered to intervene. The law of the jungle was the only code in the camp. The strongest survived, and the weakest lived in fear for their personal safety if not for their worldly possessions (n.p.).

For most refugees, the time spent in the camp was entirely dedicated to fulfilling administrative formalities that would hopefully allow them to move to the country of destination as quickly as possible. They perceived their stay at the camp as a difficult but mandatory step towards their goal – a reward that was worth every effort and sacrifice. As such, their stay at the camp came down to two distinct moments: the arrival date and the date of departure. In his scholarly article titled “Insights from Refugee Experience: A Background Paper on Temporary Protection” published in 1997, former Polish refugee at Latina Maciej Domanski adds that “the refugee camp dwellers regard[ed] their time spent in the camp as wasted, taken from their lives” (28). To that feeling of waste is added the feeling of being nothing: “The most important message I have been trying to convey here is the feeling of overwhelming powerlessness and insignificance which most refugees in the camps are doomed to experience” (31). In a “photographic story”, published in 2015, photographer from the city of Latina Tonino Mirabella, who persistently documented life at the camp from 1987 until its closure in 1990, equates the camp experience to a state of suspension: “Suspended. This has always been the feeling I used to get from the gazes of those lives that have written part of their story behind the wall. The same wall that for a long time made them inaccessible and unacceptable” (19).

According to Domanski (20), refugees faced additional vulnerability from being in the position of a “suppliant”:

arising from being uprooted, deprived of material wealth, status, political sponsorship, etc. Having no citizenship rights and being dependent on the benevolence of their hosts, refugees feel especially vulnerable [...] the lack of established channels of communication and reliable information pertaining to their destiny is the refugees’ nightmare. A specific fear relates to the possibility of forcible repatriation.

Most of the people who crossed the Iron Curtain were also “ill-prepared”: there was “no way to counsel would-be emigrants before they [...] [left their country], even in private, since nearly all keep their plans tightly secret” (*International Daily News* 9). This secrecy was necessary to survive under a

totalitarian regime where authorities, public institutions and uniforms were untrustworthy. As such, life was characterized by a “culture of duplicity” (9), and citizens “exposed to the doubletalk, to different ‘histories’ taught at school, to the coexistence of official discourse and counter-discourses” (9).

Considering all the challenges that refugees faced, it is not surprising that anxiety and mental health issues were commonplace:

There were many men that couldn't take the waiting and the conditions and thought about returning, even if that meant jail time. Some families had to wait 3 years. Everyone was anxious and nervous breakdowns were common. During that waiting period my mother's long white/blonde hair fell out, from malnutrition, stress, or both (Eordogh n.p.).

Despite such difficulties, the life in the camp went on as usual: people got married, had babies, took English lessons, attended church, went on hikes, wandered on the beach or travelled around the country (Laszkiewicz). Children went to school at the camp and the municipality sometimes organized cultural and sports activities in the town. While some refugees were officially employed by the camp administration, many others worked illegally: “Every morning Italians would show up outside the gate, looking for cheap labor. The men would work construction jobs, or unload cargo from trains and trucks. Most of the women cleaned wealthy Italians' apartments, and if they were lucky, got a job babysitting or nannying” (Eordogh n.p.). Refugees welcomed the opportunity to earn some money and the deep sleep that comes after a busy day (Babeanu 59). The Italian Communist Party and local journalists were not as pleased: they openly condemned the exploitation of the refugees. However, the authorities took no action (Piazza n.p.).

The Italian police were busy handling crimes in the camp, such as smuggling, prostitution, as well as sexual and interethnic violence. In such an artificially multiethnic place, refugees were forced to live among various ethnic groups without having the relevant skills to handle such a novel, stressful, and over-populated environment. Conflicts often culminated in intimidation, official complaints, violence, rivalry and even murders. The arrival of the boat people in 1979-1980 further contributed to the interethnic tension because of even greater cultural differences and the fear of contagious illnesses, e.g. malaria, tuberculosis, meningitis, and skin infections.

Even though the camp was formally closed down after the end of the Cold War in 1991, admissions were suspended as early as 1987 due to severe overcrowding (Costantini, Aug. 14, 87, n.p.).<sup>4</sup> After the camp was definitely

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<sup>4</sup> Costantini points out

that the flow of Poles who apply to visit our country remains constant for years and the difficulty is to determine in advance which of the applicants have also intend to seek

dismantled, having lost their refugee status, over four thousand now-illegal Polish refugees were stranded in Latina.<sup>5</sup> While most of the former refugees still live in Italy or their countries of adoption, some have returned home after the fall of Communism.

### Final Remarks

The former refugee camp in Latina has since been transformed into a university campus that hosts the Faculty of Economics of the University *Sapienza* of Rome. Today, there are no more refugees, but professors, administrative staff and students. But unfortunately, history keeps repeating itself, this time with migrants and refugees from outside of Europe who come from countries torn by war, poverty, famine, and natural disasters. Despite the fact that the current mass movement of refugees and migrants follows a very different pattern which is embedded in globalization, it is my hope that the focus on the (pre)exilic experiences of former refugees who were forced to live “behind the wall” can reveal the relevant information on how to smooth the migration process, as well as to provide a valuable insight into how the immigrant-to-be psychologically deals with stress caused by the initial stage of displacement and particularly camp-based experiences. Consequently, a deeper understanding of those realities could not only inform future decisions in regards to practical immigration issues but also reveal a realistic narrative of migration that is too often measured in terms of professional and financial achievements. Insisting instead on the diachronic dimension of that experience could provide, for instance, an opportunity to represent less glorious but equally valid moments of displacement such as gaps between initial expectations and reality, unfinished journeys and broken dreams. In reality, the experience of displacement is always inscribed in the dynamics of movement reminding that “One is not born a migrant but becomes one” (Nail 3). Hopefully, such an undertaking will also facilitate the intergenerational transmission and encourage migrants themselves to reflect on their own condition of *exilience* which is articulated between the lived

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asylum. Thus, not being able to control at the source the entrance to Italy is expected to be resolved with a more rigid compliance with the Geneva Convention, according to which Italy is subject to welcome only those Europeans who are politically persecuted. If this were truly applied, only 4% of the total number of 7,500 refugees currently registered in Italy would be entitled to receive assistance, which is instead granted by custom to all refugees without distinction. Who does not get refugee status, nor the authorization to emigrate to another country, simply becomes a tourist without money (Aug. 14, 2017, n.p.).

<sup>5</sup> The unofficial number given by a former Polish refugee who lives in Latina.

experience of exile and the consciousness of it (Nouss 26, 54), thus allowing to understand one's own experience and to share it with others.

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## UKRAINE IN CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY AFTER 2014

### Abstract

The Russian-Ukrainian war is called the ‘Ukrainian crisis’ in Europe, the United States and Canada. It does not matter what it is called; it a war. No doubt Ukraine faces a strong and an experienced rival, and Ukraine could not resist war without the extreme courage of its people and without a great deal of support from abroad. The violation of international laws has been observed – the annexation of Crimea is the first to occur in Europe after the end of World War II. Prime Minister Steven Harper gave a clear message: Canada will not stand aside and watch the violation of international laws; Canada will act. A lot of support has been given by Canada and Canadians to Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. A strong and sharp reaction by Steven Harper, and later by Justin Trudeau, the sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation, Russian citizens deported from Canada, the closure of common business projects, non-lethal aid to the Ukrainian army, and millions of donations to Ukrainian reforms are all examples of this support. In his paper the author tries to provide answers to the following questions: What is the reason for such Canadian policy towards Ukraine? How do Canadian foreign policy, its national interests, and the Ukrainian crisis correlate?

**Keywords:** aggression, sanctions, Ukrainian crisis, values, Eastern Ukraine.

### Résumé

En Europe, aux États-Unis et au Canada, on appelle la guerre russo-ukrainienne la « crise ukrainienne ». En fait, il n’y a pas d’importance comment on l’appelle, il s’agit, en tout cas, de la guerre. Sans aucun doute, l’Ukraine doit faire face à l’adversaire plus fort et plus expérimenté. En outre, il ne fait aucun doute que l’Ukraine ne pouvait pas résister à la guerre sans le courage extraordinaire de son peuple et sans un grand soutien de l’étranger. Soyons honnêtes : nous avons été témoins de violations des lois internationales que nous n’avons pas vues depuis la

Seconde Guerre mondiale. Les Canadiens se sont mobilisés et ont envoyés au premier ministre, Stephen Harper, un message clair : le Canada ne va pas rester à l'écart et observer la violation des lois internationales, le Canada va agir. Le Canada et les Canadiens ont fourni beaucoup de soutien à l'Ukraine et au peuple ukrainien : la réaction forte de Stephen Harper (et celle de Justin Trudeau qui continue d'agir dans la même direction), des sanctions contre la Fédération de la Russie, la déportation des citoyens russes du Canada, la fermeture des projets généraux d'affaires, l'aide par des armes non létales à l'armée ukrainienne et des millions de dons aux réformes ukrainiennes. Dans le présent article, l'auteur essaie alors de répondre aux questions suivantes : quelles sont les raisons d'une telle politique canadienne à l'égard de l'Ukraine ? Dans quelle mesure la politique étrangère du Canada, ses intérêts nationaux, et la crise ukrainienne sont en corrélation ?

**Mots-clés :** l'agression, les sanctions, la crise ukrainienne, les valeurs, l'Est de l'Ukraine

## Introduction

Canada and Ukraine have enjoyed close relations since Canada became the first Western country to recognize Ukraine's independence on December 2, 1991. According to the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS), Ukrainian Canadians amount to 1,251,170, or 3.7 per cent, of the country's population and are mainly Canadian-born citizens (Swyprpia). The bilateral relationship is strengthened by warm people-to-people ties, rooted in the 125 year old Ukrainian-Canadian community. Historic ties of friendship that have been forged through generations of Ukrainians migrating to Canada are reinforced by shared values and interests to produce a mature, balanced and mutually beneficial partnership. The 1994 Joint Declaration on the "Special Partnership", renewed in 2001 and again in 2008, recognizes Canada's support for the development of Ukraine and the importance of the bilateral cooperation ("Canada – Ukraine Relations").

Canadian foreign policy towards independent Ukraine is formed in accordance with the national interests of Canada, and because of the position Ukraine occupies in the international arena. Thus, Ukrainian-Canadian community organizations play a significant role in shaping the image of independent Ukraine in Canada and in lobbying for Ukrainian domestic and foreign policy that intensifies mutually beneficial friendly relations. There is obvious influence by Ukrainian public organizations on the federal government in order to shape Canadian policy on Ukraine. This influence is exerted through the organizational structure of the community, especially through the Ukrainian- Canadian Congress.

Russian aggression against Ukraine has proven that Canada has its own vision and interest in the Ukrainian crisis. The rhetoric of Canadian leaders directed towards the Russian Federation since 2014 has changed: it has become firm and started to leave no doubt that Canada did not accept Russia's actions. Canada clearly stated that there is no civil war in Ukraine, there is Russian aggression. Realizing this, Canada has donated humanitarian aid and non-lethal weapons to the Ukrainian Armed Forces valued at millions of dollars. More importantly, there is a strong feeling that Canada is Ukraine's partner and can shed some light on the situation for the rest of the world. Canadian foreign policy is going to be evaluated through the particular case of the Ukrainian crisis during the time known as "a time of doubt about Canada's place in the world" (Carment and Landry 222).

### **The Nature of the Ukrainian Crisis**

In Ukraine there is no comprehensive research on Canada's supporting Ukraine's efforts to resist Russian aggression. This is understandable as the war unfortunately continues, and it is likely that only after it ends, some papers evaluating Canada's assistance will appear. First of all, a clarification on terminology should be provided. Outside Ukraine the term the 'Ukrainian crisis' is used to refer to events occurring in Eastern Ukraine. But it is not clear what precisely the term means, and whether it refers to a civil war, an ethnic conflict or to Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

It is obviously hard to put the Ukrainian crisis into a theoretical framework. Wolczuk suggests that the "the concept of the boundary of order" (Wolczuk 54) could be applied to explain why "Ukraine has succeeded in overcoming legal and then cultural exclusion from the EU but has failed to dismantle the geopolitical boundary" (Wolczuk 69). Bock et al. tries to match the Ukrainian crisis with Steven Walt's theory of a "balance of threat". According to the theory, a state's behaviour is determined by the threat perceived by other states or alliances; states will not balance against other states which are increasing in power (as balance of power theory predicts) but rather against those that are perceived as a threat (Bock, Henneberg, and Plank 2-3). NATO, and partly the EU, Eastern policy was seen by the Kremlin as a threat, even though it was not perceived as such by Western democracies. Bock et al. suggests that "sustainable de-escalation of the Ukrainian crisis, one that benefits the EU, the US, and Ukraine, can be achieved only if the vital security concerns of Russia are taken into consideration" (Bock, Henneberg, and Plank 6). This theory could be useful when attempting to explain the reasons of Russia's aggression, but it fails to point out how Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty should be restored and whether they

should be re-established at all. Also, the authors “oppose to the termination of the NATO-Russia-Founding Act and its trust-building mechanisms, which is being proposed by Canada and others” (Bock, Henneberg, and Plank 7).

There also should be an explanation why the term “hybrid war” is used in this paper. In other words, why it is possible to call the Ukrainian crisis a hybrid war. The definition itself is rather problematic. As Erol and Oguz point out, “dictionaries define ‘hybrid’ as ‘a thing made by combining two different elements.’ Based on that, it is expected that hybrid warfare should contain at least two different warfare types. [...]. In particular, the operational elements of irregular warfare, and its blurry borders, increase the complexity in defining the components of hybrid warfare” (Erol and Oguz 263). Former NATO Secretary General Anders F. Rasmussen defined hybrid warfare as the “combination of covert military operations combined with sophisticated information and disinformation operations”, while Jens Stoltenberg NATO Secretary General described it as “warfare that combines the power of unconventional means such as cyber and information operations, and disguised military operations” (Erol and Oguz 267).

On January 27, 2015, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Resolution “On the Appeal of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to the United Nations, European Parliament, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, NATO Parliamentary Assembly, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, GUAM Parliamentary Assembly and national parliaments of the countries of the world on the recognition of the Russian Federation as an aggressor state”. The resolution reads:

Ukraine remains the target of military aggression by the Russian Federation, which the latter carries out, among other things, by supporting, and providing supplies for large-scale terrorist attacks... Taking into account the provisions of the UN Charter and UN General Assembly Resolution 3314 ‘Definition of Aggression’ dated 14 December 1974, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine recognises the Russian Federation as an Aggressor State (“Постанова Верховної Ради України”).

So called “interethnic relations’ conflict potential” in post-Soviet countries has been relatively high, for example in the countries such as Chechnya, Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but in Ukraine there have been no conflicts on ethnic grounds for over twenty years. The situation changed in 2013 after the Revolution of Dignity, the annexation of Crimea and Russia’s intervention in Eastern Ukraine. It is sometimes noticed that the Revolution of Dignity and the ongoing hybrid war or conflict in Eastern Ukraine, some parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, which make up less than 3 percent of the territory of Ukraine, is a civil war. Such a perspective on the conflict can,

unfortunately, be traced not only in Russian academic journals, like *Russian Social Science Review* (Fursoy; Minakov) or *Russian Politics and Law* (“What is Happening in Ukraine”), but also journals published in Western Europe (Wade, “Reinterpreting”). This is the result of Russia’s soft power in action. As time passes it is hard not to see that the conflict in Eastern Ukraine is not a civil war but a hybrid Russian-Ukrainian war. Such wars have taken place throughout history; however this is probably the first in which *all* the methods and tactics of hybrid wars are in use (Erol – Şafak Oguz).

It is very important to understand what role the ethnic component plays in modern conflicts. Do we still face pure ethnic conflicts in the twenty first century? Have we ever faced them? With regards to Eastern Ukraine there is research that suggests:

If local machinists and miners had only known the scale of the destruction to come, the economic rationale for rebellion would surely have appeared less compelling. Yet their choice set at the time was between a high-risk attempt to retain their economic livelihood and an almost certain loss of income. Intent is difficult to empirically discern, even with the highest-resolution data, but the results presented here suggest that many people chose the first option (Zhukov).

The author claims that economic reasons prevail over ethnic reasons in regions where industrial infrastructure was dense and Russia-oriented. There was no suppression by the so called “nationalists” in Eastern Ukraine. Here we presume Ukrainian citizens from the eastern parts of Ukraine were influenced dramatically by this propaganda. They feared that after the Revolution of Dignity, due to the strong pro-European vector of Ukrainian foreign policy, the people of Eastern Ukraine would lose their economic preferences with Russia, would go bankrupt and become jobless. They also had huge expectations that after Crimea’s annexation, Russia would incorporate Eastern Ukraine and the population of that region would immediately benefit from “improved” Russian living standards. The source cited above remains clear that if there had been any ethnic component in the conflict it was created artificially by Russia and Putin’s propaganda.

On the other hand, many major news outlets’ websites have dedicated their efforts to collecting all possible facts on Russian aggression in Ukraine (“Evidence of Russian aggression in Ukraine”), as well as presenting reports in recognized world media with reference to facts on the deployment of Russian regular servicemen (Urban; Bushuev), Russian weapons which are produced and used *only* by Russian Armed Forces (Schlein; Walker), Russian-marked armed vehicles, which are allegedly somewhere in Pskov, Kaluga, etc. (Trevithick), and the imprisonment of Russian officers as well as soldiers who are on duty (“Evidence of Russian Aggression in Ukraine”). On August 19<sup>th</sup>,

2016, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ukraine shared an updated presentation of defence intelligence from Ukraine on its web site, which showed the strengthening of a Russian group of forces near the Ukrainian border (“Russian Military Presence”). Thus, although it is possible to call the events in Eastern Ukraine a “Ukrainian crisis” it should be understood as a Russian-Ukrainian war: a hybrid war. According to reports by the UN, 9,333 people have died and 21,396 have been injured in Ukraine (Section).

The efficiency of international mechanisms for the prevention of nuclear weapons proliferation (the Budapest Memorandum) has been impaired, mutual trust has been lost and acute political and diplomatic confrontation between the West and Russia has developed. The actions of the Russian Federation not only threaten to create another “frozen conflict” on the European continent, but also create a *precedent* for using force in solving arguments between the countries. This is very dangerous, as this example is being set by the country that is a permanent member of the UN Security Council, a member of the global “nuclear club”, and a guarantor of security, territorial integrity and sovereignty of countries that voluntarily renounced possession of nuclear weapons. The international community has not recognized the annexation of Crimea, has condemned the actions of the Russian side in Eastern Ukraine, and has taken practical steps to demonstrate their solidarity with Ukraine. Foreign support is crucially important for Ukraine, which, being in a different “weight class” compared to Russia, has limited internal resources to counter Russian aggression (“The Russia-Ukraine Conflict” 15).

The UN General Assembly Resolution “Situation of human rights in Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine)” was adopted on December 19, 2016. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine stated:

This important document provides a clear definition on the status of Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol as part of the territory of Ukraine, condemns the temporary occupation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and does not recognize its attempted annexation by the occupying State. Within the context of the terrible human rights situation in Crimea due to its occupation by Russia, we attach particular importance to the reference in the resolution to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, which, inter alia, foresees the humane treatment of the population, which live in occupied territory and protect its rights under international humanitarian law (“MFA Statement on the Adoption of the UN resolution, ‘Situation of Human Rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol (Ukraine)’ – News”).

Seventy countries supported the document, twenty six were against it and seventy seven abstained. The ones who voted against included Angola, Armenia, Belarus, Bolivia, Burundi, Cambodia, China, Comoros, Cuba, North

Korea, Eritrea, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Nicaragua, Philippines, Russian Federation, Serbia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Zimbabwe. Not every state shares Ukraine's view on the Ukrainian crisis. However, the majority does.

### **Canada and Ukraine: From Sanctions to Direct Support**

The official web site of the Canadian Embassy in Ukraine informs:

Since the beginning of the crisis in Ukraine in November 2013, Canada has been at the forefront of the international community's support to the Ukrainian people – in their initial fight for democracy and reform under the Yanukovich regime, in their efforts to resist Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and support for separatists in eastern Ukraine, and in their government's ongoing and important reform efforts ("Canada – Ukraine Relations").

It is worthwhile to divide Canada's support for Ukraine into three categories: sanctions, Canada's commitment to NATO and Canada's direct support for Ukraine (Marczuk-Karbownik 41-43). In coordination with partners and allies, Canada has imposed sanctions against more than 270 Russian and Ukrainian individuals and entities ("Canada – Ukraine Relations"). Despite Russia's initial rhetoric that all of these sanctions did not work, it can now be seen that the combined shock of financial sanctions and low oil prices will make Russia lose 600 billion USD in the period between 2014-2017 (Кувшинова). Introduced in 2014 ("Special Economic Measures"), the last amendments to the sanctions came into force on March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016 ("Regulations Amending"). However, as the Razumkov Centre's experts evaluate, with reference to the impact of the sanctions on the Russian Federation at least several important circumstances should be kept in mind. Firstly, the sanctions do not have an instant cumulative effect; a significant portion of them are designed as short and mid-term solutions, and in the middle of 2016 it was seen how they affected the Russian economy. Secondly, it must be remembered that Russia has a rather strong margin of safety – the enormous potential of the oil and gas sector and significant gold and forex reserves. The forced support of the ruble could lead to rather noticeable, but not catastrophic, losses in foreign exchange savings. At the same time, it should be noted that the reduction of gold and forex reserves of the Central Bank (CB) of Russia is taking place slightly faster than it has been forecast. Thirdly, Russian leadership rather effectively uses external sanctions as an ideological propaganda tool to strengthen the ruling regime and increase the anti-Western attitude of Russian citizens ("The Russia-Ukraine Conflict" 17).

As far as NATO is concerned, its official web site states in the “Relations with Ukraine” section:

From the very beginning of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, NATO has adopted a firm position in support of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, condemning Russia’s illegal and illegitimate “annexation” of Crimea and the violence and insecurity in eastern Ukraine caused by Russia and Russian-backed separatists, expressing its full support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders (“Relations with Ukraine”).

Canada deployed 6 CF-18 Hornet fighter aircraft and hundreds of troops in Romania, initiated joint training in Poland, and gave support through NATO Trust Funds from 2014, and began to more actively take part in all Alliance activities in Europe (Marczuk-Karbownik 42-43). After the NATO Summit in Warsaw on July 8-9, 2016, it was decided to strengthen the presence of the Alliance in Eastern Europe; Canada will deploy 1,000 of its soldiers in Latvia “to boost NATO presence on Russia border” (“Canada to Send...”).

Canada’s direct help to Ukraine is financial, humanitarian and military. Since January 2014, Canada has also announced more than \$700 million in much-needed assistance to Ukraine, including \$400 million in low interest loans to help Ukraine stabilize its economy and over \$240 million in bilateral development assistance focusing on democracy, the rule of law, and sustainable economic growth (“Canada – Ukraine Relations”). On July 11, 2016, the Government of Canada and the Government of Ukraine signed the Canada – Ukraine Free Trade Agreement (CUFTA). This is an important milestone in the Canada – Ukraine bilateral relationship and should create new opportunities for businesses in both countries (“Canada – Ukraine Free Trade...”). Furthermore, Canada sent approximately 300 observers to monitor Ukrainian presidential and parliamentary elections in 2014. Canada is also deploying 25 monitors to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. During the time of Ukraine’s independence, Canada has supported processes of democratization and donated humanitarian aid, which is of special value regarding the war in Eastern Ukraine (“Canada – Ukraine Relations”).

However, at present the military assistance for Ukraine is much more important than any other form of help. In terms of bilateral security support to Ukraine, Canada has contributed over \$16 million in non-lethal military equipment to Ukraine’s armed forces and:

200 Canadian Armed Forces personnel deployed to Ukraine to deliver training and capacity-building programmes until March 31, 2017, Canadian Armed Forces cooperate with the Ukrainian Armed Forces under the auspices of the Military Training and Cooperation Program (MTCP). Canada supports the NATO-Ukraine Joint Working Group through the provision of language, staff officer, and



peacekeeping training for Ukrainian military and civilian personnel. With Canada's ongoing commitment and increased support to Ukraine, the MTCP has duly responded by increasingly the course offerings to Ukraine in 2014 and 2015. Ukraine is currently the largest participant in Canada's MTCP ("Canada – Ukraine Relations").

On March 15, 2016, Canada's Minister of National Defence, Harjit Singh Sajjan, visited Ukraine where he met Ukraine's Minister of Defence, Army General Stepan Poltorak, at the International Center for Peacemaking and Safety (the Yavoriv military training facility in the Lviv region). The ministries discussed the implementation of existing programs of military cooperation between Ukraine and Canada. Canadian instructors demonstrated the exercises on small arms handling and performing first aid in combat ("Your reform is a move forward"). After concluding his visit to Ukraine, Poland and Germany, Minister Sajjan stated:

I was pleased to meet with my counterparts in Ukraine, Poland, and Germany to discuss a number of issues important to the defence and security of Central and Eastern Europe. Canada continues to make important contributions in the region and we remain committed to working with our Allies and partners to demonstrate strength and solidarity in response to Europe's complex security environment. Canada remains committed to supporting Ukraine in its efforts to maintain sovereignty, security, and stability ("Minister Sajjan Concludes...").

This quote from the Minister's statement best characterizes the ongoing processes in formal relations between Canada and Ukraine.

### **Canada and Ukraine: Battle for Freedom and Values**

It could be suggested that the Ukrainian crisis has put into question core liberal democracy values: democracy itself and the rule of law, the inviolability of borders as enshrined in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and the broader international system with its established principles on the use of force (Wolczuk 70). What should be expected from Canadian foreign policy after the Ukrainian crisis? Uncertainty, which probably best sums up the world's order now:

Canada's foreign policy has stumbled on the international stage as its leaders confront seismic shifts in global politics that pull the country in different directions. The brief unipolar moment experienced at the turn of the century has become a multipolar system, dominated by rising giants that dwarf Canada, both

economically and militarily. To add uncertainty to the mix, Justin Trudeau's ambitious multilateral agenda faces unprecedented challenges with the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States (Carment and Landry 222).

Has Canadian policy towards Ukraine changed after the Liberals came to power in 2015? Has the Canadian vision of the Ukrainian crisis altered? Research done by Seligman suggests that in recent decades there have been slight modifications in Canadian foreign policy when governments changed:

Assessments about the relevance of political parties in shaping Canadian foreign policy appear to fall into two camps. On the one hand, the conventional wisdom says that parties do matter. Certainly, as the above anecdote indicates, parties themselves claim to be influenced by a particular set of values and ideology that not only defines the party's foreign policy positions but also differentiates one party from another. This conventional wisdom was reinforced during the 2015 federal election campaign when party leaders held an entire debate devoted solely to foreign policy. On the other hand, academic analysis of Canadian foreign policy has tended to downplay and undertheorize the role of political parties, implying that parties do not matter enough to merit significant attention (Seligman 278).

Taking into consideration Harper's and Trudeau's statements as well as actions, the conclusion may be drawn that Canadian policy towards Ukraine has not changed after 2015, nor has the attitude towards the Ukrainian crisis.

Taking the above forms of assistance into consideration, there appears to be at least one more way in which Canada can help Ukraine without selling lethal weapons and without providing any financial or humanitarian aid. This is moral support of Ukraine's freedom and sovereignty in the form of constant reminding that the Russian Federation has violated international law with the annexation of Crimea. Russia also supports its proxies in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine by sending them money, weapons and ammunition, and through their distribution of propaganda within Eastern Ukraine as well as globally. Significant research could be done on how Russian and Russia-paid internet trolls have been supporting Moscow's position on the web, as well as Russian propaganda TV channels with multi-million budgets (like *Russia Today*, etc.). Canada can use every opportunity to persuade the Russian Federation to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and European choice, as Stephen Harper did in Brisbane, Australia, during the G20 meeting on November 15, 2014. The Canadian Prime Minister said to Putin: "I guess I'll shake your hand but I have only one thing to say to you: You need to get out of Ukraine" (Goodman).

After changing their governing party from the Conservatives to the Liberals, it was believed that Canada could change its agenda on Ukraine, or at least on

Russia, considering the bilateral cooperation on Arctic issues. The Arctic region may be exposed to a security dilemma that is further exacerbated by external threats, as shown by the spill over of the Ukrainian crisis into Arctic regional cooperation (Scopelliti and Conde Pérez 677). From January 31 – February 1, 2016, Stephane Dion, Foreign Affairs Minister of Canada, visited Ukraine. But a week before his visit, Russian media, and pro-Russian media (web sites mainly) in Ukraine, began to cite him, provoking hysteria in Ukraine:

Canada was speaking to the Russians even during the tough times of the Cold War. And now we are not speaking ... because of the former policy, of the former government. In which way is this helping Ukraine? In which way is it helping our interests in the Arctic? [...] We have a lot of disagreements with the government of Russia but it's certainly not the way to stop speaking with them when the Americans speak with them and all the Europeans, the Japanese, everybody except Canada (Zimonjic).

Alexander Darchiev, Russia's Ambassador to Canada, stated that the Russian Federation and Canada "need to go back to common sense as opposed to name-calling and brinkmanship statements that we so often heard before the October elections. I am not criticizing anyone, but what we have seen is ideology put before pragmatism, and this was counter-productive in terms of Canada's own interests" (Wade, "Time for Canada...").

Canada of course has its own national interests; one of them lies in the Arctic, and another is in Ukraine. Canada has been a long-standing and consistent friend of Ukraine, which is fully explained by the activity of the Ukrainian Diaspora. In the meantime, Russia continues to try to influence Ottawa and weaken its support of Kyiv. These efforts have intensified since the Canadian government changed from Conservative to Liberal. It is worth mentioning the words of Sergei Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, that the previous government "headed the requirements of rabid representatives of the Ukrainian Diaspora" ("Сергей Лавров подводит итоги...").

When looking at Stephane Dion's visit to Ukraine, it can be concluded that it was one of the first foreign visits by a newly appointed Foreign Affairs Minister. The fact that Canada chose Ukraine to be one of the first destinations was not only symbolic. It may be assumed that Canada wanted to clearly show its support for the Ukrainian state in a time of Russian military aggression and the annexation of Crimea. The visit not only provided an opportunity to state that publicly, but emphasized the fact that the Canadian government's position had not changed and would not change as long as Russia continues its aggression against Ukraine. In addition, the visit was important for the Ukrainian government to feel the support from Canada's new government and from the Minister directly.

One month after Stephan Dion's visit to Kyiv the Canadian Minister of National Defence, Harjit Singh Sajjan, visited Ukraine. Sanctions on the Russian Federation were extended, and not only by Canada. They had a visible effect on the Russian economy as Russians' real disposable income has fallen by 12.3 percent since the beginning of the economic crisis in 2014, a report prepared by the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration suggests ("Реальные доходы россиян снизились на 12,3% за два года"). The important point is how long they will last, as every sanction's renewal is followed by some politicians' desire to return to "business as usual" with the Russian Federation. This is the point where Canada could support Ukraine, and Canada does.

Of course, the world's politics is built in such a way that governments need to interact. But it is believed that in Canadian-Russian relations, no so-called *quid pro quo* is possible. By this it is meant that the Russian Federation would make concessions to the Arctic issue, and Canada would do the same in its support of Ukraine. The Kremlin is likely to return to Cold War relations or to a *bipolar world*, and, of course, as one of the poles. Canada, as does every independent actor on the international stage, has its own national interests and they are Ottawa's priorities. It is also known that Ukraine is not a priority in Canada's agenda at the moment. But the democratic state treats every issue separately, whether it is the situation in Syria, the Arctic or Ukraine. It may be concluded that the Liberals maintain that Canada needs to open a dialogue with Russia because of shared interests, such as the Arctic, but that does not mean that Canada agrees with Putin's aggressive position towards Eastern Europe. The Russian Federation is continuing its aggression in Eastern Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea. What is more, in other parts of the world such as Syria, Russia is increasing its military operations. It is possible that Putin has his own vision of the world's future and is looking for ways to implement it. In such cases it is vital that states and diplomats have no illusions when one thing is said during meetings and then the world observes Russia doing the opposite. No one can say in advance, except Kremlin officials, what *real* intentions Moscow has. But it is known that Russia's actions undermine the international system built after World War II and Putin has destroyed this legal system constructed on agreements.

## Conclusion

Despite the moral and material assistance from Canada, Ukraine struggles to restore its territorial integrity and sovereignty. Russia should begin seeing Ukraine as not only an object of their foreign policy, but also an equal subject, a partner in international relations. Russia should abandon their aggressive

rhetoric and stop living in a bipolar world where the spheres of interest exist. Russia should withdraw their “volunteers” from the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. Russia should declare the annexation of Crimea illegal and give it back to Ukraine. If at least those steps are taken for Ukrainian political and social institutions, it would be much easier to promote reconciliation between the two countries and peoples. Canada respects international law, and gives essential direct support to Ukraine by training the Ukrainian Army as well as by sending non-lethal weapons and equipment. But the most important support for Kyiv is the feeling that across the ocean there is a partner and friend who stands for Ukrainian territorial integrity and sovereignty.

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## CANADA'S COOPERATION WITH POLAND IN THE FACE OF THE CRISIS IN UKRAINE (2014-2016)

### Abstract

The article analyses main problems and presents crucial moments in the relations between Canada and Poland in recent years. In response to the complicated situation in Ukraine, Canada supports NATO's reassurance measures in promoting security in Central and Eastern Europe, which include a closer military cooperation with Poland as well. Canadian soldiers have been sent to Poland to conduct training manoeuvres as well as to demonstrate unity, resolve and commitment to collective defence. At the NATO Summit in Warsaw Justin Trudeau announced that Canada would deploy troops on NATO's eastern flank to contain Russian aggression. To emphasize the importance of a good relationship, in 2014-2016, the highest Canadian officials visited Poland, including Prime Ministers Stephen Harper and Justin Trudeau, as well as the Governor General David Johnston. During each of those visits a common critical attitude towards the Russian aggressive policy was presented and solidarity with Ukraine was expressed. A further close military and political cooperation can be expected despite ideological differences between the governments in Ottawa and Warsaw.

**Keywords:** Polish-Canadian relations, Canadian foreign policy, Canada and NATO, crisis in Ukraine, Polish foreign policy

### Résumé

Ce texte analyse les problèmes principaux et présente les moments essentiels dans les relations entre le Canada et la Pologne dans les années récentes. En réponse à la crise en Ukraine, le Canada soutient les mesures de réassurance de l'OTAN en promouvant la sécurité en Europe centrale et orientale. Cela comprend également la coopération militaire plus étroite avec la Pologne. Des soldats canadiens furent envoyés en Pologne pour conduire des manœuvres de formation en démontrant l'unité et l'engagement à la défense collective. Au sommet de l'OTAN à Varsovie, Justin

Trudeau annonça que le Canada déploierait des troupes sur le flanc Est de l'OTAN pour décourager l'agression russe. Pour souligner l'importance de cette relation spéciale, entre 2014 – 2016, différents hauts fonctionnaires canadiens visitèrent la Pologne, entre autres, les premiers ministres Stephen Harper et Justin Trudeau, le gouverneur général David Johnston. Au cours de ces visites, ils présentèrent une attitude critique par rapport à la politique agressive de la Russie et exprimèrent la solidarité avec l'Ukraine. En outre, une coopération étroite militaire et politique peut être attendue malgré des différences idéologiques qui existent entre les gouvernements à Ottawa et à Varsovie.

**Mots-clés :** relations bilatérales entre le Canada et la Pologne, politique étrangère du Canada, le Canada et l'OTAN, crise en Ukraine, politique extérieure de la Pologne

### Introduction

Canada and Poland enjoy amicable bilateral relations, which is the result of the long-standing cooperation. The links between those two countries are based on historical and social ties. Both countries share common core values: respect for democracy, protection of human rights, rule of law and the membership in the international organisations together with institutions such as the United Nations or The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. The relations between Ottawa and Warsaw have been based on a political dialog, an increasing growth in trade and investments as well as the activities of the Polish diaspora in Canada (Pastusiak 7-12). Both countries have been engaged in the maintenance of peace and security (eg. ISAF NATO in Afghanistan). The complex situation in Eastern Europe, in regard to the complicated situation in Ukraine has made recent months exceptionally challenging for transatlantic relations and has deeply engaged Canada in European issues. The Government in Ottawa has condemned Russian aggressive policy and the illegal military occupation of Crimea in March 2014 and has taken a variety of steps and initiatives since the beginning of the crisis in Ukraine including imposing sanctions, providing economic and military assistance, as well as supporting NATO measures. Canada strongly supports the Ukrainian efforts to restore political and economic stability and to implement democratic reforms. Facing the problems in Ukraine, Canada and Poland have begun to cooperate closely and good bilateral relations became even better. Due to the fact that the analysed problems are current, the article is based mostly on the official governmental releases, articles as well as comments in Canadian and Polish newspapers.

### **Historic, Economic and Social Ties**

A powerful element contributing to the close Polish-Canadian relations is the fact that there is a sizeable population of persons of Polish descent in Canada. According to 2006 census profile, 984,000 respondents reported having Polish origins (Population by selected ethnic origins (2006 Census). Statistics Canada), and in 2011 more than 190,000 people reported an ability to speak the Polish language (2011 Census of Population. Statistics Canada). The Polish community members arrived in Canada in several waves of immigration. The first groups settled in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, a great number of people fled from the communist Poland after the World War II as displaced persons, and, finally, the "Solidarity" wave came to Canada in the 1980s-90s (Reczyńska 18-22). There is Canadian Polish Congress to promote the Polish culture, language and traditions as well.

After the fall of communism Canada supported Poland in the complex process of political and economic transformation as well as in its efforts to join NATO and to access the European Union. Canada was the first country which ratified NATO membership of Poland in February 1998. These two countries share some important bilateral agreements ranging from visa-free travelling to trade, energy, and national security (Marczuk-Karbownik 169-170). Additionally, Poland is Canada's largest trading partner in Central and Eastern Europe. In 2015 the value of bilateral trade was CAD 2.2 billion. This was a 14% increase over 2014. Canadian exports to Poland were at CAD 445 million, representing a 28% rise over the preceding year and primarily included machinery, electrical and electronic equipment, mineral ores, scientific and precision instruments, along with vehicles. Canadian imports from Poland were valued at CAD 1.761 billion in 2015, an important 10% jump over 2014, with top sectors being machinery, fur, furniture and bedding, aircraft and spacecraft products, and electrical machinery (Polska. Portal Promocji Eksportu). Accordingly, Poland has received the status as a priority established market under Canada's Global Markets Action Plan (Poland. Market Access Plan 2015-2017). The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between Canada and the European Union (CETA), signed on September 26, 2014, gives new perspectives and possibilities to intensify Polish-Canadian bilateral economic cooperation. The agreement is expected to come into force in 2017, after translation of CETA text into all EU languages and ratification by the EU members and all Canadian provinces. Poland has always been a strong supporter of CETA and currently there is a major campaign promoting the Canadian market in Poland and the Polish businesses in Canada.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A good example of the campaign could be a series of seminars "Doing Business with Canada" organized by the Canadian Embassy in Poland and the Marshal Office of the

### The High Level Visits of the Canadian Officials in Poland

Despite the ideological discrepancy between Harper's Conservatives and Polish Liberal government of Civic Platform (*Platforma Obywatelska*), both countries began to cooperate closely. The last two years were exceptional for Canadian-Polish relations in the political and diplomatic context. Among the highest Canadian officials who visited Poland there were Minister of Foreign Affairs John Baird in April 2014, Prime Minister Stephen Harper in June 2014 and in June 2015, Joe Olivier – Minister of Finance in June 2014, Governor General David Johnston in October 2014 and Ministers of National Defence – Rob Nicholson in December 2014, as well as Jason Kenney in June 2015. Most of the official statements during those visits concerned the situation in Ukraine and offered perspectives on Polish-Canadian cooperation regarding the events in the region ("Governor General's first official visit to Poland"). The common critical attitude towards the Russian policy of aggression was presented and the solidarity with Ukraine was expressed as well.

In this context, the Canada-Poland Statement of Principles for Coordinated Engagement on Ukraine, signed by John Baird and his Polish counterpart, Radosław Sikorski,<sup>2</sup> is of great importance. This declaration is to guide cooperation in Canadian and Polish efforts to support democracy, human rights, economic growth, and the rule of law in Ukraine. Moreover, Baird declared that Canada would contribute \$9.2 million to joint Canadian and Polish projects that strengthen democratic development in Ukraine such as the Poland-Canada Democracy Support Program for Ukraine for the years 2014-2017 which will work with Solidarity Fund, and Support for Grassroots Democracy project of the European Endowment for Democracy for the years 2014-2019. In the official statement Baird stressed that "Canada and Poland stand shoulder to shoulder in the face of Russia's cynical aggression" and emphasized the importance of the partnership with Poland "on a coordinated approach in support of Ukraine's future as a sovereign, unified and prosperous European state, free of Russian interference and threats" ("Canada and Poland"). While in Warsaw, the head of Canadian diplomacy met with the representatives of the Polish NGOs working in Ukraine ("Spotkanie szefa dyplomacji Kanady Johna Bairda z polskimi organizacjami pozarządowymi").

The Canadian Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, visited Poland on his way to Ukraine in June 2014 and in June 2015. The object of his first visit was to join other world leaders in celebrating the Polish Day of Freedom, marking the

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Lodz Voivodship in Lodz, June 22, 2016, see: <http://www.lodzkie.pl/strona-glowna/aktualnosci/doing-business-with-canada#prettyPhoto>.

<sup>2</sup> The English version of the statement can be found at: <https://www.msz.gov.pl/resource/0e0b9e08-efbf-45ce-878b-7cf8dda8287b:JCR>.

25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Poland's emergence from communism. The then Canadian Prime Minister met with his Polish counterpart Donald Tusk. After a call by the Polish Prime Minister for a greater NATO presence to be established in Eastern Europe, Stephen Harper announced the increased military cooperation between Poland and Canada including his country's plans to send more soldiers to that region. The deployment was implemented shortly after the announcement. He admitted that Russia's "aggressive behaviour" posed a long-term threat to the region and required a sustained and co-ordinated response ("Stephen Harper mulls bolstering military presence in Eastern Europe"). In June 2015 Harper met the Polish Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz and the President of Poland Bronisław Komorowski. Both Harper and Kopacz renewed their condemnation of Russian leader Vladimir Putin over Ukraine. "The position of Canada and Poland is very much the same, to maintain sanctions and to exert pressure on Russia so that it withdraws from the territory of Ukraine," ("Ukraine discussions trump Stephen Harper's visit") said Kopacz. She talked about both Poland and Canada's readiness to support Ukraine and called Canada a "highly valued ally" ("Ukraine discussions trump Stephen Harper's visit"). In her statement, Kopacz revealed<sup>3</sup> that Harper would be visiting a Canadian frigate HMCS Fredericton which had been conducting joint military exercise BALTOPS 2015 in the Baltic Sea under Operation REASSURANCE. Harper's visit on HMCS Fredericton was to show solidarity with Canadian military personnel and their allies. Being on board, Harper had the opportunity to observe two Russian warships sailing in the same region (and they were observing Harper).

The Governor General of Canada, David Johnston, paid an official visit to Poland on October 22-26, 2014. It was the first state visit of the Governor General to Poland and visible evidence of the strong and good relations between the two countries. The purpose of that state visit to Poland was to strengthen bilateral relations. The agenda of Johnston's visit to Warsaw and Cracow included a meeting with the President of Poland Bronisław Komorowski and a state dinner given by the President to honor the Governor General. Then Komorowski emphasized the gratitude

for the presence of Canadian soldiers on Polish territory in the framework of the NATO exercises, which are a form of response to growing threat across the eastern flank of the Alliance. [...] We look forward to even closer cooperation

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<sup>3</sup> Ewa Kopacz revealed top secret information despite the fact that she was not allowed to. Her indiscreet behaviour was commented on in Polish and Canadian media.

with Canada on security issues, including the situation in Ukraine, and strengthening our impressive economic relations (“The Governor General of Canada paid an official visit to Poland”).<sup>4</sup>

Johnston also met with representatives of the Polish government and parliament, entrepreneurs, and scientists. These meetings concerned primarily economic cooperation, security policy, including the results of the NATO summit in Newport, and the situation in Ukraine as well. Marcin Bosacki, the then Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to Canada, described the visit as a visible indication of positive bilateral relations and of the fact that “Poland and Canada are today for each other one of the closest partners” (“The Governor General of Canada paid an official visit to Poland”).

The European security, bilateral military cooperation and implementation of 2014 NATO summit in Newport resolutions were the topics of conversations of the Canadian Minister of Defence, Robert D. Nicholson, with his Polish counterpart Tomasz Siemoniak (“Spotkanie ministrów obrony Polski i Kanady”) and with the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Grzegorz Schetyna in December 2014 (“Polish-Canadian talks on security policy”). The Ministers of Defence of both countries met with the Polish and Canadian soldiers participating in common tactical and fire training in the Land Forces Training Centre in Drawsko Pomorskie. In June 2015 during his official visit in Poland the Canadian Minister of Defence, Jason Kenney, signed a Declaration of Intent with his Polish counterpart Tomasz Siemoniak; the object of this declaration is to promote increased Canadian-Polish defence cooperation in order to assure security and contribute to international peace (“Polsko-kanadyjskie rozmowy ministrów obrony”).

### **Military Cooperation**

Operation REASSURANCE *Canada* provides NATO members in Central and Eastern Europe with Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) units and staff to promote security and stability in that region. In doing so, these CAF personnel assist training, exercises, demonstrations and assigned NATO tasks. In response to the crisis in Ukraine, closer military cooperation with Poland is one of the ways of presenting Canada’s support for those NATO measures. Since May 2014, on a rotating basis, over 1,000 Canadian soldiers have conducted training together with their Polish allies within the Operation REASSURANCE. Canadian and Polish soldiers take part in cyclic military manoeuvres: “Maple Arch” and “Anakonda”. The first one is an annual

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<sup>4</sup> The official translation of the speech. See: [http://ottawa.mfa.gov.pl/en/news/the\\_governor\\_general\\_of\\_canada\\_paid\\_an\\_official\\_visit\\_to\\_poland/?printMode=true](http://ottawa.mfa.gov.pl/en/news/the_governor_general_of_canada_paid_an_official_visit_to_poland/?printMode=true).

exercise of soldiers from Poland, Canada, Lithuania and Ukraine. In September 2014, 250 soldiers trained in Lublin ("Ex Maple Arch 14") and in November 2015 – 140 joint troops had a training in Lithuania ("Nations 'standing shoulder to shoulder'"). "Anakonda" is a bi-annual multinational exercise. "Anakonda-14" was led by the Polish Armed Forces Operational Command and conducted joint defensive operations against a conventional attack from enemy forces ("Anakonda"). From September 24 to October 3, 2014 approximately 12,500 troops from Poland, Canada, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Great Britain and the United States participated in the manoeuvres on the Polish training grounds. Approximately 120 soldiers of the Royal Canadian Regiment trained with the Polish soldiers in Drawsko Pomorskie within "Anakonda 14". Canadian soldiers participated in Saber Strike 2014 and 2015, an exercise led by the USA in Poland and the Baltic Republics, as well as in US-led multinational exercise "Orzel Alert" in Świdwin in May 2014. All those common manoeuvres were to demonstrate unity, resolve and commitment to collective defence.

In February 2016, the fifth rotation of Canadian troops, equipped with 30 light vehicles, was sent to Poland. 220 soldiers came from Canada's 22nd Royal Regiment, the Canadian Army's biggest single unit, popularly dubbed "The Van Doos".<sup>5</sup> The regiment is based at Canadian Forces Base Valcartier, Quebec. The change of command ceremony, held at the Canadian Embassy in Warsaw, was presided over by Canadian Defence Attaché Colonel Pascal Demers on February 19. That shift remained in Poland until the end of August 2016 while taking part in various types of manoeuvres, some of which were not limited to the Polish territory. One of them was "Anakonda 16", the largest such exercise in the history of the Polish army after 1989. Between June 7 and 17, 2016, over 31,000 soldiers of all types of forces from more than 20 NATO and allied countries trained in Drawsko Pomorskie, Ustka, Tomaszów Mazowiecki and Nowy Glinnik. The manoeuvres were a capability demonstration ahead of the NATO summit in Warsaw in July 2016 ("Canadian soldiers teach and learn"). The representatives of the Canadian regiment participated in the military parade of the Polish Armed Forces Day on August 15, 2016 to emphasize the importance of the Polish ally and respect for the Polish soldiers. A ceremony marking the transition from Rotation 5 to Rotation 6 took place in Drawsko Pomorskie Training Area on August 24, 2016. The sixth rotation of approximately 220

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<sup>5</sup> *Le Royale 22e Régiment du Canada* (22nd Royal Regiment of Canada) is known colloquially as "the Van Doos". This linguistic corruption of *vingt-deux*, which is French for twenty-two, has been used since the First World War as English Canadian soldiers were unable to pronounce the complicated French numbers correctly. See: <http://www.vandoos.com/>.

soldiers come predominantly from Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry based at Canadian Forces Base Edmonton, Alberta ("Change of command for Operation REASSURANCE").

In order to celebrate two years of close Polish-Canadian military cooperation, Polish Minister of National Defence Antoni Macierewicz and Canadian Ambassador to Poland – Stephen de Boer on May 6, 2016, opened a special photography exhibition which could be seen on the fence of the Canadian Embassy in Warsaw ("Sześć MON: kanadyjska obecność wkładem w bezpieczeństwo Polski").

### **New Governments in Canada and Poland**

The change in Canadian foreign policy could be observed, while the Conservatives were in power (Ibbitson, *How Harper transformed*). The priority of Harper's government was to strengthen the position of the Canadian state in the world through, among other things, the more "visible" presence of Canada in the most important international bodies and employing the sharp rhetoric. The policy of Ottawa towards Kremlin after the annexation of Crimea serves as a very good example as the complicated situation in Eastern Europe was one of the main problems that the Conservative government of Stephen Harper concentrated on in 2014-2015 (Ibbitson, *The Big Break*).

Since November 2015, both Canada and Poland have had new governments. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his Liberal cabinet have declared that they will continue to support Ukraine's sovereignty, as Stephen Harper's Conservative government did. The Liberals have underlined that having some type of relationship with Kremlin should be considered, especially in the Arctic (Berthiaume, *Trudeau talks*). As Trudeau said: "we remain committed to the fact that Russia's interference in Ukraine must cease, that we stand with the Ukrainian people, and expect the president [Putin – M.M-K] to engage fully in the Minsk peace process" ("Russia's interference in Ukraine must cease"). However, in January 2016, the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Stéphane Dion signalled willingness to re-engage with Russia and confirmed that in the speech at the University of Ottawa in March 2016 saying: "This re-engagement will aim to help Ukraine, help Europe and help stabilize the situation in the centre of the continent. And it will serve Canadian interests by allowing us to talk to Russia on key issues like the Arctic" ("Trudeau government signals thaw in relations with Russia"). Nevertheless, on March 18, 2016 Canada imposed ever more sanctions against Russian and Ukrainian entities as well as individuals responsible for the ongoing crisis ("Canadian Sanctions Related to Russia.", "Canadian Sanctions Related to Ukraine.").



In May 2015 Andrzej Duda, a member of the rightwing Law and Justice party (*Prawo i sprawiedliwość*) won the presidential election in Poland, and in October 2015, his party achieved the majority of seats in the Polish Parliament. Again, the ideological differences between Trudeau's Liberal government and the Polish government of the ruling conservative party could be easily pointed out, but Poland is still a very important partner and ally for Canada.

Since then there has been a series of visits among the official of the two countries. The first member of the new Canadian government who visited Poland was the Canadian Minister of Defence Harjit Sajjan at his Polish counterpart's, Antoni Macierewicz's, invitation in March 2016. The NATO summit in Warsaw, the European security and bilateral military cooperation were the main topics of their conversation („Wizyta ministra obrony Kanady”). Furthermore, in May 2016 the President of Poland Andrzej Duda visited Canada. He met briefly with the Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on May 10. The politicians discussed the importance of their partnership in NATO and Poland's hosting of the NATO Summit in Warsaw on July 8-9, 2016. Trudeau and Duda held exchanges on regional security including Ukraine, Iraq and Syria, along with their own countries' bilateral commercial relations. Duda received the declaration that Canada would confirm the need to strengthen the Alliance's eastern flank as he expected Canada to increase its military personnel and equipment in Poland (“Prime Minister Justin Trudeau meets with President Andrzej Duda of Poland”). While meeting with the Governor General David Johnston and his wife President Duda expressed his appreciation for the Canadian military presence in Poland and invited more Canadian soldiers to his country (“We would like to invite Canadian soldiers to Poland”). The agenda of Duda's stay in Canada included a visit to the Petawawa military base where he thanked Canadian soldiers “for service as part of NATO that has strengthened and continues to strengthen Central and Eastern Europe's security” („President: NATO guards international law”), and the meetings with the members of the Canada-Poland Parliamentary Friendship Group and the representatives of the Canadian Polish Congress („President starts four-day visit to Canada”).

As Paul Wells indicates in the introduction to his interview with President Duda for *Maclean's*, although “Duda's visit was politically delicate for Ottawa's Liberals” concerning the ideological differences and the wave of Western Europe's criticism towards the Polish president and his ruling party, “Trudeau government is eager to reassert Canada's support for Ukraine and for Poland as a key ally in NATO and EU” (“Poland's president on NATO, his critics and the burden of history.”).

## The NATO Summit in Warsaw

The NATO Summit took place in Warsaw on July 8-9, 2016. A few days before the leaders came to Poland, it had been announced that Canada would join Great Britain, Germany and the United States, in leading a new rotating force of 4,000 multinational troops on NATO's eastern flank in Poland and the Baltic Republics as a deterrent against Russian aggression. Being in Warsaw, Justin Trudeau announced that Canada would deploy a majority of a 1,000-troop battalion to Latvia. The officials say it will be the largest Canadian deployment since the World War II (Berthiaume, *Trudeau Will Face*). Among the reasons of the Liberal government's decision was NATO leaders' pressure including Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and Barack Obama. In his address to the Canadian Parliament the U.S. President suggested that Canada should do more for its allies:

As your ally and as your friend, let me say that we'll be more secure when every NATO member, including Canada, contributes its full share to our common security. Because the Canadian armed forces are really good – and if I can borrow a phrase, the world needs more Canada. NATO needs more Canada. We need you (“Remarks by President Obama”).

Ottawa's decision can be treated as an indication of the strong support for the Alliance. It was the first NATO Summit for Justin Trudeau. In the aftermath, he paid an official visit to Ukraine to sign the Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement (CUFTA) and to emphasize Canada's enduring support for that country.

## Conclusion

Since the beginning of the crisis in Ukraine in 2014 Canada and Poland have been cooperating very closely in diplomatic, political, and military context. The significance of this cooperation for both nations cannot be understated. The importance of this long-term commitment persists despite any ideological differences between the two governments previously and currently. Rather than a departure from past commitments, the events of 2014-2016 demonstrate an enhanced relationship. Warsaw appreciates all Canadian initiatives in supporting Ukraine and Canada's commitment to NATO. Due to the country's geopolitical location, the situation in Ukraine is very important for Poland and its security. Trudeau's decision of deploying Canadian soldiers on NATO's eastern flank announced in Warsaw is an indication of Ottawa's engagement in Eastern Europe problems. Although the policy of Kremlin has not changed, the future of Polish-Canadian relations is bright as they have solid and firm basis.

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## **MIGRANT SPIRIT CONTESTED: COMPETING VISIONS OF CANADA'S NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE 2015 FEDERAL ELECTION**

### **Abstract**

“Migrant spirit” – the pursuit of a better life and the willingness of a new home to provide opportunities for migrants – is important to Canada’s national narrative. However, its precise meaning is not universally shared – it is contested, and it is subject to political struggles to define it. The 2015 Canadian federal election demonstrated how the precise meaning of migrant spirit is debated and contested. Two clear visions were on display, with the Liberal Party’s generous vision of migrant spirit proving victorious. While the Liberal Party remains popular, in part due to this vision, it remains that its vision is again being challenged, showing how migrant spirit is continuously politically challenged and defined.

**Keywords:** National identity – Canada, migration – Canada, brand Canada, politics – Canada, Stephen Harper, Justin Trudeau

### **Résumé**

L’« esprit migrant » – la poursuite d’une vie meilleure et la volonté d’habiter un nouveau pays en tant que possibilités pour les migrants – est important pour le récit national du Canada. Cependant, sa signification précise n’est pas universellement partagée – elle est contestée, et elle est soumise à des luttes politiques qui visent à définir ce concept. Les élections fédérales canadiennes de 2015 ont démontré comment la signification précise de l’esprit migrant est débattue et contestée. Deux visions claires ont été alors exposées dont l’une, celle du Parti libéral qui est plus généreuse, s’est avérée victorieuse. Alors que le Parti libéral est toujours populaire, en partie en raison de cette vision, il reste que sa vision est de nouveau mise en question, ce qui montre comment l’esprit migrant est continuellement politiquement contesté et (re)défini.

**Mots-clés :** identité nationale – Canada, migration – Canada, marque Canada, politique – Canada, Stephen Harper, Justin Trudeau

## Introduction

The 2015 Syrian refugee crisis disrupted national politics across the European Union. Responses varied from the generous (Germany and Sweden) to the harsh (Hungary and Denmark) as the European Union struggled to develop a coherent response to address the significant humanitarian crisis in a climate of growing security concerns. It was not expected that a refugee crisis taking place thousands of kilometres away would have much bearing on the 2015 Canadian federal election, as foreign policy was not expected to play a large role in the election (Smith). The election was expected to be a referendum on the nearly 10 years in power of the Conservative government of Stephen Harper. However, the focus of the election unexpectedly moved away from Conservative-defined themes of prime ministerial leadership on the economy, security and terrorism. One month into the campaign, in early September 2015, pictures of 3-year old Syrian refugee Alan Kurdi lying deceased on a beach in Turkey went viral. Kurdi's family had been trying to come to Canada as a place of refuge; thus, the Harper government's commitment to a fair refugee policy and its response to the 2015 European refugee crisis suddenly dominated the election. While the Harper government maintained that this incident reinforced the need for a cautious approach to refugees, both the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party argued that this incident reflected the Harper government's undermining of traditional Canadian values of generosity and a welcoming attitude towards migrants and refugees, which might be identified as "migrant spirit." Responses to the refugee crisis during and after the 2015 federal election reveal much about the Canadian national identity. Migration is central to how Canadians see themselves, and the 2015 crisis forced a fundamental re-examination of how Canadians belong and what their governments should do with respect to immigration and refugee policies in a climate of fears over terrorism. Thus, far from just being an election to decide who would govern Canada, the election became an opportunity for parties to articulate different visions of Canada and the migrant spirit.

### **Migrant Spirit and the Canadian National Identity**

An Australian of Greek origin, writing of his adopted home, said: "My story is not unique. It's typical of the migrant's spirit for pursuing a better life. What is unique is the country of Australia and its spirit for giving someone 'a fair go.' Australia embraced me as one of its own when I arrived and today I am proud to be one of its citizens" (Manolopoulos). "Migrant spirit" embodies the migrant's pursuit of a better life; however, it simultaneously reflects the willingness of the new home to provide opportunities for the migrant to



achieve a better life and to become a full-fledged citizen. While Manolopoulos claims that Australia is unique in this regard, the benefits of migration for both the migrant and their new homeland are central to many national narratives, including Canada's. Proponents of Canadian immigration, refugee and multiculturalism policies argue that this spirit informs and defines contemporary Canada, pointing to a long history of negotiating diversity, even though it was not always easy.

The "Canadian diversity model" (Jenson and Papillon), based on linguistic duality, multiculturalism, and the recognition of Aboriginal rights, provides a framework for thinking about a Canadian migrant spirit rooted in diversity, even though there has been a Canadian tendency to ignore the Aboriginal role in this partnership (Saul). This diversity is not an end in itself; rather, it is part of a broader set of core Canadian values, and in this sense diversity strengthens the Canadian identity (MacKinnon). Subsequent waves of immigration over time linked diversity to the migrant spirit. The deracialization of immigration policy and the introduction of multiculturalism policy in the early 1970s contributed to a growing diversity in the racial and ethnic makeup of Canadian society. Canada is thus a "society of difference" that "accepts and wishes to integrate people from all over the world" (Clarkson). According to Parkin and Mendelsohn, "acceptance of diversity is the norm in the new Canada" (3).

This helps explain how multiculturalism and immigration policies have become core components of the Canadian identity. Kymlicka's "Liberal Multicultural Hypothesis" suggests that "states can adopt multiculturalism policies to fairly recognize the legitimate interests of their minorities in their identity and culture without eroding core liberal-democratic values" (Kymlicka 258). There is broad-based support for immigration, due to perceived economic benefits and pride in multiculturalism, even though the support may be nuanced (Reitz). Public opinion with respect to pride in diversity has increased, particularly as foreign recognition of Canadian efforts to promote diversity was recognized, such as when the *Economist* magazine labelled Canada "cool" on its September 23, 2003 cover, in part due to its embrace of diversity.

Diversity has become a key element of Canada's international brand in order to achieve economic and political goals (Nimijean, *Articulating*; Nimijean, *Politics*). Former Liberal cabinet minister Pierre Pettigrew (*Politics*) argued that diversity informed Canada's "international personality" and was a useful tool for exporting Canadian values abroad to defuse tension in the world's trouble spots. Former Liberal prime minister Jean Chrétien (*Canadian Way*) argued that the "Canadian Way," a set of values that defined Canada, included "Canada's international voice [that] draws on its distinct advantage as a multicultural society where people have roots in virtually every country in

the world.” After 9/11, Chrétien (*Diversity*) argued that diversity was a tool in fighting terrorism. At Expo 2005, Canada’s exhibit was called “the wisdom of diversity.” Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has continued in this vein, arguing in London in November 2015 and at the Davos World Economic Forum in January 2016 that “diversity is Canada’s strength.”

While one cannot claim that discrimination has left Canadian society, particularly given the ongoing legacy of colonialism, there have been sustained efforts to change discriminatory laws and practices. The constant assessing of multiculturalism policy shows the importance of cultural and social diversity for the Canadian social discourse (Padolsky), though critics argue that the promotion of diversity abroad has reinforced a neoliberal agenda (Abu Laban and Gabriel). Indeed, national identities, as they change, are not universally embraced. This reflects important socioeconomic and political changes in society that have continually marked Canada’s evolution (Nelles), influenced by an ongoing struggle for inclusion by previously marginalized elements of Canadian society. This implies disruption as well as transformation for the positive. For example, the embrace of multiculturalism and diversity is not universally shared by Canadians, and it sometimes gets questioned politically. Kymlicka notes that Canadians often speak of multiculturalism in terms of “crisis” and “failure” (265). Despite the optimistic embrace of diversity, multiculturalism and immigration, Canadian support is nuanced – “strong, but conditional” (Soroka and Robertson, iv), including along political lines (Reitz; Grenier, *Canadians*).

Finally, national identities are subject to political efforts to define them. As this brief survey shows, there has tended to be a Liberal Party-defined sense of the Canadian identity. This is intrinsic to domestic brand politics, in which competing visions of national identity become key battlegrounds in partisan electoral competition (Nimijean, *Domestic*). This posed a particular challenge for Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper (2006-2015), who sought to redefine Canada as a Conservative country and thus embarked on a symbolic restructuring of Canada (Nieguth and Raney). Appealing to diverse ethnic communities and recent immigrants, spearheaded by cabinet minister Jason Kenney, became part of the Conservative government’s political strategy for redefining Canada. Importantly, the appeal to recent arrivals and ethnic minorities was rooted not in a migrant spirit narrative *per se* but in a political argument designed to grow the Conservative vote. For example, in the 2015 election, Prime Minister Harper argued that Chinese Canadians and Conservatives shared values of belief in hard work, education, family and faith (Levitz). Thus, while migrant spirit is important to Canada’s national narrative, its precise meaning is not universally shared – it is contested, and it is subject to political struggles to define it.

## The Conservative Reframing of Migrant Spirit

One of Stephen Harper's political goals was to transform Canada into a Conservative country. To do so, he had to convince Canadians that he was not a threat to their values, and that he and his party in fact embodied them. This required transforming the broad narratives of the Canadian story, including redefining the meaning of migrant spirit. First, in order to gain power, the Conservative Party had to visibly embrace migrant spirit to attract voters and counter claims that its supporters were intolerant, rural, or not open to diversity. In earlier elections, some candidates and supporters of the Reform Party and the Canadian Alliance (which preceded the new Conservative Party created in 2003) made comments that were offensive to a sense of migrant spirit and diversity. For example, in 1996, Reform Party MP Bob Ringma said he would move homosexual or ethnic minority workers to "the back of the store" if they offended bigoted customers (O'Neil) while in 2000, Betty Granger, a Canadian Alliance candidate, warned of an "Asian invasion" that was keeping "our own Canadian students" out of some B.C. universities (CBC News). Second, once in power, the Conservatives would need to engage in a symbolic restructuring of the Canadian state (Nieguth and Raney) and a reframing of the migrant spirit narrative. While the new Conservative Party declared that it was supportive of diversity and multiculturalism, it sought to associate its interpretation of migrant spirit with its broader agenda: economic conservatism, security, personal safety, patriotism, and Canadian sovereignty, as outlined in his successful 2006 campaign theme of "Stand Up for Canada."

If the 2006 minority victory was to lead to an eventual majority government, Harper needed to expand his base by moving the political centre more to the right. Harper began speaking of migrant spirit and the Canadian identity, the essence of which was captured in his comments on the first anniversary of his election: "East and West, French and English, immigrant and native born, we are all proud champions of these founding values, all champions of the Canadian way. Conservative values and Canadian values, I think we've demonstrated in the past year that these are one and the same" (cited in Mayeda). In 2015, he stated: "We are proud of Canada's diversity and inclusiveness. The promotion of these values has helped to build our great country where pluralism thrives" (2015).

However, beyond these broad narratives, the true meaning of migrant spirit for the Conservatives can be seen in associated policy initiatives in which migrant spirit was subsumed to the effort to transform Canada into a Conservative nation. For example, in seeking to reform the immigration and refugee system, the Conservatives emphasised economic opportunity for legal immigrants while sending signals to those who did not apply legally (which

seemingly included refugees) that Canada did not want them. This included legislation such as the 2011 Bill C-49, the *Preventing Human Smugglers from Abusing Canada's Immigration System Act*, the 2012 Bill C-31, *Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act*, which sought to eliminate backlogs of immigration applicants, and the 2014 Bill C-24, *Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act*, which meant that Canadian dual citizens born abroad could have their citizenship revoked under certain conditions.

Such legislation was accompanied by other initiatives that encouraged legal immigration and emphasized the security of Canada via a crackdown on human trafficking and queue jumpers. This included the 2012 reduction of health care benefits for refugees in order to deter refugees from coming to Canada (since restored by the Liberal government), implementing visa requirements for important source countries of refugees such as Hungary, Romania and Mexico, and even posting billboard ads in Hungary stating that "Those people who make a claim without sound reasons will be processed faster and removed faster" (Creskey). The Conservatives also sought to capitalize politically on an initiative to oblige Muslim women to remove the niqab during citizenship ceremonies. In 2015, Harper stated: "Why would Canadians, contrary to our own values, embrace a practice at that time that is not transparent, that is not open and, frankly, is rooted in a culture that is anti-women?" (cited in Chase). This statement shows how the Conservatives subsumed the rhetorical embrace of migrant spirit to their broader political agenda. This statement shows a clear sense of "us" versus "them," in that Muslim women are presented as outside Canadian values, as opposed to people who are part of the Canadian community that shapes them.

In the end, "the Conservative government has been most skilled in immigrant outreach, while playing to the 'old stock' Tory base, using the language of economic success and national security" (Cardozo). In this case, the Conservatives attempted to redefine Canada's migrant spirit through various initiatives consistent with Conservative political goals, not as a reflection of how Canadians see themselves; this reveals the complex nature of migrant spirit in the Canadian identity. While it is something that is genuinely felt by many Canadians, it is also subject to political efforts to define and redefine it for political purposes. This became evident in the 2015 federal election.

### **The 2015 Federal Election**

The 2015 election was expected to be quite competitive, even though the Conservatives trailed the NDP in many pre-election polls. The split between the centre and centre-left vote – while the Conservatives occupied the centre-right and right by themselves – meant that a Conservative minority

government was still a realistic possibility. It was in the Conservative Party's interest to define Harper strongly in terms of issues that might move Canadians while portraying his major opponents as weak and ineffective, in other words promoting "Brand Harper" (Rankin). The Conservative emphasis on fear and security built upon the narrative that promoted Harper as a defender of Canadian sovereignty. In so doing, it was hoped that the power of affect and rhetoric would lead enough Canadians to support his party even though Harper was personally quite unpopular.

However, Conservative fear-mongering in the pre-election period was perhaps a recognition that their base was collapsing (den Tandt). Such prospects no doubt motivated the continuation of the message of fear. In July 2015, Harper expressed hope that Canadians would choose "security over risk". He complained that

These guys just don't get it. [...] We're living in a dangerous world. We have a responsibility to act, to lead, to protect. [...] When the most despicable people in the world brag about their mass murders, when they threaten to carry out further attacks against Canadians, we will not back down, we will not weaken our law enforcement agencies, we will not pull our troops out of the fight (cited in Kennedy, *Harper*).

This theme informed the August launch of the Conservative campaign, which emphasized proven leadership, a safer Canada, and a stronger economy (Furey). Harper's emphasis on foreign affairs was a surprise, as *Embassy*, Canada's foreign policy newspaper, in July noted that foreign policy issues would likely not be important "barring a major international crisis before October" (Smith). Given that Harper became Prime Minister with almost no experience in global affairs, it shows how important foreign policy and visions of Canada have become in the era of domestic brand politics, for there is a connection between global projections of Canada and domestic politics (Nimijean, *Politics*; Howell). This no doubt contributed to Harper's decision to accept a debate on foreign policy.

Conservative advertising labelled Liberal leader Justin Trudeau as "just not ready," and sought to diminish his stature by referring to him by his first name. The NDP was attacked for its socialism and its alleged weakness in dealing with terrorism. Harper's approach was clear: to frame the election in terms of the leader best able to promote a strong Canada that would act internationally to get the "bad guys" and act domestically to protect vulnerable Canadians (Kennedy, *Harper*). Indeed, early in the campaign, Harper bluntly and perhaps callously criticised the opposition's position on ISIS and Syria, stating, "If your policy is humanitarian assistance without military support, all you're doing is dropping aid on dead people" (cited in Canadian Press).

It is a truism to say that campaigns matter, and television pundits often talk about the ballot box question defining elections. In this case, the eventual results – with the Liberals going from third in the pre-election polls to majority government winner and the NDP going from first to third – show that the campaign did matter. On September 2, we had the unexpected crisis that *Embassy* alluded to. The campaign suddenly moved away from Conservative – defined themes of security and the economy because of the introduction of refugee policy as an election issue, due to the publication of pictures of a deceased 3-year old refugee in Turkey, whose family had been trying to move to Canada.

Harper's initially resisted to do more for refugees – he said that “Canada is the largest resettler of refugees per capita in the world by far” – even though Canada was actually ranked 41<sup>st</sup> (Schwartz). Harper used the crisis to restate his security message. When asked about Canada's response to the refugee crisis, he rather cavalierly replied, “What's enough? What's enough? [...] “It's not just enough to turn around and say, ‘Oh let's admit more refugees.’ We can admit thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands more refugees and we are still going to see those kinds of images.” (cited in Kennedy, *Middle East*). He said, “We could drive ourselves crazy with grief” (cited in Fitz-Morris). The polls had an immediate impact, with the Conservatives dropping over the weekend. The Harper Conservatives argued that the Kurdi incident reinforced the need for strong security, continuing action against ISIS, and a cautious approach to refugees. While the Conservatives pledged to take in more refugees, they emphasised that the safety of Canadians preceded the needs of refugees (Triadafilopoulos, Marwah, and White). However, Justin Trudeau's Liberals argued that the Harper response undermined traditional Canadian values of generosity and a welcoming attitude towards migrants and refugees. Polls revealed that Canadians were split; the Conservatives were essentially reduced to appealing to their base (Fitz-Morris), while the Liberals and NDP were fighting for those Canadians who wanted Canada to do more for refugees (MacDonald).

The Kurdi incident thus led to an extended debate not only over Canada's response to the 2015 European refugee crisis but also over Canada's self-image. The photograph of Kurdi had an impact because there was a singular victim as opposed to collective numbers (our senses get dulled), and we had a Canadian connection to the family – they were trying to get to Canada, making this international incident relevant in Canada (Fleming). Moreover, Canadians can be keenly aware of global attention and are sensitive to criticism, so global media attention not only painted Canada in a light contrary to its perceived global image, it again shone the spotlight on how Harper had been trying to recast that image. This shifted the ballot box question from “who could lead Canada in uncertain and insecure economic and political times?” to “who best embodies Canadian values?” As pollster Frank Graves

(2015) stated, “this event and its effects was probably the point that demarcated the shift from an important election about the economy to an historic election about Canadian values.”

Moreover, this was important, for it altered the stakes when the major party leaders participated in a debate on foreign policy later in September. The Conservatives hoped the debate would show off Harper’s strengths. Instead, it confirmed the Trudeau turnaround. Trudeau had already managed to appeal to progressives, in turn hurting the NDP, by offering a more interventionist, deficit-laden economic platform, according to pollster Greg Lyle. This was in stark contrast to the NDP’s very conservative, balanced budget approach (Vongdouangchanh). At the debate, Trudeau argued that the Harper agenda did not reflect traditional Canadian values of helping refugees and acting constructively in the world. Harper tried to attack Trudeau by claiming that Trudeau wanted terrorists to keep their citizenship; however, Trudeau’s response about the inherent nature of Canadian citizenship, that a Canadian was a Canadian was a Canadian, struck a chord with Canadians, especially in light of the Kurdi incident. Ever more voters had become interested in how Canadians were acting in the world and how the country and their government lived up to their values in light of a major humanitarian crisis.

This continued Trudeau’s attempt to show that the Liberal Party could be strong on security issues while defending liberty. Central to this tack was an emphasis on inclusion, rather than the exclusionary vision of Mr. Harper: that Canada is a country of diversity and inclusion, and that the positives of Canadian diversity came out of acknowledging and learning from darker moments in history, such as the head tax, or “none is too many” immigration that tried to keep Jews out of Canada, as he outlined in a March 2015 speech at McGill University. Thus, Trudeau was able to defend Canadian citizenship while arguing that the Conservative attack on the right of women to wear the headscarf during citizenship ceremonies was fear mongering and dog-whistle politics.

The Liberal surge led to more dramatic campaigning from the Conservatives. The Harper government extended concerns about the wearing of the niqab by Muslim women in public citizenship ceremonies to the federal workplace. Whereas the Conservatives framed this as a positive outlook about an inclusive, open Canadian identity that rejected misogyny, the Liberals argued that Harper was stoking division by not so subtly targeting Muslims. Trudeau again used the patriotic defence of wearing the niqab – “A Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian” – not only as a defence of multiculturalism but as an articulation of a radically different view of the Canadian identity, and one that was widely becoming more embraced by Canadians who were turned off by the tone of the Conservative campaign.

In this sense, a debate about migrant spirit entered the campaign, as voters called for actions that reflected their values. Whereas the Liberals and NDP

spoke of the Charter of Rights and a pro-refugee and immigration vision of Canada rooted in multiculturalism, the Conservatives lost focus, moving away from debates on the economy and security (which they believed were Harper strengths) to the culture wars. This culminated in a disastrous policy announcement on a snitch line for reporting barbaric cultural practices, encouraging Canadians to report on their neighbours while ignoring that there existed a Criminal Code which forbade some of the practices they were concerned about. Collectively, the Conservatives could no longer claim to be a party embracing migrant spirit.

That Trudeau went from third to first tells us about the nature of domestic brand politics, in which the emotional connection of values between voters and leaders matters (Nimijean, *Domestic*). Trudeau's optimism at a time of crisis versus the fearful and often condescending tone of Harper was key. Branding involves emotion, and brand politics is about building emotional connections with voters; the election showed how this plays out. The Trudeau victory combined a desire for more progressive government with a tone on refugees that many supported, turning the election into a debate on values (Graves). Graves argues that "Harper may have had the high ground on the specific public opinion around the niqab and citizenship ceremonies, but he was emphatically in the inferior position when the debate widened to a vision contest about which values would define Canada in the future."

In effect, the campaign undid much of the work the Harper Conservatives did to alter historic perceptions of intolerance by embracing migrant spirit. Marland notes that

the Conservative Party was tone deaf to public sympathy for the plight of Syrian refugees, and the party's gambit to provoke controversy about women wearing niqabs bordered on racism. These issues congealed to reignite the politically incorrect image of its legacy parties, Reform and Canadian Alliance. An image of intolerance caused a brand rethink among the many Canadians who demand greater compassion (121).

## **Conclusion**

The Conservative strategy in the 2015 federal election shows that migrant spirit is far from universal in Canada. The political challenge the party faced – and faces going forward – is how to grow beyond its base – a base that is uncomfortable with the idea of migrant spirit – with more Canadians who believe in the ideal. The Conservatives employed the rhetoric of migrant spirit, but attempted to subsume it to other political goals favoured by its base. Mary Stuckey's concept of "celebratory othering" helps explain the bifurcated Conservative approach. Speaking of American politics, she writes: "In this



contemporary era, when overt exclusion is itself politically problematic, presidents often rely on rhetoric that ostensibly includes everyone while still maintaining hierarchies of belonging among citizens” (6). This rhetoric may seem inclusive, “but does so on terms that maintain existing stratifications and exclusions. It differs from real inclusion in its stress on inclusion not as accepting difference, but on disciplining it into the terms preferred by the dominant culture” (6). As Stuckey notes, an “us” requires a “them,” in effect defining some groups as outside the nation (9). In the Canadian case, a “them” had been clearly identified to voters by the Conservatives and they raised the question not only of whether or not they fit in, but on what terms they are allowed to try and fit in. Given this tone, estimates that the Liberals received the vote of 65% of Muslims, with the Conservatives only getting 2%, are not surprising (Grenier, *Liberals*).

For a majority of Canadians, this vision of Canada was not appealing. They preferred instead the inclusive vision of the Trudeau Liberals. Since winning power, migrant spirit has been central to Prime Minister Trudeau’s branding of Canada globally. In late November 2015 in London, he proclaimed that “Diversity is Canada’s strength,” linking an increasingly diverse Canadian population to migration, producing a Canada that is “open, accepting, progressive and prosperous” (Trudeau). Migrant spirit was reinforced when Trudeau made a surprise appearance at Toronto’s Pearson Airport in December 2015 to welcome the first plane load of Syrian refugees arriving in Canada, proclaiming “you are home ... welcome home.”

The Liberal rhetoric on migrant spirit has been buttressed by several important initiatives, including changing the name of the Immigration department from Citizenship and Immigration Canada to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, expanding the family reunification program, increasing immigration targets, restoring refugee health care benefits, and spearheading a global refugee plan. At the United Nations in September 2016, Trudeau stated: “We’re Canadian and we’re here to help,” noting that Canada welcomed 31,000 Syrian refugees “not as burdens, but as neighbours and friends” (cited in Kupfer).

Trudeau has received much praise for his positions and remains high in the polls a year after the election, in part because his government is not following the trend of many other countries with attitudes and initiatives that are tough on migration and refugees. One of the effects of the embrace of multiculturalism, for some, is that Canada has avoided the emergence of parties of the far-right based on xenophobia, as in some European countries, due to selective immigration, integration policies, and repression of dissent against these policies (Ambrose and Mudde, 2015). The defeat of the Conservatives in 2015 must be understood in this context.

However, it remains that 30% of Canadians were comfortable with the Harper vision, and aspects of his program, such as the banning of the niqab at citizenship ceremonies, were popular with a majority of Canadians. Thus, migrant spirit may dominate the Canadian identity but it is not universally shared. In this regard, the 2015 election revealed long standing tensions within the migrant spirit narrative. Canadians are divided on the welcoming of refugees. Polls in September 2016 revealed a desire of Canadians to do more for refugees, but they revealed partisan splits – Conservative supporters expressed a tougher attitude towards refugees and their claims, leading one polling analyst to suggest that parties are playing to their base in how they communicate positions (Grenier, *Canadians*). Immigration Minister John McCallum also claimed that most Canadians have been asking him to increase immigration levels, yet polling conducted by his department revealed that most Canadians did not even know what current levels were: 59% said the levels were right, while 25% said Canada took in too many immigrants, and only 8% said the levels were too low (Curry). A poll of Ontarians showed half thought Canada took in too many immigrants, a phenomenon linked to Islamophobia (Keung).

There is another crack in the migrant spirit narrative. Kamal Al-Solayee argues that the Canadian media have focused on “feel good” stories; Canadians “had hijacked the refugees’ narrative, sidelining what they were escaping in favour of where they had landed” (13). In other words, he argues that the refugee story of 2015 became about Canadians and a “return to the kinder, gentler nation that had gone missing” in the Harper years (13).

There therefore remains a need to critically analyze what Canada is and is not doing. While Harper was criticized for exaggerating Canada’s refugee performance and Trudeau was congratulated for setting immediate targets of 25,000 refugees for two years, on a per capita basis Canada has done little compared to some other countries. According to global affairs journalist Matthew Fisher (December 27, 2015), Canada would have had to dramatically increase the number of refugees accepted in 2015 to match Sweden (Canada would need to accept 670,000 refugees), Germany (450,000 refugees) or Finland (210,000 refugees). Not surprisingly, as historian Stephanie Bangarth has reported: “Fast forward to today and a United Nations report reveals that Canada is at the bottom of a top-15 list of industrialized receiving countries, with 13,500 claims reported in 2014. [...] We weren’t always so unwelcoming, but nor have we offered an open door since the end of World War II” (Bangarth). Even with such comparatively modest levels of refugees, there was a remarkable lack of support for privately-sponsored refugees (Hepburn). Moreover, Canadians did think about how well-prepared we were to support integration (Ditchburn). As she notes, not enough attention was

paid to resources and plans to ensure that the integration of refugees into Canadian society went smoothly.

Because of the ongoing importance of immigration for Canada, migrant spirit will continue to inform the national identity, though as we have seen it is subject to political dynamics. Despite challenges, to date the Trudeau government has successfully communicated the importance of an inclusive migrant spirit as part of the Canadian national identity. However, it will need to ensure that its actions support this vision if Canada is to assume leadership on the refugee file (Milner). This is important, given that there is a significant minority of Canadians who are not comfortable with migrant spirit. Conservative leadership candidate Kelley Leitch is tapping into this sentiment with a proposal that immigrants and refugees be screened for “anti-Canadian values”. This reminds us that while Canadians do have a generosity of spirit when it comes to diversity issues, Canadians also express considerable concern over them. A poll conducted shortly after this idea was launched found that 67% of Canadians would support such an initiative, though there is a partisan difference – 87% of C Conservatives supported the idea, while a still substantial 57% of Liberals and 59% of NDP supported also supported the idea (Campion-Smith). Finally, a CBC – Angus Reid survey of Canadian values revealed that Canadians prefer that immigration enhance Canadian economic interests and not focus on the well-being of immigrants, and that minorities should “do more to fit in” rather than having a multiculturalism policy that encourages new Canadians to keep their language and culture (Reid).

Thus, while Trudeau promotes Brand Canada as a model for a world, defending globalism and inclusive diversity even though much of the world is experiencing waves of hyper nationalism, xenophobia, and a backlash against refugees and migration, we must remember that Canada is not immune from such forces. Harper’s ploy in 2015 was not simply reflective of a desperate strategy of a losing campaign; he not only embodied but in fact blew out into the open the longstanding discomfort many Canadians have with the idea of migrant spirit. This is a longer-term tension in the Canadian political culture that rose to the surface under the glare of an election campaign.

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## **A NOTE ON THE POST-WAR STORY OF THE WAWEL TAPESTRIES IN CANADA**

### **Abstract**

This year it has been 56 years since the Wawel tapestries were returned to Poland after their wartime odyssey. The wartime and the post-war journey of the Polish Treasures had many dimensions. In an atmosphere of personal conflicts and rivalry among various political forces, the Polish tapestries and other treasures awaited the final decisions about their future, being repeatedly transferred from one place to another. Complications were numerous and related to four areas: to the relationship between the Polish Government in exile in London and the government in Warsaw; between the Canadian government and the Polish political centres – both the anti-communist authorities in London and those subordinate to the Soviets in Warsaw; between Ottawa and Quebec. Shortly after the war there was also an ideological-political conflict developed between the main caregivers of the Treasures, who had accompanied them since the beginning of this odyssey, and were their custodians in the Wawel Castle. These were the four main areas of the dispute regarding the future of Polish treasures found in Canada. This prolonged disagreement was the reason why the treasures returned to Krakow no sooner than 15 years after the war.

**Keywords:** Wawel tapestries, war, evacuation, Quebec, Duplessis

### **Résumé**

En 2016, cinquante-six ans se sont écoulés depuis le retour des tapisseries du Wawel en Pologne après leur odyssee guerrière. Durant la guerre et après elle, le voyage des trésors polonais était compliqué et multidimensionnel. Dans l'ambiance des conflits personnels et de la rivalité entre différentes forces politiques, les tapisseries et le reste des trésors polonais ont attendu (déplacés toujours dans de nouveaux endroits) les décisions définitives concernant leur avenir. Des complications étaient multiples, elles se déroulaient sur quatre plans majeurs. Il s'agissait des relations suivantes : entre le gouvernement polonais en exil à Londres et le gouvernement communiste à

Varsovie ; entre le gouvernement canadien et des centres politiques polonais à Londres et à Varsovie ; entre Ottawa et le Québec. Juste après la guerre, un conflit idéologique et politique est apparu entre les plus importants gardiens des tapisseries qui les avaient accompagnées dès le début, dès l'évacuation du Wawel. Ces quatre niveaux les plus importants de la discussion et des manœuvres politiques autour des tapisseries ont été la cause du fait que les trésors ne sont revenus à Cracovie qu'après une quinzaine d'années depuis la fin de la guerre, c'est-à-dire en 1961.

**Mots-clés :** les tapisseries, la guerre, l'évacuation, le Québec, Duplessis

### **The Post-War Story of the Wawel Tapestries in Canada**

This year it has been 56 years since the tapestries were returned to Poland after their wartime odyssey. Tracing the history of the tapestries, and especially their fate during and after the War World II, one can say that even James Bond would not be ashamed of such an adventure. The way the tapestries found their way to Canada and their 20-year stay in this country was full of sudden twists, surprising disappearances, mysterious spies, treachery among those entrusted with the care of the Treasures, as well as actions taken by the RCMP. As in Bond's movies, all ends well and the plot revolves around a dozen large boxes, which are invaluable for Polish culture, rather than around, for example, even the most precious Faberge egg as in the film titled *Octopussy*, starring Roger Moore (1983). The case of the Polish National Treasure was not, of course, the problem of a priority or of international importance, especially in the complex and dangerous decades of the 1940s and the 1950s. However, the disputes and conflicts over the attempts to get those treasures back to Poland had an international dimension. For some time, they were also an object of disagreements between Ottawa and Quebec.

The wartime and the post-war odyssey of the Polish Treasures had many dimensions. In an atmosphere of personal conflicts and rivalry among various political forces, the Polish tapestries and other treasures awaited the final decisions about their future, being repeatedly transferred from one place to another. Complications were numerous and related to four areas. The first area was the relationship between the Polish government in exile in London and the government in Warsaw. London did everything to prevent the Treasures from returning to Warsaw. It was feared that they might, like in the time of partitions of Poland, be relocated to Moscow. It was also believed that the immediate return of the Treasure would legitimize the communist government in the post-war Poland, to which there was no agreement. After the war, the Polish government in London was not, in general, recognized internationally.

Within a few years after the war, it was the government in Warsaw that gained international recognition. The so-called London government had the support of only a few countries: Cuba – until the fall of Batista; Spain – up to 1968, and in the 1950s it was also recognized by Ireland and Lebanon. The Vatican recognized the Polish government in exile until 1972 – longer than any other country. Internationally, thus, the voice of the London government meant little. The communist government in Warsaw was doing, of course, all it could for the treasures, including tapestries, to be returned. It was important for political reasons and perhaps mostly for propaganda. Besides, diplomatic efforts with Canada and those on the international forum, and propaganda operations were used as well. The communist newspapers wrote about the imperialists who stole the Polish Treasures, rallies were held in support for the government's efforts to bring the tapestries back. Also, conferences were organized and publications issued. All these lasted for fifteen years, but to no avail.

The second area was the relationship between the Canadian government and the Polish political centres – both the anti-communist authorities in London and those subordinated by the Soviets in Warsaw. Here one can also include the relationships between Warsaw and Ottawa via international organizations: the United Nations and UNESCO. In 1946, Ottawa officially recognized the government in Warsaw. After that, according to international law, Canada was obliged to return the Polish property. Canada, however, was in no hurry to do so (Castel 3-5). Warsaw petitioned three Canadian Prime Ministers, William Lyon Mackenzie King, Louis St. Laurent and John Diefenbaker, to return the tapestries. And it was the Diefenbaker government that started talks with Warsaw. This was possible only after Maurice Duplessis, Premier of Quebec, died in 1959 and the political power in Quebec was taken by the Liberal Party under Jean Lesage. One should also remember that at the end of the 1950s the situation in the communist Poland also slightly changed. In 1956, Wiesław Gomułka came to power and the first years of his rule gave hope for easing of political terror as well as the introduction of moderate reforms. It seems, however, that procrastinating over the return of Poland's tapestries was not the worst solution for Ottawa, as all the confusion that occurred around the Polish treasures could be blamed on the Quebec government of Maurice Duplessis. Warsaw tried to intervene, also internationally, to force Canada to hand over the tapestries. In the years 1947-1949, the Communist government intervened at the UN and UNESCO with no positive result.

The third area was the relationship between Ottawa and Quebec. From 1944 until 1959, Quebec was ruled by MD's Union Nationale, which remained closely linked to the Quebec's conservative Catholic Church. Both the Union Nationale and Quebec's church were strongly anti-communist. Duplessis condemned the recognition of the government in Warsaw by Ottawa. In

Quebec, as early as in the 1930s, he had fought against all manifestations of socialism or anarchy. After the war, along with the Quebec's Catholic Church, he acted as a major opponent of the communists and, among others, the defender of the Catholic Church in Poland, discriminated against by Polish government. At the same time, being the premier of Quebec, he emphasized the separation and independence of Quebec from Ottawa, which extended to, inter alia, matters relating to culture and religion – the areas where the Polish tapestries belonged to. Duplessis did everything to show Ottawa that in these areas he made independent decisions, which not necessarily needed to be consistent with the intentions of the federal government. The anti-communist Polish government in London showed support to the activities of Duplessis, who spoke openly that he would not give the tapestries into the hands of atheists (Kijewska-Trembecka 148-152; Hennel-Bernasikowa, *Dzieje* 138).

The last, fourth area concerned the fact that shortly after the war, an ideological-political conflict developed between the main caregivers of the treasures, who had accompanied them since the beginning of this odyssey, and were their custodians in the Wawel Castle – between Józef Krzywda-Polkowski, who remained loyal to the government in London, and Stanisław Świerz-Zaleski, who began cooperating with the Warsaw government's envoys who came to Canada. After several years Zaleski went back to Poland. These were the four main areas of the dispute regarding the future of Polish treasures found in Canada. This prolonged dispute was the reason why the treasures returned to Krakow no sooner than 15 years after the war.

A few words about the treasures themselves. The objects called the Royal, Wawel or Polish Treasures consisted of three groups of objects. The first group were crown jewels, including the most important one, the Szczerbiec – a coronation sword of the Polish kings; various royal souvenirs and precious monuments of the Polish language, such as: The Holy Cross Sermons, the Chronicle of Gallus Anonymus; Chopin's manuscripts. The second group was tapestries, called the Jagiellonian Tapestries. There are 132 of them, including the three most valuable collections, featuring the Bible scenes: "The Story of the First Parents", "The Story of Noah" and "The Story of the Tower of Babel". These tapestries, because of their huge size, generated the biggest problems both when they were transported to and while in Canada. The third group is the least valuable. It includes, among others, paintings, tapestries and so called horse tacks, that is harnesses and horse riding accessories. Since the best-known and the most recognizable part of these treasures were tapestries, their wartime story is often referred to as: the war history of tapestries (Hennel-Bernasikowa, *Dzieje* 135-136).

Regarding the unprecedented journey of these priceless Polish cultural-historical objects, it must be remembered that the tapestries already had quite a rich history of travel in Europe. They had been pledged, sold, illegally

exported. The Wawel tapestries, also called the Flemish arrases or verdures, are a great collection of fabrics from the workshops Flanders purchased by the Polish King Sigismund Augustus in the mid-sixteenth century. The collection was ordered to decorate specific rooms in the Wawel Castle, so the tapestries were woven and tailored for the pre-selected sites, like a particular wall or a specific door or window. King S. Augustus managed to collect 350 arrases in his lifetime. From this collection today in Poland we have 136 tapestries. One is located in Amsterdam, in the Rijksmuseum, it was purchased at an auction in the 1950s. The fate of the rest of the arrases is unknown (Hennel-Bernasikowa, *Arrasy* 38, 41). Sigismund Augustus decided that after the death of his sisters, who inherited a collection of tapestries, the arrases would become the property of the Crown of Poland.

The tapestries have always been among the most precious treasures in Polish history. They have repeatedly aroused great excitement and were often used for political purposes. In their long history, they have been to Stockholm, Gdansk, Malbork, and were also stored in the Spisz region. For over 120 years, from 1795 until 1924, they remained in Russia – in St. Petersburg, Gatchina, and Moscow. They were moved from Poland by Catherine the Great. The last tapestry came back from Moscow no sooner than in 1977. In total, Russia returned 136 tapestries. It is not known what happened to the remaining 20 arrases, including the so-called Raphael tapestries (Hennel-Bernasikowa, *Arrasy* 36-38). The tapestries always returned to the Wawel Castle.

The most recent, though perhaps not the most tragic but very dramatic journey of these Polish Treasures took place during and after the World War II. On 2 September 1939, loaded in 20 trunks and 6 boxes made of metal, the Wawel Treasures set off at night on another, this time 20-year long, journey. When Poland was being bombed, the treasures were evacuated from Krakow on a ship. The tapestries travelled down the Vistula river to Sandomierz, then to Kazimierz Dolny. Subsequently, they were transported overland, in the direction of Jaroslaw, by ordinary carts and then also by bus and on a truck. On the night of 17/18 September, they crossed the Romanian border on the Cheremosh River. They reached Bucharest after another 10 days. In Bucharest, the most valuable objects – the *Szczerbiec* and the tapestries – were left in the British Embassy, and the rest in the Polish one. The treasures remained in Romania for two months. A safe place for them was dramatically sought. Even the Vatican was asked to agree to keep and store the treasures, but unfortunately it refused claiming that they were not religious art collections (Hennel-Bernasikowa, *Dzieje* 125).

During the evacuation, there were a lot of logistic problems as well as those related to the substantial threat from German bombs. In November, the treasures travelled from the port of Constanta to France, having a two-week

stopover in Malta, and at the beginning of January 1940 they reached Marseilles. Then by rail they went to Aubusson, where they were seen by conservation officers of the French National Museum. In June, due to the increasing danger of the German offensive into France, the Treasures again had to be evacuated. They were taken on a truck to Bordeaux, from where they travelled on a Polish ship called *Chrobry* to England, to the port of Falmouth. From there the Treasures were transported by train to London, where they spent two weeks in one of the rooms of the Polish Embassy. Very quickly it was decided that the evacuation was to be continued, as the Polish ship *Batory* was anchored in the port of Greenock. In early July 1940, the Treasures went to Canada on its board. The gold reserves evacuated from the British banks travelled with them. *Batory* sailed across the Atlantic escorted by two British warships.

A complicated Canadian stage of the journey of the Treasures began in Halifax, where *Batory* arrived on July 12, 1940. The tapestries were to remain in Canada for the next 20 years. The treasures reached Canada thanks to the work, often very dangerous, of many people, but two people, who had worked before the war at the Wawel Castle, were with them all the time: St. Świerz-Zalewski and Józef Krzywda-Polkowski. Zaleski took care of the tapestries until 1946 and Polkowski till the end of their stay in Canada, until 1960. In Canada, escorted by the RCMP, the tapestries reached Ottawa. The Canadian government agreed to take care of the Treasures till the end of the war but at the same time made it clear that it did not take any responsibility for them. The "Canadian" history of the tapestries was dramatic but not dangerous for the treasures. I have already discussed the political perturbations around the Treasures. Now let me say a few words about the places which the tapestries visited while being in Canada. At the beginning, the trunks with treasures were deposited in the National Archives on the so-called Experimental Farm in Ottawa, in a new building, in very good housing conditions. They stayed there until 1945.

The situation got more complicated after the end of the war in Europe. At the conference in Yalta Poland was subordinated to the Soviet Union. Polkowski began to fear that the Canadian government would give the treasures to the new government in Warsaw. So the next manoeuvres with treasures began. All the treasures were divided into several parts – small items, including the *Szczerbiec*, were deposited in the Bank of Montreal (Hennel-Bernasikowa, *Dzieje* 135-136). Meanwhile, a way was found to move the tapestries from Ottawa. Waclaw Babiński, Minister Plenipotentiary of the government in London, sent to Canada in 1944, made use of a hoax, which allowed the moving of the tapestries to another place. It was announced that the Treasures belonged to the Church of Cracow, so the legal guardianship over them was exercised by the Archbishop of Cracow (Balawyder, 42,59-60;

Hennel-Bernasikowa, *Dzieje* 135). By doing so, it became possible for the Catholic Church in Quebec to agree to accept and keep the Treasures. In Quebec, Union Nationale was in power and its leader Maurice Duplessis, a great enemy of communism and a politician closely connected with the church, emphasized his independence from Ottawa. Therefore, the game around the Polish treasures suited his political agenda (Kijewska-Trembecka 148-152).

In May 1945, the tapestries reached the Redemptories' monastery of Saint-Anne-de-Beaupre, near Quebec City. Less valuable objects were deposited in the Monastery of the Precious Blood in Ottawa. As Hennel-Bernasikowa wrote, this was done "to cover their track" (Hennel-Bernasikowa, *Dzieje* 135). These were a few paintings and tapestries, carpets and banners of Sobieski's troops from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Treasures were thus protected till July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1946, when Ottawa recognized the communist government in Warsaw as legal.

In the spring of 1946, the representation of the communist government in Warsaw, chaired by Alfred Fiderkiewicz, arrived in Ottawa. Their main task was to find and bring treasures back to Poland. In mid-May Fiderkiewicz met with Krzywda-Polkowski and Świerz-Zaleski, hoping to find out where the Wawel treasures were stored. Both refused to convey such information. However, Polkowski began to suspect that Zaleski had started to cooperate with the regime in Warsaw and decided to find another hiding place for the treasures. Under the cover of the night, in secret, the big trunks with treasures went to the Augustines' monastery – Hotel Dieu in Quebec City. Fiderkiewicz's mission on the tapestries failed and he returned to Poland in 1947 (Swoger 73-74; Krzywda-Polkowski 115-117; Hennel-Bernasikowa *Dzieje* 136). In the meantime, due to the increasing demands of the government in Warsaw, which accused Ottawa of stealing the Treasures, the RCMP undertook an investigation to clarify what was really happening with the tapestries. At the same time the government in Ottawa noted that in 1940 Canada had agreed to store the Polish treasures, but with no liability for the deposit (Balawyder 49).

In an increasingly tense atmosphere of mutual suspicion and accusations, the next decision was made to transfer the tapestries to a new location. At the beginning of 1948, in consultation with the premier of Quebec MD, again under the cover of the night and again in secret, trunks with the tapestries were moved to the Provincial Museum of Quebec. There they remained till the end of their stay in Canada. For the first few years after the war the communist government in Warsaw did not speak about the problems that piled up regarding the attempts to recover the treasures. Even in Cracow, there was no awareness of the real situation (Hennel-Bernasikowa, *Dzieje* 138-139). Only at the turn of the 1940s and the 1950s, when the tapestries were under the tutelage of the government did Québec and Ottawa openly declare that there

was no possibility to influence the decisions of M. Duplessis, the government in Warsaw initiated the protests and propaganda actions accusing Canada of looting the Polish Treasures. It all started from a pamphlet by Stanislaw Lorentz, then the Director of the National Museum in Warsaw, titled *Le Canada refuse de rendre à la Pologne ses richesses culturelles*, published in 1949. It was at the same time the appeal to the most important Polish scientific and cultural institutions to put pressure on the government in Ottawa to return the Polish treasures. In support, more than fifty major Polish communities, including universities, scientific societies, research and cultural centres, the Polish branch of Pen-Club, signed under Lorentz's text, which was consistent with the demands of the government (Hennel-Bernasikowa, *Dzieje* 139).

Throughout the decade of the 1950s, communist newspapers from time to time returned to the issue of the treasures and wound the propaganda actions. More comprehensive studies were also published, such as S. Nahlik's *Grabież Dziel Sztuki. Rodowód Zbrodni Międzynarodowej* [*Looting the Art: The Roots of International Crime*], Wrocław: Ossolineum 1958, or a book by Jerzy Rosa, *Tajemnice Arrasowego Skarbu* [*The Secrets of the Tapestry Treasure*], Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza. Polish academics sent petitions to Canadian universities with appeals for help in recovering the treasures (Swoger 132-134).

The fate of the Treasures, the tapestries in particular, mobilized some Polish immigrant groups in the US and Canada to act. A special role was played by Alexander Janta Połczyński. He wrote about the treasures in the American press, delivered readings, and tried to raise money for of a monograph on the tapestries in Canada. In 1953, in consultation with the Krzywda-Polkowski and after obtaining the consent of M. Duplessis, Janta engaged the renowned Canadian photographer Yousuf Karsh, who for four days and nights, in secret in a closed museum, photographed the tapestries. The pictures were to be found in the monograph, which, however, has never been published, but most of all, the photographs documented the condition of the tapestries. In mid-December 1953, *Macleans* published an article "Polish National Treasures", illustrated with Karsha's photographs (Hennel-Bernasikowa, *Dzieje* 139-142).

The Treasures were returned to Poland in several stages. The earliest part, the one deposited in Ottawa in the Monastery of the Precious Blood, returned in 1948 and was brought by Zaleski, who was returning to Poland. Apart from them, the inventory of Wawel collections of 1932 was also brought to Poland (Hennel-Bernasikowa, *Dzieje* 135). The part kept in the safe in the Bank of Montreal, which included the Szczerbiec, was in 1959 handed over by Polkowski to the delegation, which arrived in Canada from Poland and was headed by Prof. Jerzy Szablowski, the Director of the Wawel Castle. Szablowski was accompanied, among others, by Prof. Zbigniew Drzewiecki, head of the Frederic Chopin Society, Witold Małcużyński, the famous Polish



pianist living after the war in Western Europe as well as by Prof. Marian Morelowski, pre-war custodian of the Wawel collections. The efforts of this group to recover treasures were repeatedly supported by the Polish Primate, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński (Balawyder 72-76). At the beginning of 1959, the Szczerbiec returned to Krakow. It is worth mentioning here that the government in Warsaw accepted the clause which stated that the treasures were returned to the Polish people and not to the government (Hennel-Bernasikowa, *Dzieje* 92-93; Castel 9-10). The remaining treasures and tapestries were returned to Poland two years later due to the interventions of many institutions, including universities, in Poland and in the world, together with the intervention of the Polish Primate Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński to Emile Leger, the bishop of Montreal and to Mauricio Roy, the bishop of Quebec. The return was also strongly supported by Witold Małcużyński. M. Duplessis's death and the changes on Quebec's political scene made the decision to give back the tapestries to Poland easier (Balawyder 79-85; Castel 19; Hennel-Bernasikowa, *Dzieje* 142-143). In January, 1961, the tapestries set off to Boston, from where on the Polish ship named *Krynica*, they went back to Poland, accompanied by Prof. Szablowski, Director of Collections at Wawel (*Jerzy Szablowski* 4-5). In February 1961, the Warsaw Symphony Orchestra during a concert in Ottawa, dedicated the second piano concerto in F minor / Piano Concerto No.2 op.21 / to Canadians in appreciation for taking care of the tapestries and for their safe return. This was the concert the manuscript of which was among other Chopin's manuscripts which had spent the previous twenty years in Canada (*Warszawska Orkiestra*). In Cracow, it is said that the King watches over his tapestries and that they always come back to the place where the king is buried – to the Wawel Castle.

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**OTHER APOCALYPSES – METAPHORS  
OF WAR AND IDENTITY, LINGUISTIC  
AND CULTURAL CONFLICTS**

**AUTRES APOCALYPSES –  
LES MÉTAPHORES  
DE LA GUERRE ET LES CONFLITS  
IDENTITAIRES,  
LINGUISTIQUES ET CULTURELS**



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## APOCALYPSES : ENTRE MARIE-CLAIRE BLAIS, ÉRIC DUPONT ET NICOLAS DICKNER

### Abstract

Unlike many European countries Quebec seems to lack a great national narrative of the fight against an external enemy. Can we find a reason for it? Or can we identify traumatizing events related to the war included in the collective imagination as a part of Quebec cultural memory? Elements of such a narrative influenced by the Catholic tradition and the community habitus of the Quebec society seem to be reflected in apocalyptic themes. In itself, Apocalypse does not denote only war, but involves a broader vision of Evil. In that way, a national commitment becomes a universal one. The analysis of Marie-Claire Blais (novel cycle *Soifs*), Nicolas Dickner (*Tarmac*) and Éric Dupont (*La fiancée américaine*) underlines the ethos as the concept which provides meaning of the story and History. In fact, this is the very point where collective imagination, apocalyptic themes and *enargeia* meet in order to both structure and justify writing.

**Keywords:** Quebec literature, Apocalypse, Marie-Claire Blais, Nicolas Dickner, Éric Dupont

### Résumé

Il semblerait qu'il n'y ait pas, au Québec, de grand récit national, dressé contre un ennemi historique extérieur, comme c'est le cas dans de nombreux *vieux pays*. Pourrait-on en trouver une justification, ou mieux pourrait-on identifier les éléments traumatisants liés à la guerre qui participent de l'imaginaire collectif et constituent une parcelle de la mémoire culturelle? Un des facteurs, hérité de la tradition catholique et de l'habitus communautaire de la société québécoise, se traduit par la thématique apocalyptique. Celle-ci n'est pas guerrière en soi. Car il ne s'agit pas seulement de la guerre, mais d'une vision élargie du Mal. De national, l'engagement se fait universel. Comme nous tenterons de le prouver en comparant Marie-Claire Blais (cycle *Soifs*), Nicolas Dickner (*Tarmac*) et Éric Dupont (*La fiancée*

*américaine*), nous avons plutôt affaire à la problématique de l'éthos qui donnerait un sens au récit/Récit et à l'histoire/Histoire. Car c'est là que l'imaginaire, la thématique, mais aussi l'*enargeia* structurante, qui conditionne et justifie l'écriture, se rejoignent.

**Mots-clés :** littérature québécoise, apocalypse, Marie-Claire Blais, Nicolas Dickner, Éric Dupont

Le numéro spécial de *Voix et Images* (no 110, hiver 2012) qui est consacré à la thématique de la guerre dans la littérature québécoise met en évidence certains traits liés à l'histoire. À la différence de l'Europe, théâtre des différentes guerres de cent, trente, quatre-vingts ans, terre aussi des deux grands conflits mondiaux du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle, le Canada et le pays du Québec semblent échapper à des grands bouleversements militaires. Les traumatismes nationaux et les fantasmes historiques prennent plutôt la tournure des conflits intérieurs – guerres civiles, révoltes, rébellions – et qui, dans l'imaginaire littéraire et collectif, sont très souvent résolus par les mécanismes de médiation.

Prenons à titre d'exemples quelques récits nationalistes marquants du 19<sup>e</sup> et du 20<sup>e</sup> siècles. *Le Jeune Latour* (1844) d'Antoine Gérin-Lajoie, qui aurait pu être conçu comme un grand conflit anglo-français, se réduit à la conflictualité médiatisée entre le fils et le père. Le roman *Une de perdue, deux de trouvées* (1849-1851 ; 1864-1865 ; 1874) de Pierre-Georges Prévost Boucher de Boucherville tend à modérer la conflictualité antibritannique de la Révolte des Patriotes, alors que *Les Anciens Canadiens* (1863) de Philippe-Joseph Aubert de Gaspé père atténue celle de la bataille des Plaines d'Abraham (cf. Cardinal). Une situation analogue se présente au moment de la Révolution tranquille et de la résurgence du néonationalisme québécois qui rethématisent dans le sens anti-anglais les récits de la Conquête, de la Révolte des Patriotes et de celle de Louis Riel. Mais là encore, la conflictualité armée est souvent modérée et médiatisée comme chez Jacques Ferron : dans *Les Grands Soleils* (1958), l'Anglais est présent sous la figure de la douce pupille du docteur Jean-Olivier Chénier, Elizabeth Smith, élevée par les Ursulines, et le souci de la médiation va jusqu'à la non-représentation sur scène du conflit majeur – la bataille de Saint-Eustache. L'ennemi anglais n'est qu'esquissé, la violence de la bataille est émuée par une narration « dispersée » et « indirecte »<sup>1</sup>. Au seuil du nouveau millénaire, *Les Plaines à l'envers* (1989) de François Barcelo

<sup>1</sup> Les premières indications – rêves prémonitoires d'Elizabeth Smith (Ferron 22, 72) – sont complétées par le récit du personnage de Mithridate (67, 92 sqq.). La dispersion de l'information permet d'éviter le climax dramatique, accentue l'effet lyrique, élégiaque, de l'émotion partagée par les personnages. De plus, la parole qui domine, ici, est celle de Mithridate, un « *robineux en redingote* » et « *roi du Pont* » (17) – figure ferronienne par excellence et narrateur intra/hétérodiégétique de la pièce.

travestit la conquête anglaise en badinage érotique et affuble la bataille même d'un renversement spectaculaire et ironique.

Bref, il semblerait qu'il n'y ait pas, au Québec, de grand récit national, dressé contre un ennemi historique extérieur, comme c'est le cas dans de nombreux *vieux pays*. Et là où la conflictualité s'impose, elle est intérieure et comme telle médiatisée, négociée. Si la guerre est présente, c'est une guerre éloignée, la guerre des autres. Pourtant on se sent concerné :

Ces guerres ont beau avoir lieu sur d'autres continents, elles fascinent l'écrivain canadien-français malgré la distance ou, plus exactement, elles le fascinent par la distance même qui le sépare de l'événement (Biron, Parenteau 9).

À défaut d'un grand récit guerrier national, ce sont les guerres des autres qui attirent. Pourrait-on en trouver une justification, ou mieux pourrait-on identifier les éléments traumatisants liés à la guerre qui participent de l'imaginaire collectif et constituent une parcelle de la mémoire culturelle (cf. Assmann, Halbwegs) ? À mon avis, un des facteurs, hérité de la tradition catholique et de l'habitus communautaire de la société québécoise se traduit par la thématique apocalyptique. Cette thématique, bien sûr, n'est pas guerrière en soi. Aussi la guerre n'occupe-t-elle qu'une partie de la sensibilité apocalyptique et de l'eschatologie qui traversent la littérature québécoise en dépit de la laïcisation de la Révolution tranquille. Depuis un certain temps, la critique s'en aperçoit en réinterprétant certains auteurs majeurs du siècle passé : ainsi repère-t-on la défense du rôle historique du clergé chez Jacques Ferron<sup>2</sup>, la présence du message chrétien chez Hubert Aquin (cf. Leralu), André Brochu ou Robert Lalonde (cf. Ouellet), l'exploitation du drame religieux chez Michel Tremblay dont on signale par ailleurs la sensibilité apocalyptique (cf. Arino) ; on peut penser aussi aux ouvrages récents de Jocelyne Saucier dont le roman *Il pleuvait des oiseaux* (2011) a pour fond historique l'incendie apocalyptique de la forêt ontarienne de 1916 et où l'amour, la dignité devant la mort et le rachat de la souffrance par l'art s'opposent au mal cosmique.

Car il ne s'agit pas seulement de la guerre, mais d'une vision élargie du Mal qu'il importe de combattre. De national, l'engagement se fait universel, généralisé, à l'échelle mondiale. S'agirait-il d'une sorte d'angélisme communautaire ? Comme nous tenterons de le prouver en comparant une auteure classique de la génération de la Révolution tranquille, Marie-Claire Blais (\*1939), et les romanciers de la génération émergente, Nicolas Dickner (\*1972) et Éric Dupont (\*1970), nous avons plutôt affaire à la problématique

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<sup>2</sup> Voir notamment les romans de Jacques Ferron *Le ciel de Québec* (1969) et *Le Saint-Élias* (1972).

de l'éthos qui donnerait un sens au récit/Récit et à l'histoire/Histoire. Car c'est là que l'imaginaire, la thématique, mais aussi l'*enargeia* structurante, qui conditionne et justifie l'écriture, se rejoignent. Pour illustrer la problématique, nous prendrons en considération le cycle romanesque *Soifs* (1995-2010) de Marie-Claire Blais et les romans *Tarmac* (2009) de Nicolas Dickner et *La fiancée américaine* (2012) d'Éric Dupont.

Le point commun des trois auteurs est sinon la rupture du moins l'abandon du concept de littérature nationale, québécoise. Dans *Soifs* le Québec n'est pas mentionné, l'identitarisme québécois est ignoré, la thématique est volontairement exterritorialisée, mondialisée. Le lieu central de l'univers blaisien se résume à quelques rues et le port d'une ville du sud des États-Unis, en Floride sans doute, à la limite de l'Occident et du Tiers Monde où les intellectuels et les riches résidents sont confrontés aux réfugiés haïtiens, cubains et autres. Toutefois d'importantes séquences du récit se situent à New York, Venise, Saraïévo, au Rwanda, en Chine, au Guatemala, etc. L'histoire et la mémoire sont chargées d'horreurs (la Shoah) et de persécutions (Haïti), on mentionne le trafic de drogues (Mexique), la guerre (Afghanistan, Rwanda), mais aussi la vie dans un ashram (Sri Lanka) ou dans un couvent (Espagne). Les romans du cycle que nous avons pu analyser embrassent, successivement, deux décennies de la marche du monde : *Soifs* se situe vers 1990, *Dans la foudre et la lumière* vers 1998, *Augustino* fait allusion aux attaques du 11 septembre de 2001, *Naissance de Rebecca* à l'ouragan Katrina de 2005, *Mai au bal des prédateurs* clôt la narration vers 2009.

Si *La fiancée américaine* d'Éric Dupont est largement installé dans la tradition québécoise en brochant le tableau d'une grande famille loupériquoise, le texte n'en accorde pas moins une large part à la Nouvelle Angleterre, à New York, mais surtout à Berlin, à la Prusse Orientale et au grand récit apocalyptique de la Seconde Guerre mondiale : trains de déportés, bombardements, exodes, Dachau, Auschwitz, Nagasaki. Cantonné comme celui de Dupont à Rivière-du-Loup, le récit de *Tarmac* de Nicolas Dickner traverse lui aussi les frontières pour un périple qui de New York va à Seattle et à Tokyo, alors que la perspective temporelle, aiguillée vers l'attente d'une apocalypse, n'en creuse pas moins le passé : déportation des Acadiens, Seconde Guerre mondiale, Hiroshima et Nagasaki, *carpet bombing* de Tokyo, mais aussi autodestruction du monde inscrite dans sa logique économique.

### **Famille, communauté, agapè**

Cet élargissement spatial et temporel centrifuge est contrebalancé par le thème centripète, celui de la famille et de la communauté qu'il s'agit de rassembler ou de créer ou recréer à travers le temps et l'espace. Rappelons à ce sujet la



thématique de la crise de la famille traditionnelle qui apparaît chez Dupont (*Bestiaire*, 2008) et chez Dickner (*Nikolski*, 2005) et dont les romans respectifs, sur lesquels nous nous appuyons ici, semblent être le prolongement. Dans *Tarmac*, la conjuration du passé et la recherche d'un moment fondateur de l'avenir sont le fil de l'histoire d'amour de Michel Bauermann et Hope Randall (Hope, justement). Les deux personnages principaux sont présentés comme héritiers d'une lignée de famille dont l'une, celle de Bauermann, est porteuse de prospérité, alors que celle de Hope est marquée d'une tare héréditaire que celle-ci tente de conjurer – le syndrome apocalyptique, à la fois ironisé et assumé avec sérieux, et qui remonte à 1755, au Grand Dérangement des Acadiens.

Dans *La fiancée américaine* il s'agit de reconstituer les racines et les ramifications familiales qui remontent au 18<sup>e</sup> siècle et à la Prusse Orientale, de relier les Lamontagne loupérivois aux Berg de Kœnigsberg et de Berlin, de réconcilier l'héritage allemand avec le québécois et l'américain. Le grand-père Louis Lamontagne sème ses enfants naturels à travers le monde en transmettant à la grande famille ses yeux sarcelle et la tache de naissance en forme de clé de fa. Ce signe mystérieux, renforcé par celui des croix d'or échangées et la marque des prénoms récurrents de Madeleine/Magda et Louis/Ludwig, est couronné par les flèches miraculeuses qui ayant traversé le temps et l'espace retombent pour sanctifier la triade formée de Madeleine-la-Mère, Sœur Marie-de-l'Eucharistie et sa jumelle sœur Sainte-Jeanne-d'Arc.

Mais c'est Marie-Claire Blais qui crée la communauté romanesque la plus étendue en multipliant des liens de parenté, d'amitié, de compagnonnage, d'apprentissage et de transmission générationnelle. Le noyau du cycle de *Soifs* est formé par la famille de Mère (Esther), sa fille Mélanie, son mari Daniel, leurs enfants Samuel, Augustino, Vincent, Mai, une famille élargie de parenté ascendante qui remonte aux familles juives de Pologne ou réfugiées aux États-Unis (Samuel, Frédéric, Joseph, Isaac), mais aussi collatérale (Renata Nymans et son mari Claude). En contrepoint de cette famille d'intellectuels et d'artistes se posent la famille du pasteur noir Jeremy et de Mama, la communauté des immigrés haïtiens et cubains, celles des travestis, des transsexuels, des prostitué(e)s. Les lieux de rassemblement sont les bars, les maisons avec leurs jardins, ainsi que les églises comme celle du pasteur Jeremy ou celle de la révérende Ézéchielle qui dirige l'Église de l'Espérance.

Les relations familiales et sociales sont doublées par la filiation artistique et intellectuelle. Il s'agit le plus souvent de la famille de Mère et de leurs amis : Daniel est écrivain, comme le sera Augustino, Samuel devient danseur et chorégraphe, Caroline est photographe, Tchouan est paysagiste, son mari Olivier est politicien et journaliste, leur fils Jermaine sera cinéaste, Nora est peintre, Franz musicien, Adrien, Suzanne, Jean-Mathieu, Charles sont poètes, critiques et essayistes, Jacques est professeur de littérature, Cyril acteur, Isaac architecte, Ari sculpteur, Arnie Graal danseur. Les autres communautés ont

aussi leurs musiciens (oncle Cornélius, Jason), leur chanteuse (Vénus), leur couturier (Yinn). L'art se transmet par apprentissage de génération en génération (Daniel – Augustino, Arnie Graal – Samuel, Cornélius – Vénus).

Les liens de parenté, la famille élargie et la communauté sont loin de représenter un simple fait biologique, social ou culturel. Ils ont une mission, soulignée par la présence du motif récurrent de l'*agapè* matérialisé par le repas en commun, cérémoniel ou parodié. C'est sur ce point que les trois romanciers divergent. Dans *Soifs* la fête ou la cérémonie communautaire entrent dans la composition des romans qui forment le cycle. Le premier tome *Soifs* comporte deux événements contrastants : les obsèques de Jacques, victime du sida, et la fête de la naissance de Vincent dans le jardin de la maison de Mélanie. Le roman *Dans la foudre et la lumière* culmine avec les funérailles de Jean-Mathieu et la dispersion de ses cendres à « l'Île qui n'appartient à personne », *Augustino* est centré sur la fête des quatre-vingts ans de Mère dans le jardin de Tchouan qui organise encore une autre fête, de Noël, dans *Naissance de Rebecca*, à laquelle font pendant les chants et repas organisés par la révérende Ézéchielle à l'Église de la Communauté et la fête communale dans le port. *Mai au bal des prédateurs* converge vers les funérailles du travesti Fatalité que ses amis du Saloon Porte du Baiser honorent par une parade dans la rue.

Ce traitement sérieux de l'*agapè* contraste avec l'approche ironisante de Dickner et de Dupont. *La fiancée américaine* invite en effet au repas partagé à l'échelle mondiale qu'offre la chaîne de restauration Mado, de Madeleine Lamontagne qui gère son entreprise d'une main ferme, matriarcale, en identifiant tous ses employé(e)s par leur nom et jusqu'aux moindres détails. Ce trait familial est encore souligné par les recettes qui sont à l'origine de sa réussite et qui lui viennent de sa grand-mère Madeleine-l'Américaine.

*Tarmac* déploie la récurrence de deux motifs qui évoquent, toujours sur le mode mi-ironique, mi-sérieux, à la fois l'imminence de la mort et le salut. D'une part c'est l'arche de Noé, représentée tantôt par la voiture que la mère de Hope charge de vivres et qu'elle lance sur la route pour échapper à l'apocalypse qu'elle croit imminente. Arrivée à Rivière-du-Loup, elle emménage dans une ancienne animalerie *Arche de Noéh* (Dickner 15 ; sic !), appellation que justifient les sacs de vivres accumulés en vue de la prochaine catastrophe. À Tokyo, enfin, Hope habite une autre arche : une maison historique de Kokura (181), reconstruite en l'état, au sommet de la seule maison épargnée par le tremblement de terre de 1923 (191). Or on sait que la ville de Kokura fut désignée comme la seconde cible au moment du lancement de la bombe atomique sur Hiroshima et comme la première cible au moment de Nagasaki, mais qu'elle fut sauvée miraculeusement par les pluies diluviennes qui obstruaient la visibilité requise pour le lancement. L'autre motif communautaire, plus proche du sens de la communion du repas, est celui

de la soupe japonaise en sachet *ramen* de la marque *Captain Mofuku* dont tous les emballages portent la date fatidique de l'apocalypse annoncée pour le 17 juillet 2001. Un repas donc qui rappelle aussi bien un *amen* répété qu'un vêtement de deuil en japonais (*mofuku*).

## Apocalypses

Ces communautés sont en fait une synecdoque de l'humanité aux prises avec le Mal sous ses différentes formes : guerres, génocides, viols et violences, terreur, crimes, persécutions, bref le Mal que l'humanité s'inflige à elle-même. Les évocations que nous trouvons chez Marie-Claire Blais sont saisissantes :

elle voyait [« la vierge aux sacs », une prophétesse] le supplice du feu dont brûlait déjà la terre, dans la flambée des bombes, [...] assise sur le trottoir, propre comme si elle eût été lavée par les pluies dans sa jupe plissée, elle attendait la condamnation des hommes autant que celle de Dieu, espérant que cette colère de Dieu saurait englotir avec elle la ville de New York [...]. [...] les bras en croix, dans la surdité de la foule, ces instables esprits avaient été déroutés par de récents oracles [...], obsédés par ce paroxysme de la fin du monde [...]. [...] l'eau diluvienne débordant de tous les évier, de toutes les cuvettes murales, se propageant partout, finirait par épurer la terre et recréerait la vie [...] d'autres ressentaient dans leur chair l'éruption d'une planète [...] croyaient voir exploser sous leurs yeux la grappe de leurs entrailles et de leurs organes gangrenés [...] (Blais, *Dans la foudre...* 64-65).

La danse macabre, un des thèmes récurrents de *Soifs*, représente le côté inversé de l'*agapè* :

ils étaient [soldats] comme ces Allégories du peintre Beckmann, leurs têtes, leurs corps sadiquement tenaillés, ou avais-je le pouvoir de lire dans leurs yeux caves ce qu'ils ramenaient d'eux-mêmes de la ligne des tranchées, eux qui se sentaient coupés, décapités, bien qu'ils fussent encore imprimés là comme sur le canevas du peintre, vivant, respirant encore, telle une marche de fantômes (Blais, *Augustino* 60).

Pourtant, c'est à travers la danse macabre que peut s'opérer l'amorce du salut :

Je veux savoir, c'est tout, peut-être ai-je envie que chacun constate que ces moments de la fin d'une vie n'appartiennent qu'à lui seul, pourtant c'est dans une danse collective que nous mourons, que voit-on, que ressent-on pour la dernière fois ? Est-ce cynique de vouloir l'accomplissement d'une danse entre tous ces êtres séparés qu'une même crainte unit ? Je veux une levée d'âmes triomphantes, déterminées, nous formons alors un cercle, une arche, il n'y a pas que cette union du sexe et de la mort, son image euphorique, il y a aussi que la mort est vitale,

qu'elle est pour tous un recommencement, nous pouvons tous convertir notre mortalité en une matinée de survie, et cela varie pour chacun, pour chacune (Blais, *Dans la foudre...* 102).

L'arche du salut est encore là. Car tout se tient : la vie et la mort, le passé et le présent. Le mal du passé doit être racheté par l'avenir, car le mal, au même titre que le bien, sont historiques, liés aux activités humaines :

je crois comme vous au retour des âmes, comment expliquer autrement la confusion du monde, ai-je écrit cela, le retour des âmes ? dit Daniel, mais oui, souvenez-vous, dit Rodrigo, vous avez écrit, ces âmes rejetées par les crimes de leurs parents qui habitaient des corps innocents immolés trop tôt reviennent sur la terre, qu'ils ravagent de leurs frayeurs et parfois de leurs crimes [...] ces âmes en écueils rôdaient autour de nous dans le gluant brouillard des sévices ancestraux (Blais, *Dans la foudre...* 43).

C'est là que s'inscrit le rôle de l'art, car il peut être le dépositaire des vérités et aussi la source de l'*harmonia mundi*, susceptible de transfigurer le mal, racheter l'homme et sa nature mortelle.

ceux qui marchaient dans la nuit sous les façades noires des immeubles de Zenica, ces enfants, leurs mères, ils étaient eux aussi de cette grande marche de la mort vers la vie, pendant que Franz dirigeait en Bosnie ces œuvres de Berlioz, la *Grande Messe des morts*, *L'enfance du Christ*, quand pour le lancinant malaise de chacun, pensait Renata, la guerre était photographiée et que sonnait le cor du massacre funèbre (Blais, *Dans la foudre...* 125).

Tel est le renversement axiologique de l'eschatologie blaisienne où l'homme peut racheter le Mal universel.

Nicolas Dickner et Éric Dupont sont loin de partager le pathos éthique du message et de l'engagement que Marie-Claire Blais assigne à l'art à travers les différentes figures d'intellectuels. Avec eux, nous sommes loin de l'élitisme intellectuel, mais aussi plus près d'une écriture ludique et qui affiche son jeu.

Dans *La fiancée américaine*, la présence du mal historique est très marquée, comme l'est aussi son complément l'art, sous un double aspect, ambigu, du crime et du rachat. Quatre thèmes dominants s'entrecroisent dans le roman. Les deux récurrences musicales majeures sont celle de *Tosca* de Puccini et son contrepoint *Que ma joie demeure* de Bach, les occurrences picturales sont le *Chemin de croix* du peintre-prêtre Lecavalier et *La Mise au Tombeau de la Vierge* de Masolino Panicale. Une opposition scinde les deux domaines. D'une part *Tosca* et le *Chemin de croix* mettent en relief le mal que les passions peuvent produire : tel le fratricide de Madeleine Lamontagne, jalouse de son frère Marc, le vol d'argent qui constitue le capital initial de son

entreprise, les vols de bijoux de Magda Berg à Berlin et sa passion ambiguë pour Ludwig Bleibtreu, les manigances de l'impresario Bruno-Karl d'Ambrosio, la mort par anorexie de Stella Thanatopulos, qui se sacrifie, manipulée par sa mère, au culte de l'art et de la réussite. Par contre *Que ma joie demeure* et *La Mise au Tombeau de la Vierge* soulignent la promesse d'un rachat qui sert de contrepoids lénifiant au traumatisme de guerre de Louis Lamontagne et au souvenir obsédant de la libération du camp de concentration de Dachau. Louis sauve David Rosen, un rescapé qu'il installe au centre de réfugiés de Feldafing (Dupont 139-140, 193-197, passim) : c'est là qu'il trouve le tableau et entend la musique qui l'accompagneront tout au long de sa vie en lui rappelant le dépassement du Mal.

Une autre série, mineure, de thèmes musicaux – le *Ständchen* de Schubert, le *Freischütz* de Carl-Maria von Weber et *La Flûte enchantée* de Mozart – marquent le *locus amœnus* et le merveilleux qui interviennent telle une halte idyllique au cœur des catastrophes et sont liés au *climax* et à l'*anticlimax* du récit apocalyptique.

Or faut-il insister sur la duplicité du mot apocalypse chez Dupont ? En effet il ne figure explicitement que là où l'impression du jeu ironique s'impose. Que penser de cette fin du monde que les bonnes sœurs annoncent à leurs élèves pour mieux les moraliser :

Mesdemoiselles. J'ai pour vous une terrible nouvelle. Le Saint-Siège nous annonce une fin du monde imminente. La date est connue : cela aura lieu le jeudi 10 novembre en avant-midi. D'immenses blocs de glace enflammés tomberont du ciel pour châtier l'humanité. Seuls les purs de cœur et ceux qui craignent Dieu seront sauvés (163).

Même si l'on sait qu'il s'agit d'une manipulation pédagogique de sœur Marie-de-l'Eucharistie, la description gradue la tension :

Le ciel ennuyé de quelques nuages blancs à neuf heures connut un ennuagement graduel et, aux yeux des filles, prévisible au fur et à mesure que la matinée avançait. À dix heures quarante, une masse de nuages gris et sombres couvrait le ciel du Bas-Saint-Laurent, plongeant tous et toutes dans une lumière blafarde et blanchâtre, luminosité de novembre des pays du Nord. Par-delà le fleuve immense, les montagnes de Charlevoix disparurent derrière un brouillard apocalyptique. [...] On attendit les onze heures comme Zachée attendit Jésus : avec de petits tremblements dans les membres inférieurs (168).

Pourtant l'apocalypse n'est pas un jeu. Car le passage cité précède l'histoire de la jumelle de Marie-de-l'Eucharistie, victime de la bombe atomique de Nagasaki (173 sqq.) et il introduit un autre passage qui relate la montée du nazisme en Allemagne dans le récit de Magda Berg :

Le 1<sup>er</sup> septembre 1939, un immense cul se leva sur l'horizon allemand. Tel un astre, il monta dans notre ciel [...], il se mit à merder, Kapriel. Chez vous, il neige. Eh bien ici, il merde. Des flocons bruns, collants et puants, se mirent à tomber paresseusement sur le sol, sur les gens, sur les voitures, sur le stade olympique... D'abord sur l'Allemagne, puis sur le reste de l'Europe. Au début, on arrivait à se débarrasser de la merde qui tombait, mais bientôt, on en eut aux genoux, puis à la hauteur de hanche. Il merda pendant six ans. Aujourd'hui encore, nous pelletons la merde qui commença à tomber ce jour-là (490).

Sans être désignée *verbis expressis*, la vraie apocalypse de *La fiancée américaine*, s'étale sur des pages entières du récit : ravages de la guerre, génocides, euthanasies, marches de la mort, bombardements, torpillage du paquebot vacancier Gustloff. C'est ici que les motifs musicaux mineurs, idylliques, s'introduisent, notamment dans les trois « Cahiers » de Magdalena Berg.

Ainsi, le jardin accueillant des Gœbbels se transforme en lieu d'orgies et de viols (479 sqq.) ; la ville de Königsberg, « terre promise » (560) et paradisiaque avec son ZOO, sa maison de vacances sur la côte et le spectacle du *Freischütz* (572 sqq.), s'écroule et s'enflamme sous les bombes (576 : « À la fin août 1944, le ciel nous tomba sur la tête. Littéralement. ») ; l'exode d'hiver, sur la mer gelée, entre Königsberg et Gotenhafen/Gdansk (582 sqq.), est entrecoupé d'une halte idyllique dans un château au son de *La Flûte enchantée* (584) ; enfin le torpillage du Gustloff et le naufrage dans l'eau glacée des dix mille réfugiés (623 sqq.) sont précédés d'un air du *Freischütz* (594). Le contrepoint ironique est la description de la nuit apocalyptique précédant le Jour de l'An 2000 à Montréal : « De ces groupes avinés s'élevaient des éclats de voix, des cris et des chants de fin du monde qui cassaient l'air froid » (655). Décidément, les apocalypses dupontiennes se réalisent sur un fond de musique ou de chant. À la différence de *Soifs*, l'art, ici, ne sauve pas, ne rachète pas, même s'il se situe du côté du Bien. Il n'en est pas l'instrument, mais un simple rappel du Bien résigné devant le Mal, un écho ou des passions humaines ou du désir du Premier Jardin et de la Terre Promise, à jamais perdus.

La composition ludique de la narration dupontienne qui se traduit entre autres par le jeu des thèmes récurrents s'amplifie en inspiration perequienne de Nicolas Dickner dans *Tarmac* (Dickner, *Le romancier portatif*, « Tentative d'épuisement d'un écrivain parisien » 85-88). Tout en étant une réflexion sur l'Histoire, l'apocalypse dicknerienne est avant tout une construction du Récit et son implication à la fois narrative et existentielle. Hope Randall, excellente mathématicienne, écœurée par les folles attentes apocalyptiques de sa mère, veut prouver à son ami Michel qu'Albert Einstein s'était trompé en déclarant que « "Dieu ne joue pas aux dés" : c'est à l'aide des dés, par jeu, qu'elle

décide de “trouver la date de la fin du monde au hasard” » (Dickner, *Tarmac* 66). Elle tombe sur une date qu’elle trouve d’abord ridicule – le 17 juillet 2001 (une apocalypse pendant les vacances !?) – mais qui lui est confirmée par toutes sortes d’indices convergents. On a déjà mentionné le thème déclencheur – la date de péremption, imprimée sur tous les emballages de la soupe japonaise ramen de la marque *Captain Mofuku*. S’y ajoute la publicité, dans une bande dessinée de *Spider-Man*, pour le livre de Charles Smith qui annonce la fin du monde pour la même date (142). Le doute noétique mène à l’obsession sans qu’on sache si Hope serait obsédée par l’idée de l’apocalypse ou bien par la volonté d’élucider l’énigme du hasard qui cesse d’en être un pour se révéler comme une nécessité incontournable ?

La charpente apocalyptique du texte s’érige par la convergence de deux réseaux thématiques. Le premier est celui de l’histoire récente et de l’actualité. Le roman s’ouvre sur la première réplique de Hope : « La nuit dernière j’ai rêvé de la bombe d’Hiroshima » (12), événement qui fonde l’arrière-plan du Mal historique du récit, avec de nombreuses récurrences. Mais c’est surtout l’actualité politique et les événements des années 1990 qui étoffent le récit : chute du mur de Berlin et commerce des fragments de *Grenzmauer*, guerre du Koweït et bombardements de Bagdad, attentats de Beyrouth et guerre civile du Liban, perestroïka et démembrement de l’Union soviétique, mais aussi épidémies, typhons, catastrophes naturelles, grippe aviaire qualifiée d’« Hécatombe » (88). À la télévision, les fouilles de Pompéi rappellent l’imminence des dangers naturels (43), le film *Tora! Tora! Tora!* celle des guerres et autres catastrophes civilisationnelles (68-71). Le sous-sol du bungalow familial, aménagé confortablement à l’américaine et où Michel et Hope passent leurs meilleurs moments, lovés devant la télévision, est en fait un « Bunker », « produit d’une civilisation obsédée par son avenir » (46).

C’est à ce filon thématique que s’accroche l’imaginaire de la fin du monde : les zombies qu’on croit entrevoir dans un supermarché désert (90) ou qu’on aime regarder à la télévision (116-118), la ville dépeuplée (143), la chanson de Bob Marley *Come we go burn down Babylon* (180), l’exclamation de Hope devant sa déchiqueteuse : « Je suis Shiva, le destructeur des mondes ! » (111), le carton prophétique du mendiant newyorkais : « The End Is Near » (146). Le thème de la confusion babélique, annoncée par les langues sacrées des rêves de la mère de Hope et signalée par la chanson de Bob Marley, s’intensifie au moment du séjour de Hope à Tokyo. Les pages *phrase book* de son guide *Rough Planet*, livrent des informations aussi humoristiques qu’inquiétantes :

« Où peut-on trouver un bunker dans les parages ? » (*Sumimasen, kono atari ni chika sherutaa wa ari masu ka ?*) ou « Puis-je emprunter votre masque à gaz / votre habit antiradiation ? » (*Gasumasuku / houshanou bougyo suutsu o kari temi ii desu ka ?*) (169-170).

C'est dans cette Babel<sup>3</sup> que Hope veut retracer Hayo Kamajii, alias Charles Smith, auteur du livre sur la fin du monde, promu par la publicité de la bande dessinée *Spider-Man*. La scène de la rencontre finale semble suggérer que Charles Smith–Kamajii, découvert par Hope parmi les bandes dessinées stockées aux toilettes d'un appartement loupérisois la nuit d'un party (142), ne serait après tout qu'un avatar du *Spider-Man* (221) et un développement du film inspiré par les mangas japonaises *Sen to Chihiro no kamikakushi* (*Le voyage de Chihiro*, 2001) de Hayao Miyazaki.

La dérision ludique du narrateur cache cependant une réflexion existentielle, générationnelle, formulée par l'autre personnage principal du roman, Michel Bauermann (249 sqq. ; chapitre « Une journée banale ») : sa génération avait « grandi dans un monde obsédé par l'apocalypse », celle de la guerre froide. Cette menace disparue, l'humanité se jette sur d'autres menaces : « les pluies acides, la couche d'ozone, les substances cancérogènes, le cholestérol, la désertification, la fluoration de l'eau courante et les astéroïdes – n'importe quoi, pourvu que ce soit imminent » (la liste occupe un chapitre entier : 234-236). En sécurité relative, on aime s'inventer des scénarios catastrophiques. L'apocalypse serait-elle nécessaire après tout ?

### Conclusion

Pourquoi les récits de guerre, pourquoi les apocalypses ? La vraie raison ne serait-elle pas celle du besoin des grands récits ? Sans doute s'agit-il moins du récit même que de l'axiologie qui le sous-tend et de la tension signifiante entre le récit et la réalité vécue, tension qui donne sens et justification aux deux composantes.

L'éthos axiologique, on l'aura noté, tient compte de deux aspects. D'une part, c'est le partage entre le Bien et le Mal, entre la Vie et la Mort. D'autre part, ce sont les prises de position et les relations entre l'individu et la collectivité qui permettent d'authentifier le héros, celui qui assume et incarne l'effort dans la voie du salut. Qu'il soit terrestre et séculier ou bien céleste et sanctifiant, ce dernier est marqué par la transcendance qui justifie l'action et offre une prise à la fois sur la réalité et sur la parole. Faute des grands combats et faute des grands ennemis extérieurs et même intérieurs, l'imaginaire québécois semble s'être orienté vers les conflits et combats en dehors de son contexte immédiat en les intégrant à sa mémoire culturelle marquée par

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<sup>3</sup> Pour les jeux des chronotopes et les jeux de langue, analogues à la veine perequienne et au ludisme ducharmien, voir Petr Vurm, « Deux chronotopes qui diffèrent à une lettre près : *La Disparition* et *Les revenentes* de Georges Perec » et Petr Vurm, « Les villes bricolées de Réjean Ducharme ».



l'héritage religieux et communautaire. C'est ce que nous avons voulu montrer en insistant sur la présence de la famille, de la communauté et de l'*agapè* dans les récits apocalyptiques. Toujours est-il qu'il ne faut pas réduire l'apocalypse aux récits de guerre. L'exemple des romans récents de Jocelyne Saucier *Héritiers de la mine* (1999) et *Il pleuvait des oiseaux* (2011) démontrent l'usage élargi de cette modalité narrative dans la littérature québécoise. Aussi les trois auteurs présentés ne sont-ils que des spécimens d'un phénomène plus large que chacun d'entre eux aborde par un autre biais.

La narration de Marie-Claire Blais qui réalise au point extrême la technique du monologue intérieur en effaçant et estompant les cloisons qui séparent les psycho-récits des multiples personnages de son cycle crée une sorte de discours communautaire où la fusion des voix signifie aussi la fusion des lieux et de la chronologie. Or, dans ce discours, une tendance se dessine : celle du dépassement de soi par un engagement artistique, politique, social, humanitaire ou tout simplement humain et qui confère aux personnages un éthos héroïque, actionnel. L'apocalypse c'est l'Histoire du grand Mal, toujours présent ou imminent, auquel les hommes se mesurent et qu'ils combattent, forts d'une axiologie collectiviste, communautaire, celle du salut commun.

L'approche d'Éric Dupont est polyphonique. *La fiancée américaine* confronte plusieurs voix : celle du narrateur qui suit principalement les destinées de Louis Lamontagne et de sa fille Madeleine, celle de Gabriel et de Michel, jumeaux qui s'échangent des lettres, celle enfin de Magdalena Berg dont les « Cahiers » prennent en charge l'histoire de l'Allemagne nazie. Les récits sont loin d'être univoques et concordants, on se heurte aux mensonges, aux silences, aux zones d'ombres. Comme le dit Magda Berg : « Dans un monde où tout est mensonge, plus personne ne ment » (Dupont 611). Toujours est-il que la complexité même aboutit à un discours communautaire où les temps et les lieux finissent par trouver une unité, et les événements leur place dans la logique des causes et des effets où les liens de la communauté et de la famille se rétablissent. Le Mal historique est compris, assumé, avec une ouverture vers l'avenir. L'apocalypse a eu lieu et on aura toujours la force d'en affronter de nouvelles.

En indiquant son jeu scriptural, à la manière de la contrainte oulipienne, *Tarmac* de Nicolas Dickner met davantage l'accent sur la problématique du récit, à la fois individuel et collectif. En effet, comment donner sens à sa vie ? Comment fabriquer son histoire pour qu'elle soit ou fasse partie d'une Histoire ? L'aventure individuelle, pour en être une et pour faire sens, nécessite un Récit qui la dépasse et qui l'insère dans une axiologie. Certes, l'Apocalypse en est un, y compris au sens de « révélation », celle, chimique, de l'agent révélateur qui éprouve les valeurs. Au fond, le message dicknérien, dans *Tarmac*, est inquiétant, sur un fond de désespoir. Nicolas Dickner se situe au-delà de l'apocalypse, dans la conscience d'un vide qu'il s'agit de remplir

par le Récit qu'on imagine. Pour vivre une grande h/Histoire, il faut l'inventer, la créer, la raconter. Ce n'est pas un hasard si le personnage de Michel a deux passions complémentaires : l'archéologie et la science-fiction, le récit du passé et celui d'un futur possible. En ce sens l'apocalypse est aussi bien une négation qu'une confirmation de la composante communautaire de la thématique et une négation/confirmation d'une des caractéristiques de la littérature québécoise.

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**LES FRÈRES ENNEMIS :  
UNE GUERRE CIVILE À L'ÉCHELLE FAMILIALE.  
*L'ŒIL DE MARQUISE* DE MONIQUE LARUE**

**Abstract**

In her 2009 novel, *L'Œil de Marquise*, Monique LaRue depicts the conflict between the proponents of Quebec's independence and the defenders of Quebec's multicultural character as hatred between the Cardinal brothers. On the one hand, their antagonism veils an opposition between "the surveyor" and "the navigator", conceptualized as such by LaRue in one of her essays. On the other hand, behind the conflict there looms the father's fondness for the elder son, which intensifies the brothers' enmity, and creates associations with the story of Cain and Abel.

**Keywords:** Monique LaRue, surveyor, navigator, Cain and Abel, nationalism in Quebec

**Résumé**

Dans son dernier roman, *L'Œil de Marquise*, Monique LaRue montre le conflit entre les intransigeants de l'indépendance québécoise et ceux qui tiennent compte du caractère multiculturel du Québec actuel comme une inimitié qui oppose deux frères Cardinal. Derrière ce conflit politique se profile d'une part l'opposition conceptualisée par LaRue dans un essai comme celle entre « l'arpenteur » et « le navigateur » et d'autre part la préférence du père pour l'aîné des frères qui attise leur animosité comparée à celle entre Caïn et Abel.

**Mots-clés :** Monique LaRue, arpenteur, navigateur, Caïn et Abel, nationalisme québécois

Née en 1948, philosophe, enseignante, romancière, nouvelliste et essayiste, Monique LaRue appartient à la génération charnière qui a vécu la transformation de la société québécoise depuis les dernières années de la Grande Noirceur, à travers la Révolution tranquille, les deux référendums, les accommodements raisonnables et les changements démographiques qui ont fait de Montréal une métropole multi-ethnique.

*L'Œil de Marquise*, le sixième roman de LaRue, publié en septembre 2009, au moment où la Belle Province célébrait le 250<sup>e</sup> anniversaire de la bataille des plaines d'Abraham, constitue, dans l'œuvre de l'écrivain, un moment de récapitulation d'une expérience personnelle, générationnelle et nationale, qui couvre un demi-siècle décisif pour la formation de la conscience montréalaise moderne des années 1950 jusqu'en 2008.

Au commencement du long récit assumé par leur sœur Marquise (née en 1948), il y a, dans *L'Œil de Marquise*, deux personnages-type qu'oppose tout sauf le fait qu'ils soient frères : le docteur Louis Cardinal, né en 1947, grand et bien bâti, indépendantiste, extraverti, sanguin, fumeur et buveur de vin, et son frère, Doris, né en 1957, artiste floral, hybrideur-métisseur de paysages, petit et sec, introverti, buveur de thé et non-fumeur qui a perdu la foi dans la cause nationale. En faisant abstraction de l'évolution que subiront, au cours du roman, les deux frères, on pourrait risquer l'hypothèse qu'au début au moins ils incarnent, à un niveau de lecture, les figures d'arpenteur et de navigateur conceptualisés par LaRue dans son essai célèbre de 1996. À l'époque, ces deux types d'attitude résumaient, pour LaRue, celle des Québécois de souche envers les immigrés et, plus précisément, celle des écrivains d'origine canadienne-française envers ceux qu'on a baptisés, à peu près à la même époque, les écrivains migrants : « [d]eux personnages se partagent notre âme [...]. L'un est arpenteur et l'autre est navigateur » (LaRue, *De fil...* 57). L'arpenteur, c'est celui qui se croit le possesseur du terrain qu'il a colonisé le premier, le navigateur, c'est celui qui croit que la terre est à tous, qui – au nom de la liberté – conteste les frontières établies par les autres avant son arrivée et veut se tailler une place sous le soleil nonobstant les vieux partages. D'ailleurs, le père de Louis et de Doris exerce le métier d'arpenteur. Le fait qu'il est le type même d'un traditionaliste est un signe qui semble confirmer la synonymie contextuelle des termes « arpenteur », « conservateur » et « nationaliste ». Signe indubitable de l'appartenance de Maurice Cardinal à l'élite nationaliste, ses deux premiers enfants ont été baptisés par « le chanoine L. G. » (LaRue, *L'Œil...* 15)<sup>1</sup>. Le père Cardinal incarne les traits essentiels de la génération de la Grande Noirceur. Pour lui, l'enfance, l'enfant, l'imagination et la psychologie sont « des idées modernes » (LaRue, *L'Œil...*

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<sup>1</sup> Le sigle renvoie évidemment à Lionel Groulx, prêtre catholique, auteur de plusieurs ouvrages historiques qui marqueront la pensée nationaliste canadienne-française.

23). Le monde lui apparaît simple et compréhensible : parmi ses propres enfants, il y en a un (Louis) qui a bon cœur et un autre (Doris) qui est irrévocablement classé « sournois ». Marquise « n' » est « qu' » une fille et comme telle ne compte pas vraiment.

Louis qui partage le point de vue de son père, s'identifie avec les positions nationalistes que résume bien la phrase de Jacques Godbout au moment de la discussion sur les accommodements raisonnables :

[...] poser la question de l'être « québécois », c'est poser celle de l'immigration. Si, comme l'affirment les slogans multiculturels, « nous sommes tous des immigrés », cela ne nous place pas tous sur le même palier. Nous ouvrons la porte à l'étranger, mais il doit reconnaître qu'il n'arrive pas dans une maison vide (Godbout 22).

Finalement, bien qu'il appartienne à la génération des *baby boomers* qui ont ouvert le Québec à la modernité, Louis ne diffère pas essentiellement de son père si l'on prend comme dénominateur commun leur attachement à l'histoire du pays réduit à celle de la « race » (cf. Groulx) d'arpenteurs franco-canadiens.

Après avoir longtemps subi des propos dépréciatifs de la part de son père et de son frère (selon eux, il est petit, sournois, menteur et ne fréquente pas les filles), Doris se révolte le lendemain du deuxième référendum. C'est pour le cadet le moment où il manifeste ouvertement sa volonté de se libérer du complexe d'infériorité et de l'opinion de menteur invétéré dont l'a toujours accablé son père, puisqu'à la perte de foi de Doris dans la cause indépendantiste l'auteur assigne une raison psychologique : le manque d'amour paternel dont l'effet a d'abord été le sentiment d'incompréhension et le manque de confiance réciproque entre le père et ce dernier-né, sans qu'on sache si le caractère fantasque du cadet est la cause ou le résultat de leur incompréhension mutuelle. L'émancipation affective de Doris, qui se manifeste par un choix politique, se fait donc en quelque sorte contre le père et contre le frère, mais aussi grâce à la fréquentation de deux amis que sont d'un côté Salomon, un Juif émancipé et mari de Marquise, et de l'autre côté Virginia, une « Anglaise » et femme de Louis. Cette dernière remplace pour Doris la mère, trop tôt décédée. Quant à Salomon qui a reçu une éducation laïque et internationaliste<sup>2</sup>, il montre à Doris la possibilité d'adopter une autre

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<sup>2</sup> « Salomon est [...] la première personne qui a dit devant Doris qu'il se pourrait que le nationalisme ne soit pas seulement un bienfait, que ses parents étaient 'internationalistes'. On avait toujours entendu dire que l'être humain aime naturellement sa patrie et sa langue. Les mots d'ordre de Salomon : antinationalisme, respect de la démocratie. Durant son enfance, il avait fréquenté un camp d'été au Vermont, où il avait

idéologie que le nationalisme. L'expérience d'aliénation que Doris a connue au sein de sa famille a pour effet une (hyper)sensibilité envers toute forme d'altérité. Dans la grande discussion sur le racisme qui traverse le roman, Doris finit par adopter une position extrême : il se demande si « on peut être raciste inconsciemment » (78), alors que son père et son frère aîné ne conçoivent pas que le terme de racisme puisse s'appliquer à eux-mêmes en particulier et aux Canadiens français en général, étant donné que ce peuple a été une sempiternelle victime de l'histoire. Dans cette vision subjective de son propre peuple, lequel, pourtant majoritaire et quasi-monopoliste du pouvoir au sein des institutions provinciales, apparaît comme le beau perdant de toujours, exploité par des puissances étrangères et trahi par des renégats, un amateur d'analogies reconnaîtra un avatar du nationalisme éternel, nourri de ressentiment et de sentiment d'injustice, perceptible à travers ses couleurs locales tant aux bords du Saint-Laurent que le long de la Vistule.

L'extrême empathie de Doris s'oppose à l'attitude de son frère aîné qui affiche une conception cartésienne du psychisme humain : « Pour Louis, la cause de l'indépendance, de la libération du peuple québécois [...] ces convictions claires et distinctes sont toujours restées claires et distinctes, elles n'ont jamais changé de nature » (25-26). Lorsque la sensibilité de Doris atteint son apogée (« Ce n'est pas à nous de dire qu'on n'est pas raciste. C'est aux autres de juger » (95)), Louis répond, toujours sur le même mode rationaliste : « Moi, quand je parle, je sais ce que je veux dire. Sinon, je me considérerais comme fou » (95), ou bien : « Le Petit devrait chercher la définition du racisme dans son dictionnaire » (99). Sans chercher à comprendre les motifs de son frère, Louis se place donc d'emblée du côté du discours rationnel qui, comme tous les discours du pouvoir, marginalise et tourne en ridicule la sensibilité des persécutés, en en niant l'existence même, ou bien en la considérant comme une sensiblerie, par définition féminine, donc négligeable. Bien que les séparatistes québécois n'aient pas pu réaliser leur rêve d'un Québec indépendant, depuis les années 1960 ils sont pourtant sortis de la situation subalterne des « Nègres blancs d'Amérique », pour reprendre le titre de l'essai de Pierre Vallières. Ce qu'on n'a pas remarqué, c'est que, de victimes, les Canadiens français sont devenus « maîtres chez eux », comme le postulait un des slogans de la Révolution tranquille, ce qui sonne comme un synonyme d'« arpenteur » de LaRue et l'est en effet, puisque, même si les tenants d'une idéologie nationaliste se disent ouverts aux autres, leur optique présuppose le sentiment que rend si bien le terme d'« arpenteur », c'est-à-dire le projet d'un État dans lequel le groupe ethnique « fondateur » constitue le

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appris à chanter que son pays, c'est la terre entière, des hymnes qu'il a toute sa vie fredonnés sous la douche » (LaRue, *L'Œil*... 45-46).

modèle culturel et linguistique auquel doivent se conformer les représentants des minorités.

C'est en pensant à cette idéologie d'« arpenteur » qu'il convient d'aborder la conférence de Salomon à l'UQAM, au lendemain du deuxième référendum<sup>3</sup>, dont le contenu se résume comme suit :

À Montréal, il n'y a pas de guerres dans les rues, pas d'attentats suicides, mais il y a des guerres de mots, et les guerres de mots sont tout de même moins dangereuses, plus civilisées que les guerres tout court. Nous devons donc nous réjouir de vivre dans une ville comme Montréal. Mais les guerres de mots sont de vraies guerres, pas des métaphores. Un mot est un acte, un acte de parole. Un *speech act* est quelque chose d'aussi concret que d'entrer dans les eaux territoriales d'un pays. Mais toujours préférable à l'agression physique. Toujours plus rationnel (LaRue, *L'Œil...* 74).

En effet, envisagés du point de vue d'un Rwanda, les différends entre les représentants des groupes ethniques au Québec paraissent anodins, mais en se basant uniquement sur leur caractère non sanglant on ne peut pas dire qu'ils n'existent pas et qu'ils ne sont pas importants pour les habitants du Québec. L'autre n'est peut-être pas ici un enfer (pour paraphraser Sartre), mais il est quand même un problème que pose toute altérité pour un groupe relativement homogène qui affirme son identité par opposition et par rapport aux autres.

Pour revenir à l'opposition entre Louis et Doris et au rôle que le père a joué dans leur vie, la thèse de Monique LaRue n'est peut-être pas très originale mais elle a la force d'une vérité première : peut-on vraiment se remettre du manque d'amour et de confiance qu'on a éprouvé enfant, même si, depuis, on a réussi dans la vie, comme c'est le cas de Doris ? L'histoire de celui-ci prouve que le refoulé revient parfois au galop aux moments les plus inattendus. À l'époque du deuxième référendum, Doris s'oppose à son frère aîné à qui il a signifié qu'il avait voté contre l'indépendance du Québec, sans doute suite à la découverte et à l'acceptation de l'altérité ethnique constitutive du Montréal contemporain, mais peut-être aussi par opposition à cette communauté d'esprits frileux qui unit son père et son frère aîné et dont il se sent exclu. L'origine de l'attitude politique de Doris serait donc ce sentiment de rejet qui l'a si douloureusement marqué dès son enfance, et ce rejet de la part de son père aurait probablement pour cause un lien subtil et certainement inconscient, mais indubitablement destructeur, entre l'acte de conception de ce fils tardif et le cuisant échec professionnel que Maurice Cardinal avait subi à

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<sup>3</sup> Sa date, les conditions atmosphériques et même, au fond, si l'on fait abstraction de détails, son message générique (au sens cornélien du mot), sensible et antiraciste font penser à la conférence de Monique LaRue au CRELIQ de l'Université de Montréal « L'arpenteur et le navigateur ».



l'époque, ainsi que le besoin irrépressible et confus de se venger que le père a ressenti désormais et dont le bouc émissaire toujours à portée de la main était ce fils né au mauvais moment.

Comme c'est fréquent dans le roman, les questions psychologiques et morales sont ici emblématisées par des références à l'art et à l'univers de culture en général. Telle est la fonction du thème des frères ennemis, symbolisé dans la partie médiane du livre par l'évocation de la fresque de l'abbaye Saint-Sauvin, dans le Poitou, illustrant le meurtre de Caïn. Les réflexions qui accompagnent cette évidente mise en abyme située à un endroit stratégique de l'œuvre témoignent de l'importance que le problème en question possède pour Monique LaRue.

L'amour serait donc un don gratuit, totalement immotivé, une grâce qu'on ne mérite pas. Comme se le dit Marquise en contemplant la fresque, de même que Dieu refusa son amour à Caïn, le père a refusé le sien à Doris, tout en étant pourtant capable d'assumer son rôle paternel envers Louis et Marquise. À la lumière de l'interprétation de cette fresque médiévale, le geste de Doris qui refuse d'être donneur de la moelle de son os iliaque au frère atteint d'un cancer du sang serait l'équivalent du geste meurtrier de Caïn, ce fils mal aimé qui se venge de son père céleste de lui avoir préféré Abel.

Heureusement, Louis sera sauvé grâce à une transfusion. Il est cependant significatif que lorsqu'il rencontre Doris à un aéroport, à la veille du traitement salvateur, il lui souffle à l'oreille : « Ils vont changer tout mon sang... Après ça, je ne serai plus ton frère » (133).

La clé pour comprendre le refus de Doris se trouve dans deux extraits de la conversation entre Salomon et Marquise au moment où ils admirent la fresque qui représente le meurtre de Caïn. « Caïn tue peut-être son frère parce qu'il ne peut pas tuer Dieu, a ajouté pensivement Salomon, ce jour-là, à Saint-Sauvin. Il ne conçoit pas qu'on puisse tuer Dieu, il tue son frère » (164-165). À quoi il convient cependant d'ajouter ce souvenir de Marquise qui en dit long sur une possible réciprocité de la haine fraternelle : « Quand Louis, après sa 'résurrection', pensait à Doris, il disait : "Le plus dur, c'est de comprendre à quel point il ne m'aime pas. – Mais toi, est-ce que tu l'aimes?" [lui demande Marquise] Il ne m'a jamais répondu à ma question » (163).

On peut supposer que le thème des frères ennemis qui occupe le devant de la scène exemplifie pour LaRue ce qu'elle appelle « [l]e syndrome du *fifty fifty* » (*L'Œil...* 30), c'est-à-dire d'un partage des sociétés occidentales en deux groupes aux opinions opposées, comme c'est le cas des partisans de l'avortement et ceux qui s'y opposent farouchement. Pratiquement chacune des sociétés occidentales semble irrévocablement divisée en deux tribus d'un nombre à peu près égal, incapables de se comprendre, ce que Monique LaRue qui a observé ce phénomène jusqu'en 2007, décrit en se servant des exemples dont elle disposait à l'époque où elle terminait la rédaction de son roman :

« Après ça [le deuxième référendum], il y a eu Al Gore et George W. Bush. López Obrador et Calderón. Le référendum sur l'Europe en France. Comme si le système de l'argumentation occidentale était dans une impasse. Comme si le néant nous montrait son visage » (30).

Ce qui apparaît à un niveau de lecture comme une guerre de discours et d'opinions politiques, se révèle être, à un niveau formateur et fondateur de la personnalité, un traumatisme d'enfance, dont on n'aperçoit pas d'abord clairement le lien avec l'attitude politique et idéologique, avec la vision du monde de la victime devenue adulte. Le propre du roman, d'un grand roman épique qu'est indubitablement *L'Œil de Marquise*, est de proposer un trait d'union entre ces différents niveaux (voire aspects) de la réalité, en créant un modèle qui n'est pas une simple reproduction de la réalité, mais une construction qui, par le moyen de la fiction, propose aux lecteurs une réflexion sur les causes possibles de la violence : l'incompréhension, la rancune et l'inimitié. Dans son dernier essai, *La Leçon de Jérusalem*, LaRue appelle cette construction « la moire » (218), un tissu chatoyant qui est pour elle la métaphore du caractère polysémique de l'œuvre littéraire où l'imagination de l'artiste se mêle aux fragments du réel.

Comme le dit Monique LaRue dans le même essai qui est en partie la défense et l'illustration de sa propre œuvre romanesque (surtout de *L'Œil de Marquise*) et du genre romanesque en général :

[...] on pourrait dire qu'un des multiples aspects de l'art romanesque consiste à étudier, fictivement, le visage privé de la vie publique. [...] Les idées ne vivent pas au ciel de la politique. Elles sont parfois ce que l'être humain a de plus cher, ce qui le fait vivre, ce qui compense ses manques, ses besoins, ce qui se substitue à l'objet réel de ses désirs (203).

Histoire privée du conflit qui opposa, en 1995, au Québec, les tenants de la cause indépendantiste et ceux qui ont voté « Non », le dernier roman de LaRue se propose d'un côté, en individualisant et en personnalisant cette guerre des discours, de remonter, dans ce cas précis, aux sources psychologiques du différend qui opposa deux frères ennemis, et de l'autre côté, il donne à cette opposition d'idées incarnées par des personnages qui ne représentent en fait qu'une vision subjective de ce conflit, une dimension mythique, universelle, en faisant recours aux sources archétypales de notre culture. En présentant, par les personnages des frères interposés, deux attitudes qu'on peut résumer grossièrement comme d'une part l'attachement au groupe au sein duquel on est né et de l'autre la compassion et l'ouverture envers l'altérité, elle propose une explication – que j'ose appeler féminine – pour comprendre ce conflit dont elle souligne le caractère masculin, et qui, en effet, se comprend en partie, par un conflit entre les mâles.

Comme le répète Marquise : « Aucun être humain n'est transparent. C'est pour cela que nous avons tant besoin de la confiance. La confiance est le pont qui enjambe le fossé entre les humains » (358).

Privé de confiance et d'amour, Doris refuse d'avoir un enfant, parce qu'il ne veut pas contribuer à donner la vie à quelqu'un qui pourrait souffrir comme lui. Cependant, *L'Œil de Marquise* s'ouvre par la dédicace : « Pour Louise-Aurore, née le 1<sup>er</sup> mai 2008 », intrusion extralittéraire de la romancière qui, placée à un endroit stratégique du paratexte, suggère l'opinion personnelle de LaRue. À l'avant-dernière page, on apprend que « Rosa Lou [la fille de Louis] est déjà enceinte du deuxième des quatre enfants qu'elle compte avoir » (375). C'est cette image optimiste que choisit Monique LaRue pour terminer son roman dont le sujet (un des sujets, un aspect du sujet principal) est la méfiance et la confiance, en réponse, peut-être, aux jérémiades d'un Godbout qui vaticine la fin du Québec en 2067.

Tant qu'il y aura la confiance et tant qu'il y aura l'amour et l'espoir, semble dire Monique LaRue, on décidera d'avoir des enfants. Tant qu'on voudra mettre au monde ces fruits de la confiance, donc de l'amour, et tant qu'on fera tout pour les protéger et pour les élever dans l'amour et dans la confiance, en essayant de ne pas répéter les erreurs des ancêtres qui ont été la source de l'incompréhension, de la méfiance et de la rancune de leur descendance, l'espoir est possible, même si la société de demain ne ressemblera pas à celle de jadis et de naguère. Le reste est mystère, comme c'était et comme ce sera toujours le cas de l'avenir.

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## LA TORTUE AUTOCHTONE OU L'ORDRE DE L'IMAGINAIRE. LA POÉSIE D'ÉLÉONORE SIOUI

### Abstract

Inspired by the figure of the turtle in the film *Mesnak* by Yves Sioui Durand, launched in 2011, this paper aims to discuss the First Nations concept in relation to the collective imagination of Québec (*l'imaginaire québécois*) and to consider Amerindian francophone literature in Québec, especially in the poetry of Éléonore Sioui. Being reluctant to the notion of collective imagination, here discussed from a psychoanalytic and pragmatic angle, I endeavour to propose an approach going beyond, I believe, the victimising or accusatory tone that dominates debates on First Nations of Quebec and, as a result, leads the former to a cul-de-sac.

**Keywords:** Éléonore Sioui, Yves Sioui Durand, *Mesnak*, First Nations, collective imagination, French-Canadian myths

### Résumé

En m'inspirant de la figure de la tortue dans *Mesnak*, film réalisé par Yves Sioui Durand en 2011, je me propose dans cet article d'aborder la question autochtone par rapport à l'imaginaire québécois et, du coup, de m'interroger sur la production littéraire des écrivains amérindiens francophones avec une attention particulière attachée à la poésie d'Éléonore Sioui. Réticent à la notion même d'imaginaire collectif, que j'interroge ici depuis une perspective psychanalytique et pragmatique, je propose un horizon permettant, à mon sens, de dépasser le ton accusateur ou victimisant qui domine de nombreuses discussions autour de la question amérindienne au Québec et, tout compte fait, les fait tomber à plat.

**Mots-clés :** Éléonore Sioui, Yves Sioui Durand, *Mesnak*, Amérindiens du Québec, imaginaire collectif, mythes français-canadiens

Ces quelques réflexions qui vont suivre me viennent du film d'Yves Sioui Durand qui s'intitule *Mesnak*. C'est le premier film francophone dans l'histoire du cinéma québécois, réalisé, en 2011 (cette date tardive ne saurait mentir – elle est là), par un autochtone vivant au Québec. Mesnak est le nom de la tortue qui représente dans le film la réalité autochtone. Lente, connue pour sa longévité et pour sa carapace massive dans laquelle elle peut rentrer si un danger la menace, la tortue est pourtant bafouée, agressée et ridiculisée. On la retrouve dans deux scènes dont la portée est symbolique et on ne peut plus prescriptive : d'abord, la tortue est maltraitée par les jeunes de la réserve qui, fumant leurs joints au son du hip-hop, marchent sur elle, la baignent dans leurs bières et la retourne sur son dos. Abandonnée par les adultes de la réserve qui ne voient en elle que l'état lamentable de la culture qu'ils n'ont pas réussi à transmettre à leurs enfants, la tortue est sauvée par une jeune Innue qui s'oppose à ses oppresseurs. Ensuite, on voit la tortue faillir à être écrasée par un camion chargé de bois fraîchement coupé, le camion représentant, en l'occurrence, la culture des blancs qui exploitent la nature sauvage et s'emparent de l'espace de ceux dont ils ne voient même pas l'existence. Le film d'Yves Sioui Durand me servira ici de toile de fond pour aborder la question autochtone par rapport à l'imaginaire québécois et, du coup, pour m'interroger sur la production littéraire des écrivains amérindiens francophones. Une attention particulière sera attachée à la poésie d'Éléonore Sioui.

Or, ces quelques réflexions vont également compléter mon petit projet de recherche, un *side project* à vrai dire, qui portait sur ce que j'appelle « discours identitaire québécois » tel qu'il se forme et se transforme après 1960 dans le champ social, politique, médiatique et universitaire et que j'avais essayé de décortiquer dans quelques articles pour voir ses susceptibilités ou taches aveugles<sup>1</sup>. Confrontée avec le récit national, la question amérindienne, après celle des femmes dans les années 1970 ou celle des immigrants dans les années 1980, est bel et bien une question épineuse. Chantal Maillé a raison de remarquer que, largement construit autour du mythe de l'autochtonie canadienne-française, le récit national québécois est incapable d'intégrer la présence des Amérindiens qui vivent au Québec (99). Si l'imaginaire québécois a fini par reconnaître la figure de l'immigrant dont la place est aujourd'hui incontestable tant sur le plan social que culturel, historique ou littéraire, l'histoire de la conquête, pour ce qui est de ses conséquences, est une histoire évacuée de la mémoire collective.

Je me propose, dans ce qui suit, d'aborder cette problématique à partir de ce que Pascal Blanchard et Isabelle Veyrat-Masson évoquent sous le nom de

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<sup>1</sup> Voir la bibliographie.

« guerres de mémoires » (2008) pour en faire « un objet d'étude » (2009). Qu'ils le fassent, de manière ô combien éclairante et utile, dans le contexte de l'histoire de France, cela ne change rien. En fait, « comprendre comment et pourquoi des guerres de mémoires existent, s'affirment, se transforment et contribuent *in fine* à 'l'identité nationale' » (Blanchard, Veyrat-Masson « Les guerres... ») est un travail de mémoire qui reste à faire à tout peuple qui s'affirme comme nation. Si l'histoire est un terrain de combat, ce n'est pas seulement parce qu'elle se déroule sur les théâtres de guerre ou champs de bataille, mais qu'elle est également traversée par des conflits mémoriaux et demandes de reconnaissance qui constituent l'espace politique par excellence. Or ces guerres mémorielles sont menées aujourd'hui, Blanchard et Veyrat-Masson l'ont bien montré, par l'intermédiaire de différents médias et supports (« Les guerres... ») qui viennent modifier la structure du mémoriel et augmenter l'ampleur du mémorisable dans ce qui peut *s'énoncer* comme récit national. Les minorités visibles, avec leurs imaginaires culturels qu'elles font apparaître (Bancel et al. 9-34), sont également les minorités audibles. Ça parle, ça crie, ça *nous* cherche pour se chercher dans le « nous » *en question*.

Et pourtant, les Amérindiens, qui sont un groupe minoritaire dans le sens sociologique le plus large, sont-ils visibles ? Dans quelle mesure peuvent-ils, en effet, appartenir à l'espace du visible<sup>2</sup> et le transformer dans l'espacement qui détermine leur *condition* et délimite leur espace vitale ? Comment trouver des mots *justes* sans crier à l'injustice ? Impossible de répondre à et de cette question sans être en différend, sans entretenir une polémique (mais faut-il rappeler que *polemikos* signifie la guerre ?), sans mettre en question « les fondements les plus rassurants et les plus consensuels, mais les fondements non naturels, construits et fragiles du 'vivre ensemble' national » (Derrida, *Avouer...* 29). Or si les guerres de mémoires viennent redéfinir le champ politique aujourd'hui, elles touchent peu à la mémoire collective qui supporte difficilement qu'on lui *rappelle* ses trous.

Dans le récit national québécois, la méconnaissance des Amérindiens, qui résulte de leur absence dans l'espace du visible, est totale. En 2007, la Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse au Québec a publié le document *Mythes et réalités sur les peuples autochtones* dont le rédacteur, Pierre Lepage, rappelle que

dans un premier sondage réalisé par le groupe Léger et Léger pour le compte du Journal de Montréal en décembre 1992, 66,5 % des répondants affirmaient que les autochtones du Québec avaient des droits supérieurs aux autres citoyens. En

<sup>2</sup> J'utilise la catégorie du visible dans le sens de Rancière (cf. *Le partage du sensible et La Méésentente*).

mars 1994, la firme SOM, qui sondait l'opinion des francophones et des anglophones du Québec pour le compte de La Presse et de Radio-Québec, révélait que 52 % des francophones interrogés se disaient d'avis que la qualité de vie dans les réserves est « bien meilleure » ou « un peu meilleure » que celle des Québécois vivant dans le reste du Québec. Plus étonnant encore, seulement 9 % des francophones répondants étaient d'avis que les conditions de vie étaient beaucoup moins bonnes dans les réserves (59).

Dans le documentaire de Richard Desjardins et Robert Monderie, *Le Peuple invisible*, sorti en 2007, on entend pourtant que « si tous les Indiens du Canada constituaient un pays, ce pays se situerait en termes de qualité de vie en 63<sup>e</sup> position mondiale, voisin du Ghana et du Congo ». Reste donc à savoir si la question autochtone est considérée par les Québécois comme une question québécoise.

Afin de comprendre cet écart entre la réalité autochtone et l'opinion publique<sup>3</sup> au Québec, il faut aller plus loin : se référer non seulement à la mémoire collective, mais surtout à l'imaginaire collectif qui la structure pour voir ce que celui-ci peut avoir de réducteur et comment nous pouvons nous en libérer pour mémoriser mieux et *juste*. Ainsi, il me semble que, depuis cette perspective, les rapports entre les imaginaires collectifs conflictuels, tels qu'ils se donnent à voir à travers les littératures appartenant à la même aire sociale, peuvent constituer non seulement un objet d'études à caractère littéraire, mais aussi faire apparaître le pouvoir politique de l'imaginaire. L'ordre de l'imaginaire est un ordre politique qui décide de la *condition* de la mémoire collective qui est également la condition du lien social qui fait le « nous ». Il s'agit de voir et savoir qui a le droit de *garder* cette mémoire, qui peut s'identifier à ce « nous » et quelles sont les conséquences d'une telle identification. L'espace de cohabitation est nécessairement un espace de conflit où se contredisent des voix qui parlent à travers des textes et qui font apparaître de nouveaux régimes de vérité. Étudier les imaginaires conflictuels ne revient peut-être qu'à savoir gérer le conflit.

Dans cette perspective, aborder la littérature amérindienne peut revenir à mettre en miroir l'imaginaire canadien-français et québécois avec l'imaginaire amérindien tel qu'il se dégage de la littérature écrite en français par les écrivains autochtones nés pour la plupart dans les années 1920-1940 du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle, dont la production littéraire témoigne du passage de l'oral à l'écrit et de

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<sup>3</sup> L'opinion publique dans laquelle Derrida voyait « la silhouette d'un fantôme, la hantise de la conscience démocratique » [qui] n'est en droit ni la volonté générale, ni la nation, ni l'idéologie, ni la somme des opinions privées analysées selon des techniques sociologiques ou les institutions modernes de sondage (Derrida, *La démocratie ajournée* 103-105).



l'adaptation du modèle occidental<sup>4</sup>. Mon analyse doit beaucoup aux travaux de Maurizio Gatti (2006), chercheur italien installé au Québec qui a fait de la littérature amérindienne un sujet de recherches universitaires sérieuses et qui me l'a fait découvrir à travers son anthologie *Littérature amérindienne du Québec*, publiée en 2004 chez Hurtubise et cinq ans plus tard dans la Bibliothèque québécoise. (Et qu'un étranger ait été le premier qui soit allé voir les auteur/e/s autochtones dans leurs communautés et se soit intéressé à leur écriture, cela en dit long sur l'absence des Amérindiens dans l'imaginaire collectif québécois). Or, à la différence de Gatti qui aborde la littérature amérindienne en littéraire, je me propose d'adopter une approche psychanalytique qui me semble, en l'occurrence, beaucoup plus prometteuse dans l'étude de l'imaginaire collectif qu'une perspective typiquement littéraire ou sociologique, focalisée sur une analyse descriptive des représentations collectives.

Et pourtant, la notion même d'imaginaire collectif qui est au cœur de tant de débats littéraires au Québec et ailleurs, est une notion bien équivoque qu'il faut mettre constamment sous un examen critique. Je me demande si l'imaginaire collectif, tel que le décrivait Gilbert Durand par exemple (1993), n'est pas, après tout, une catégorie réactive et plutôt conservatrice, dont il nous faut, chacun et chacune, nous libérer pour mieux voir que le mythique qui fait ériger le national est le contraire même du collectif et du commun. À l'associer à un ensemble de mythes et thèmes que l'on prend pour un véhicule de valeurs qui constituent une culture ou une nation, je préfère utiliser la notion d'imaginaire en m'inspirant librement de la théorie lacanienne du sujet. D'un côté, l'imaginaire serait donc la faculté de produire des images de soi et de l'autre qui permettent au je de se projeter dans le moi idéal et/ou l'idéal de moi (j'y reviendrai). D'un autre côté, l'imaginaire, par la puissance des images qu'il produit, peut immobiliser la faculté de penser, ce qui risque de mettre en question l'autonomie du je.

Mais à quoi bon aborder la littérature amérindienne avec du Lacan ? Quel est le *sens* d'une telle approche que d'aucuns peuvent trouver *too sophisticated* et que peut-elle nous dire de *juste* à propos de cette littérature ? Elle peut nous en dire trop peu en effet, si l'on veut voir la chose en pur littéraire et québécois. Cependant, faire passer la réflexion par la catégorie de l'imaginaire telle qu'elle a été élaborée par Lacan pourrait permettre d'abandonner les positions discursives trop bien reconnues qui organisent le débat autour de la question amérindienne et, du coup, de reconnaître les insuffisances des images que nous produisons pour définir nos positions

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<sup>4</sup> Ceci dit, l'appellation « écrivain amérindien » renvoie à celle ou celui qui a adopté le français comme langue d'écriture.

identitaires. Que cette justification, si insuffisante soit-elle, m'autorise à préciser ma position théorique avant de passer au sujet annoncé.

Dans un entretien accordé à *Gazeta Wyborcza*, le plus grand quotidien polonais, Andrzej Leder, philosophe et analyste, a expliqué avec brio l'enseignement de Lacan en se référant à la métaphore du filet à larges mailles que nous jetons dans la mer pour ne capturer que des flétans et, par conséquent, nous sommes convaincus que les sprats n'existent pas (cf. Leder « Świat... »). L'imaginaire collectif québécois, baigné dans son aura mythique, serait, en l'occurrence, ce filet à grandes mailles. Comment faire, donc, pour saisir la réalité de la mer ? Il ne s'agit certainement pas de se débarrasser du filet, de se jeter dans la mer soi-même. En fait, nous ne sommes pas capables de regarder la réalité autrement qu'à travers le filet, cette façon de voir étant décisive pour la formation de notre identité du sujet. C'est pour la même raison que nous ne pouvons pas changer de filet et faire la pêche avec un autre filet à des mailles plus petites. Il ne s'agit pas non plus de confondre ce qu'on voit et ce qui est, de nous empêtrer, pour ainsi dire, dans nos propres filets. À l'en croire Slavoj Žižek qui distingue entre deux types de bêtise, se jeter dans la mer soi-même serait la démarche d'un idiot, tandis que s'empêtrer dans ses filets résulterait de celle d'un crétin [*moron*]. Pour Žižek, l'idiot est seul et, pour se référer à la terminologie lacanienne, il est en dehors du grand Autre. En mots plus simples, l'idiot est déconnecté de la réalité en tant que telle. Il ne connaît pas ses codes et contextes, même s'il est capable de la comprendre logiquement, il est nul en situation de communication. Le crétin, en revanche, est dans le grand Autre, il manie le langage à force de répéter ce qu'il ne comprend pas. Il n'arrive pas à se retrouver (se reconnaître en tant que lui à travers son autre) dans le langage qui lui vient toujours d'ailleurs et, par conséquent, il n'a qu'à obéir à son appel (Žižek 1-2).

Comment faire, donc, encore une fois, pour saisir la réalité de la mer ? Je dirais, dans la veine de Žižek, c'est-à-dire sans crainte de dire des idioties, qu'il faut adopter la démarche d'un imbécile. En spéculant sur l'étymologie du mot « imbécile », le philosophe slovène nous fait croire qu'il dérive du mot latin *baculum* signifiant « bâton » ou « canne ». L'imbécile, ou mieux : « bécile », est celui qui marche en s'appuyant sur une canne, il occupe l'espace entre l'idiot et le crétin<sup>5</sup>. Il s'agirait donc, pour saisir la réalité de la

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<sup>5</sup> Comme si la différence entre la bêtise et la sagesse était plus que subtile, et Žižek en est peut-être le meilleur exemple. Aux dires de Žižek, le « bécile » est « aware of the need for the big Other, but not relying on it, distrusting it, something like the way the Slovene punk group Laibach defined their relationship towards God (and referring to the words on a dollar bill 'In God we trust'): 'Like Americans, we believe in God, but unlike Americans, we don't trust him' » (2).

mer, de savoir naviguer ou, pour jouer avec cette métaphore aquatique, de naviguer dans les eaux de l'autre ; de regarder l'autre comme le miroir dans lequel nous nous regardons nous-mêmes, comme dans le fameux stade du miroir lorsque l'enfant qui voit son image, s'y reconnaît et, finalement, apprend quelque chose sur lui-même.

Or ce travail de reconnaissance, s'il nous appartient, s'il est ce qui reste à faire, pour le dire dans le style derridien, nous devons l'effectuer chacun et chacune à son compte afin même de nous séparer de l'imaginaire collectif pour mieux voir nous-mêmes. En fait, d'un point de vue pragmatique, qu'on le veuille ou non, l'imaginaire collectif, l'imaginaire d'un *nous*, est une pure aberration dès qu'on se rend compte que « si le pronom 'nous' n'est pas le pluriel de 'moi', c'est qu'en réalité le mot 'moi' (en latin, *ego*) n'a pas de pluriel » (Descombes 163)<sup>6</sup>. Si je me permets d'aborder ici le problème d'imaginaire collectif en frôlant un peu les grandes catégories de la psychanalyse et en les confrontant avec la philosophie du langage, c'est pour risquer une hypothèse : l'imaginaire, en tant que produit de l'imagination, cette « folle du logis » selon la belle formule de Pascal, ne peut concerner que l'individu et il est ce par quoi le sujet se dispose à et dispose de la réalité. Dans cette optique, l'imaginaire collectif n'est pas le travail d'une imagination individuelle dilatée ni d'une imagination commune à plusieurs individus, car celle-ci n'existe simplement pas, mais il incarne le grand Autre de l'argument de Žižek. Comme si imaginer soi-même en s'en remettant à l'imaginaire collectif entraînait la perte de la faculté d'imaginer la réalité de façon autonome, c'est-à-dire, comme l'étymologie grecque du mot nous le rappelle, de la nommer selon ses propres (αὐτοσ) lois (νόμος).

Mais qu'en sais-je ? Moi, « im-bécile » polonais, qui lis la littérature amérindienne du Québec et vis très difficilement sa « polonitude » au point d'en devenir parfois un « idiot », celui qui est déconnecté de la réalité telle qu'elle est ? Je suis très loin de dénier la possibilité qui est mise à la disposition de chaque Québécois/e de se reconnaître dans cet ensemble d'images mythiques et mythologiques à la fois qui constituent l'imaginaire collectif. Une telle reconnaissance, individuelle, réfléchie et entièrement volontaire, est pourtant ce qu'il faut vivre et assumer plutôt que de subir. Ce qui me frappe particulièrement, c'est que le terme d'imaginaire collectif

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<sup>6</sup> Commentant la disproportion entre le sujet individuel et le sujet collectif, Andrzej Leder se réfère à la différence faite par Lacan entre le moi idéal et l'idéal de moi (Leder, *Rysa...* 123). Il s'ensuivrait que, par analogie, si le moi idéal est une formation narcissique appartenant au registre de l'imaginaire (le je se reconnaît comme moi qui est son autre qu'il voit dans le miroir), l'idéal du moi appartient au symbolique et, par conséquent, peut revêtir des formes d'images qui nous viennent de structures identitaires collectives.

semble avoir une teneur bien française. Je m'en suis rendu compte tout récemment lorsque je préparais une présentation en anglais, dans le cadre de la Journée canadienne organisée à l'Université de Silésie par le Département d'études canadiennes et de traduction littéraire dont je fais partie, qui portait, entre autres, sur « the collective imaginary of Québec ». Même si ce terme existe en anglais et signifie exactement la même chose qu'en français, il n'est utilisé que très rarement et plutôt dans le contexte scientifique<sup>7</sup>. Plus souvent, on évoque la « collective imagination », ce qui rend la chose encore plus floue. C'est que l'imaginaire collectif, théorisé à la française, est tributaire d'un certain imaginaire républicain, apparenté à la tradition sociologique française selon laquelle on étudie le peuple, de même que ce qui fait tenir les individus ensemble, comme un objet. Dans cette optique, penser la pluralité dans le cadre du social est inconcevable tandis que le peuple est identique à la nation. Le débat sur les accommodements raisonnables au Québec a beaucoup en commun avec cette conception du peuple considéré comme « enfants de la République », elle-même méfiante à l'égard de toute sorte de manifestation de l'appartenance à une communauté ethnique. L'imaginaire collectif qui en découle n'est peut-être qu'une variante de l'imaginaire national.

Dans un texte de 1954, qui est l'introduction à la traduction française de l'ouvrage *Le Rêve et l'Existence* de Ludwig Binswanger, psychiatre suisse, le jeune Foucault écrivait que « l'imagination, dans sa véritable fonction poétique, médite sur l'identité. Et s'il est vrai qu'elle circule à travers un univers d'images, ce n'est pas dans la mesure où elle les promeut et les réunit, mais dans la mesure où elle les brise, les détruit et les consume : elle est par essence iconoclaste » (144). Adopter une perspective psychanalytique à l'égard du phénomène de la littérature amérindienne dans le sillage de la littérature québécoise permettrait donc avant tout de se libérer des images du Blanc et de l'Indien qui nourrissent l'imaginaire collectif, mais qui immobilisent l'imagination dès qu'on comprend celle-ci comme disposition à/de vivre la réalité de façon autonome. Prise dans son ensemble, la littérature a un statut paradoxal. Elle peut être la source principale de l'imaginaire, comme le montrent Maurice Lemire pour la littérature québécoise (*Le mythe*

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<sup>7</sup> Et si c'est bien le cas, la catégorie de « collective imaginary » est évoquée comme inséparable d'un certain nationalisme. Ainsi, Anderson insiste sur « the educational linkage [...] between 'imagined' and 'imaginary' communities » (*Imagined Communities* 118). Charles Taylor, quant à lui, évoque plutôt le moderne « cosmic imaginary » qui conditionne la vie sociale et semble avoir peu en commun avec l'idée de la collectivité identifiée à la nation : « And just as the social imaginary consists of the understandings which make sense of our social practices, so the 'cosmic imaginary' makes sense of the ways in which the surrounding world figures in our lives » (*A Secular Age* 323).

*de l'Amérique*) et Maurizio Gatti pour la littérature amérindienne, par quoi elle accuse son esprit conservateur. Mais elle peut également apporter un renouveau qui entraîne le changement dans la structure identitaire de soi se reconnaissant dans l'autre. La littérature, donc, comme lieu de rencontre avec l'autre, mais surtout comme lieu de confrontation avec soi à travers l'autre, qui invite à retravailler les fausses représentations que nous souffle l'imaginaire collectif.

C'est en termes de rencontre et de confrontation entre le soi et l'autre, et de négociation avec deux imaginaires que je lis des poèmes d'Éléonore Sioui, huronne-wendat (1925-2006). Pour un « nous » qui se dégage d'une telle lecture, il peut s'agir en gros de *nous* regarder, ce qui revient à nous garder de nous-mêmes. Comme s'il nous fallait bien écouter nous-mêmes parler de l'autre et écouter l'autre parler de nous-mêmes afin de réajuster notre rapport au monde. Très loin de la rancune contre le Blanc, la poésie de Sioui permet de voir l'aventure américaine dans un miroir déformé et en même temps de réviser l'image dont les Québécois se font de l'Amérindien et d'eux-mêmes. Regardons le poème « Autochtonicité »<sup>8</sup> :

Dans un verre  
De vin blanc  
Déposez deux ou trois gouttes  
De sang indien  
Ajoutez-y une once de pollution  
Brassez à l'européenne  
Et vous aurez un mélange de deuxième classe  
Puis fermentez le résidu de l'élixir  
Qui vous procurera une troisième classe  
Dont la dilution deviendra  
L'Amérindien  
Contaminé dans son authenticité.  
Make big plans, aim high in hope and work  
Do not make little plan as it gives you no magic stir.

Tout d'abord, il est frappant que, pour les auteur/e/s amérindien/ne/s écrivant en français, le Blanc parle toujours anglais. *He speaks white*, pour le dire en québécois de l'époque de Michèle Lalonde. Les deux dernières strophes du poème sont une variation sur les mots attribués à Daniel Burnham, urbaniste et architecte de Chicago.

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<sup>8</sup> Tous les poèmes de Sioui cités dans le texte après Gatti, *Littérature amérindienne du Québec* 91-95.

Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will not die but, long after we are gone, be a living thing, asserting itself with ever-growing insistence. Remember that our sons and grandsons are going to do things that would stagger us. Let your watchword be order and your beacon beauty<sup>9</sup>.

Or, Sioui détournent ces phrases pour les rapporter de façon manifestement ironique au sort des Amérindiens qui se sont retrouvés en dehors de ce « noble diagramme logique ». Le « grand plan » dont la magie était censée « remuer le sang des hommes » devient la recette pour préparer une mixture magique permettant d'obtenir « [l']Amérindien contaminé dans son authenticité ».

Le changement de langue dans le poème est d'une importance décisive : il encourage à mettre en miroir deux imaginaires et à revenir au processus de la préparation de la mixture dans le contexte de l'histoire canadienne-française et québécoise. Si l'imaginaire collectif des Québécois fait de ces derniers les héritiers des Canadiens-français, une telle démarche semble nécessaire et pleinement justifiée. Dans le document déjà mentionné, Pierre Lepage rappelle que « l'idée que les autochtones ont été conquis, est profondément enracinée dans l'imaginaire collectif des Québécois », tout en soulignant que l'histoire de la soi-disant conquête des terres canadiennes par un groupe de soldats du roi de France n'a été au fond que l'histoire de « la collaboration et [du] bon voisinage avec les trappeurs et commerçants amérindiens » (3). On retrouve la même perspective de cette rencontre du côté amérindien, notamment dans *La Légende des oiseaux qui ne savaient plus voler* de Christine Sioui Wawanoloath :

Au début, les oiseaux verts les avaient laissés faire. Ils avaient même offert aux oiseaux jaunes de les aider. Ils voulurent également leur apprendre à voler car, d'après leurs enseignements, tous les oiseaux étaient égaux et libres et devaient cohabiter en paix. Les oiseaux jaunes ne voulaient pas voler. Tout ce qu'ils voulaient, c'était rapporter le plus de feuilles possible au continent jaune. Lorsqu'ils virent que les oiseaux jaunes venaient de plus en plus nombreux et qu'ils décimaient les arbres, les oiseaux verts comprirent qu'il y avait du danger à les laisser occuper leur continent (cité après Gatti, *Littérature...* 49).

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<sup>9</sup> Il n'est pourtant pas sûr que Burnham ait jamais prononcé les mots qu'on lui attribue si volontiers. En tout cas, il n'en existe aucune trace. Cette fausse citation, dont le pouvoir peut être comparé à celui d'un mème, ne serait-elle rien de plus que le fruit de l'imaginaire ? En voyant Burnham parler devant le conseil municipal de Chicago, en *imaginant* son discours dans lequel il refuse *little plans*, ne serions-nous toujours déjà sous l'emprise du mythe ? (Cf. Reardon).

Or, si c'est la littérature franco-canadienne, bientôt nationale, qui est la source principale de l'imaginaire collectif québécois, il faut dire que ce dernier a été bâti sur la perception bel et bien coloniale. Étudiant les *Voyages* de Champlain, Maurice Lemire remarque que

comme tous les autres explorateurs, il perçoit l'Amérique comme une terre innocupée mise à la disposition des Européens pour l'exploiter. Jamais ne lui vient à l'esprit que les « Sauvages », qu'il voit toujours en train de danser sur les rives, peuvent réclamer ces terres et que, en s'en emparant, il les dépouillerait de leur propriété. Au contraire, cette terre vierge, cette *materia prima* qui n'a pas encore de forme, est à la disposition des Blancs pour qu'ils la façonnent à leur guise (58).

Une incohérence dans la construction de l'imaginaire québécois frappe l'observateur extérieur que je suis. Si les Québécois se reconnaissent volontiers dans l'héritage des Canadiens-français, ils se sentent très mal dans la peau des colonisateurs. Et pourtant, il suffit de confronter le rapport de Champlain à la terre, la façon dont il décrit ses avantages et inconvénients, les richesses de la flore et de la faune et les mines à exploiter, avec les rapports des colonisateurs français de l'Algérie adressés au roi de France, pour voir que la ressemblance est saisissante<sup>10</sup>. En termes lacaniens, il faudrait évoquer ici le réel qui fait intrusion dans le régime du symbolique pour dévoiler l'insuffisance du récit national. C'est bien là où celui-ci prend son sens, mais c'est aussi là que ça craque tel maillot le plus faible de la chaîne.

Étudier deux imaginaires conflictuels peut également revenir à chercher ce que nous partageons hors des lieux communs qui risquent de nous partager. Comme s'il nous fallait accéder à l'autre imagination pour voir comment elle peut s'énoncer selon ses propres lois dans notre imaginaire, désormais amplifié, plus riche. Regardons le poème « Ondechatterri. J'ai partout mal », publié en 1985 dans le recueil *Andatha* :

Je n'ai été l'amante  
Que du soleil  
Je n'ai engendré  
Que par Lui

<sup>10</sup> Dans le rapport de 1827, établi par le marquis de Clermont-Tonnerre après son arrivée à Alger, nous lisons qu'« une grande partie de son immense surface se compose de plaines d'une prodigieuse fertilité. Il y a, dans les montagnes, des forêts de sapins, de chênes propres aux constructions navales ; on y exploite des mines de fer et de plomb qui sont d'une grande richesse et dont les produits sont d'une excellente qualité ; il y a des montagnes de sel gemme, et le sel et le nitre sont presque partout en abondance, à la surface même de la terre ; les bords de la mer offrent des salines d'une richesse extrême » (223).

Je n'ai connu  
La caresse amoureuse  
Qu'étendue sous ses chauds baisers  
Fécondée par la pluie  
C'est la création de mon univers  
Parfois lorsque le désir  
D'être aimée m'entraîne  
Je pars jusqu'à la mer  
Qui boit mes plaies  
Et me verse l'oubli  
À grands coups de vagues  
Distillant mes sanglots  
En poèmes de paix  
Dans le fond du vert de mes yeux  
Grisant l'engouement qui me tord  
Comme une source évictée.

Au premier abord, dans le poème, il n'y a rien qui puisse surprendre l'imaginaire occidental où l'image d'un Indien attaché à la nature a pris la valeur d'un cliché et elle répond au déjà vu et déjà connu. Or, le je qui parle dans le poème est un je féminin qui dépeint son amour de la nature comme amour avec la nature. D'une pierre deux coups : premièrement, on se rend compte que l'écrivain amérindien n'est pas nécessairement un homme et, qui plus est, il y a autant d'écrivaines que d'écrivains dans dix communautés amérindiennes et une communauté innu sur le territoire du Québec (Gatti, *Littérature...* 16-23). Deuxièmement, la communion avec la nature n'est pas celle des âmes. En fait, la relation avec la nature, sensuelle, corporelle et manifestement érotique, fait penser à une relation sexuelle. L'aveu d'amour est ici celui de désir et de fidélité à la fois. Le je du poème se représente comme « l'amante que du soleil » qui ne connaît « la caresse amoureuse qu'étendue sous ses chauds baisers », le soleil lui-même l'engendrant en tant que « Lui ». Elle est « fécondée par la pluie » et entraînée par « le désir d'être aimée par la mer qui boit ses plaies et [lui] verse l'oubli ».

Il est frappant de découvrir à quel point le caractère sensuel de la poésie d'Éléonore Sioui peut servir de miroir pour celui qu'on retrouve dans l'écriture au féminin, telle qu'elle a émergé au Québec dans les années 1970. Chez Suzanne Lamy, par exemple, qui rappelle « l'attraction que les femmes subissent à se fondre dans le grand tout masculin, à s'y oublier et à s'y noyer » (17). Certes, la cause est entièrement différente : chez l'une, les noces sont totales et elles apportent de l'apaisement dans le monde qui a irréversiblement changé ; chez l'autre, l'amant peut devenir l'ennemi dans le monde qui est, pourtant, toujours à changer. Les pleurs contre l'espoir, l'abandon contre la



transgression, son monde à elle éprouvée comme « une source évictée » contre son monde à elle qu'elle voit comme « ce lieu de complicité et d'oppression [...] cet étai qui [lui] est cher (et chair) » (Lamy 18). Or, le langage qui sert à exprimer le désir éprouvé par le corps est le même. Lamy évoque, en effet, « [c]elle qui se veut subversive [et à la fois] enrobée, engluée dans un fragment de la partie adverse » et « ce qui lui est à la fois racine et cocon, piège et velours, épaule où se lover, main, bouche et sexe désirants pour son corps de fringale » (17). On pourrait également évoquer la nécessité de « se démarquer des représentations proposées » (18) qui seule permettrait de voir « le fond du vert de[s] [...] yeux » d'Éléonore Sioui.

Et pourtant, malgré ses apparences, le désir chez Éléonore Sioui a une valeur profondément spirituelle. Pourquoi ne pas penser ici aux « noces avec le monde » de Camus, dans lesquelles, tout comme dans « le sentiment océanique » que Freud évoque au début du *Malaise dans la civilisation*, André Comte-Sponville, en détournant ces métaphores du sens que nous aurions été prêts à leur assigner, voit « une mystique du silence et de l'immanence » (Comte-Sponville 162). « Quand donc suis-je plus vrai que lorsque je suis le monde ? » se demande Camus pour répondre : « Je suis comblé avant d'avoir désiré. L'éternité est là et moi je l'espérais. Ce n'est plus d'être heureux que je souhaite maintenant, mais seulement d'être conscient » (cité dans Comte-Sponville 162). À Comte-Sponville de commenter :

des expériences comparables sont vécues sur tous les continents, dans des climats intellectuels et spirituels fort différents, et cela ne rend les convergences, entre les récits qui en sont faits, que plus spectaculaires. Le « sentiment océanique » n'appartient à aucune religion, à aucune philosophie, et c'est tant mieux. Ce n'est pas un dogme, ni un acte de foi. C'est une expérience (162).

On peut même aller plus loin et – en emboîtant un peu le pas de Comte-Sponville, cet athée qui finit par reconnaître la valeur spirituelle du mysticisme, cette spiritualité se situant hors de la religion qui n'en est qu'une variante – chercher, chez Sioui, des traces du langage « mystique » avec tout ce qu'il a d'équivoque : ces « plaies » que boit la mer ne font-elles pas penser aux plaies du Christ dans la vision d'Angèle de Foligno ? « 'Regarde, disait-il, regarde vers mes plaies'. [...] Il m'appela et me dit de poser mes lèvres sur la plaie de son côté. Il me sembla que j'appuyais mes lèvres, et que je buvais du sang, et dans ce sang encore chaud je compris que j'étais lavée » (de Foligno). « L'amante du soleil » est-elle donc comme le Christ abandonné ou, au contraire, ses « sanglots » sont-ils à la mesure de ceux d'Angèle devant son Dieu ? « Je pleurai, je pleurai, je pleurai, je sanglotai à ce point que je vis mes larmes brûler ma chair ; quand je vis que je brûlais, j'allai chercher de l'eau

froide » (de Foligno), écrit la sainte, cette froideur nous référant à un autre poème de Sioui, « Obedjiwan » :

Obedjiwan  
La ouate  
De tes neiges  
Sans fin  
Renferme  
Les glaçons  
Aigus  
Argentés  
Des sanglots  
Perdus.

Entendons-nous : se hasarder à ces comparaisons risquées ne revient pas à affubler l'expérience amérindienne du langage religieux de l'Occident, qu'il soit athée, chrétien ou mystique. Il ne s'agit pas non plus de frayer des passages forcés. Il est plutôt question de retrouver la valeur spirituelle de l'expérience faite par Sioui comme une manière de faire parler l'esprit qui n'appartient à personne et qui, par conséquent, est *partageable*. Une lecture naïve, peut-être, faisant abstraction, de manière volontaire, des contextes culturels différents. Elle cherche à dépasser l'imaginaire et révéler pleinement l'imagination qui nous est *commune* quoique jamais *collective*, qui produit des images marquées par l'imaginaire quoique capables de briser ses contours. On pourrait y voir une lecture herméneutique par excellence, qui permet de nous comprendre dans le sens d'un vrai « dialogue herméneutique » dont parlait Gadamer (410). Faisant de la conversation l'espace privilégié du comprendre : non pas de la conversation que l'on peut « avoir », mais celle dans laquelle « [nous sommes] entraîné[s], pour ne pas dire empêtré[s] » (405), le philosophe allemand évoque « la fusion d'horizons » qui, quant à elle, n'est pas « une naïve assimilation » mais deux horizons « soi-disant indépendants l'un de l'autre » (328). Lue dans le contexte de la confrontation de deux imaginaires collectifs qui parlent à travers la même langue, la critique herméneutique offre un nouveau mode d'existence du « nous » composés des « je » qui peuvent partager leur expérience commune.

Pour conclure, le détour théorique que j'ai proposé ici pour débattre des imaginaires amérindien et québécois permet, à mon sens, de dépasser le ton accusateur ou victimisant qui domine de nombreuses discussions autour de la question amérindienne au Québec et, tout compte fait, les fait tomber à plat. Tout se passe comme s'il fallait sortir de nos *lieux communs* et chercher moins « le lieu de l'autre » (Ouellet 185-207) qui est, malgré tout très centré sur le soi, que l'autre lieu depuis lequel une rencontre entre deux, et non pas celle de

l'un dans l'autre, devient possible. « D'abord le deuil », pour le dire comme Derrida (*Spectres de Marx* 30). Je me demande, donc, dans quelle mesure l'accusation et la victimisation qui ne cessent d'envenimer les débats québécois sur et avec les Amérindiens ne seraient, peut-être, que les signes d'un travail du deuil non réussi, une « incantation [qui] se répète et se ritualise, [...] tient et se tient à des formules, comme le veut toute magie animiste » (Derrida, *Spectres...* 90). Je me demande également à quel point la leçon derridienne qui nous encourage « à tenter d'ontologiser des restes, à les rendre présents, en premier lieu à *identifier* les dépouilles et à *localiser* les morts » (Derrida, *Spectres...* 30) pourrait avoir quelque chose de révélateur dans le contexte de l'imaginaire québécois. Or, apprendre à vivre avec les spectres du passé n'aurait rien d'un ressassement désespéré. Les spectres ne peuvent apparaître que dans l'avenir, les revenants ne peuvent revenir que l'avenir. Il faudrait, donc, essayer de parler de la littérature amérindienne en français comme si elle était un héritage. À Derrida de terminer :

L'héritage n'est jamais un donné, c'est toujours une tâche. [...] *Être*, [...] cela veut dire, [...] *hériter*. [...] Nous *sommes* des héritiers, cela ne veut pas dire que nous *avons* ou que nous *recevons* ceci ou cela, que tel héritage nous enrichit un jour de ceci ou de cela, mais que l'*être* de ce que nous sommes *est* d'abord héritage, que nous le voulions et le sachions ou non (Derrida, *Spectres...* 94).

La littérature amérindienne, qui émerge lentement dans le paysage de l'institution littéraire québécoise, qu'il me soit permis de l'exprimer au futur antérieur que Derrida a préféré dans ses nombreux textes, aura été le signe avant-coureur d'un changement. Elle aura offert un lieu de reconstruction qui re/vient après le travail du deuil réussi.

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## LE CONFLIT DES MÉMOIRES DANS *VOLKSWAGEN BLUES* DE JACQUES POULIN

### Abstract

*Volkswagen Blues* (1984) by Jacques Poulin is a novel that offers rewriting history of America from the point of marginal communities – the First Nations and the Quebecois. In Poulin's text, these two marginal visions collide with the interpretation of history as a collective concept. Referring to the notion of historiographic metafiction, created by Linda Hutcheon in *The Poetics of Postmodernism. History, Theory, Fiction* (2002), this conflictual relation is examined as an individual experience of the novel protagonists – Jack Waterman and Pitsémine – during their journey from Gaspé to San Francisco. In particular, the paper demonstrates how the memory of the white people in Canada and the First Nations, initially in disagreement, reach a compromise and permeate each other in order to create a plural vision of Quebecois identity.

**Keywords:** postmodernism, historiographic metafiction, Jacques Poulin, hybridity, memory

### Résumé

*Volkswagen Blues* (1984) de Jacques Poulin est un roman qui propose une réécriture de l'histoire de l'Amérique à partir de la « marge », amérindienne et québécoise. Dans le texte de Poulin, ces deux visions marginales reposent sur un conflit d'interprétation de l'Histoire, articulé à prime abord sur le mode collectif.

À partir du concept générique de « métafiction historiographique », élaboré par Linda Hutcheon dans *The Poetics of Postmodernism. History, Theory, Fiction* (2002), nous nous proposons d'interroger ce rapport conflictuel comme expérience individuelle, éprouvée par les protagonistes du roman (Jack Waterman et Pitsémine) tout au long de leur voyage de Gaspé à San Francisco. Nous allons voir en particulier comment la mémoire des Blancs et celle des Amérindiens, initialement en désaccord, cherchent à négocier entre elles et à se croiser en vue de déboucher sur une vision plurielle et « métisse » de l'identité québécoise.

**Mots-clés :** le postmodernisme, la métafiction historiographique, Jacques Poulin, l'hybridité, la mémoire

*Volkswagen Blues* (1984) de Jacques Poulin est un roman qui raconte le voyage de Jack Waterman, écrivain en panne d'écriture, qui, accompagné de Pitsémine, une jeune Métisse, parcourt le continent américain pour retrouver son frère perdu. Le roman propose une réécriture de l'histoire de l'Amérique à partir de la « marge », à la fois amérindienne et québécoise, pour démontrer que deux visions, deux mémoires initialement en désaccord, se croisent et proposent un autre regard sur l'Histoire. Mais comment connaissons-nous le passé aujourd'hui ? Linda Hutcheon affirme que nous ne pouvons le connaître que par les textes qui présentent une certaine Histoire et une certaine Vérité acceptées par les autorités (128). Il s'agit des documents, des archives ou des témoignages grâce auxquels il est possible d'accéder au passé. Néanmoins, la métafiction historiographique, comme Hutcheon désigne le roman postmoderne historique, montre qu'on peut contester leur objectivité, en mettant en évidence les failles et les lacunes. Enfin, les vrais témoins des événements historiques ne vivent plus et il est difficile de constater ce qui s'est vraiment passé. Comme le prétend la chercheuse, la Vérité absolue et univoque n'existe pas, car il y a toujours des vérités et des mémoires différentes (109). Qui plus est, l'altérité et l'« excentrisme » des personnages leur permettent de présenter fréquemment le contraire de la version officielle. Il s'agit surtout des gens marginalisés pour des raisons raciales, sexuelles, religieuses, ethniques ou bien des minorités jusqu'alors oubliées. La critique met en relief également que ce sont les communautés marginalisées et hantées par l'oppression qui veulent prendre la parole et réécrire l'Histoire pour que leur point de vue soit finalement pris en considération. Selon Hutcheon, la réalité devient plurielle, mais la marge ne remplace jamais le centre (69). Marie Vautier, quant à elle, remarque que l'étendue des documents historiques est élargie par des légendes orales et anecdotes personnelles qui portent sur le passé vécu par ces groupes particuliers et met l'accent sur l'approche holistique selon laquelle nous devons nous adresser au passé (18). De plus, la contestation de l'autorité et de l'idéologie dominante relève du fait que le roman postmoderne est fortement ancré dans la politique. Finalement, comme l'explique Vautier, surtout la littérature canadienne, anglaise et française, continue à s'adresser aux questions idéologiques qui concernent l'histoire, l'historiographie et le nationalisme (19). La chercheuse postule que le Canada se considère lui-même comme le pays de multiples vérités historiques (21). Par le biais de cette théorie, nous allons essayer de démontrer que le roman de Poulin présente justement une telle pluralité des vérités et des mémoires qui, apparemment en conflit, contribuent toutes à la mémoire hybride, métisse de la société québécoise.



### ***Volkswagen Blues* et le Grand Rêve d'Amérique**

L'œuvre de Jacques Poulin est imprégnée de références historiques, cela est dû au fait qu'au cours de leur voyage, Jack et Pitsémine visitent des bibliothèques, des librairies, des musées, des archives, des sites historiques et des cimetières. C'est surtout grâce aux livres qu'ils apprennent l'Histoire de divers points de vue. Ils ont également recours à d'autres documents de caractère historique qui, d'un côté, leur indiquent la route, et de l'autre, démontrent les lacunes et les failles du passé qui, par conséquent, s'ouvre à plusieurs interprétations.

Au début du roman, les deux voyageurs visitent le musée de Gaspé pour déchiffrer la carte que Théo, le frère de Jack, lui a envoyée il y a une vingtaine d'années. Cette visite anticipe plusieurs épisodes du roman, car Jack et Pitsémine y trouvent deux cartes de l'Amérique auxquelles ils s'identifient et qui symbolisent deux mémoires distinctes. Datant du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, la première montre le territoire appartenant à la France, ce qui « était incroyable et très émouvant à regarder » (Poulin 19) pour Jack. L'autre carte, à son tour :

était jalonnée de noms de tribus indiennes, des noms que l'homme connaissait : les Cris, les Montagnais, les Iroquois, les Sioux, les Cheyennes, les Comanches, les Apaches, mais également une grande quantité de noms dont il n'avait jamais entendu parler de toute sa vie : les Chastacostas, les Shumans, les Miluks, les Wacos, les Karankawans, les Timucuas, les Potanos, les Yuchis, les Coahuitlecans, les Pascagoulas, les Tillamooks, les Maidus, les Possepatucs, les Alseas, les Chawashas, les Susquehannas, les Calusas (Poulin 19).

En regardant cette carte, « les yeux [de Pitsémine] étaient brillants et humides » (Poulin 19) et, par là, la Métisse s'est placée déjà symboliquement du côté des Indiens. Ce qui est très important, c'est que nous voyons déjà que le nombre des tribus connues aujourd'hui est considérablement inférieur à celui des tribus d'antan. Nous pouvons donc nous demander ce qui s'est passé ? Pourquoi Jack, ou plus généralement chacun de nous, ne connaît pas ces autres noms ? Quoi qu'il en soit, les réactions des deux personnages font preuve de leur nostalgie par rapport au passé. Quant à la situation présente, elle se reflète également sous la forme d'une carte, cette fois-ci routière, dont ils se servent au cours de leur voyage. Celle-ci illustre l'Amérique contemporaine qui, dans les termes de Pierre L'Hérault, signifie « le déplacement » à l'opposé des deux cartes « statiques » qui se trouvent au musée. Comme l'observe le chercheur, les deux cartes anciennes montrent symboliquement que le passé isole les deux personnages, tandis que la carte contemporaine les unit (31). Dans ce contexte, Jack et Pitsémine partent en voyage-odyssée et découvrent comment dans la quête du Grand Rêve

d'Amérique, le Nouveau Monde s'est éloigné de ces deux visions d'autrefois. Ressuscitées, les multiples visions de tous les peuples de ce continent leur permettent d'apercevoir à quel point la violence a été le pivot des commencements de l'Amérique. De plus, le révisionnisme historique du roman influe sur le présent d'autant plus que Poulin propose une nouvelle identité québécoise qui serait dorénavant plurielle, accueillante et hybride et à laquelle toutes les mémoires de ces peuples devraient contribuer.

### Les visions des Blancs

« [L]es gens qui sont venus chercher de l'or et des épices et un passage vers l'Orient » (Poulin 29), voilà comment sont caractérisés les premiers Blancs sur le continent américain. Le récit alterne avec les histoires de plusieurs personnages historiques tantôt connus, tantôt anonymes. Elles constituent, en fait, le nœud focal qui permet de comprendre l'Histoire de l'Amérique dès l'arrivée des Blancs.

Nous voudrions nous concentrer sur le personnage d'Étienne Brûlé qui était le premier Blanc à explorer la région en 1615. Ce personnage est d'autant plus important qu'il est le héros d'enfance de Théo. La vision officielle et idéaliste de l'explorateur est brisée quand, rencontré à la bibliothèque torontoise, Pinkerton affirme qu'« Étienne Brûlé était un *bum* » (Poulin 76). Grâce à un livre intitulé *Toronto During French Regime*, Jack et Pitsémine découvrent une autre facette de cette figure quasi-héroïque qui a trahi son pays lors de la prise de Québec en 1629 par les frères Kirke. En outre, la Grande Sauterelle lit qu'on lui reproche sa conduite avec les Indiennes. Enfin, la Métisse ajoute que les Indiens l'ont tué. Le personnage de Brûlé s'inscrit alors dans le sillage des théories de Vautier qui constate que les versions contradictoires du passé constituent une partie intégrante de connaissance de l'histoire au Canada où il y a toujours l'ambiguïté et l'hésitation concernant les héros incertains et gênants, ainsi que les versions fragmentées de l'histoire (30).

Même si la silhouette héroïque de Brûlé semble contradictoire, le roman présente positivement la mémoire d'autres Canadiens français. Ici, Poulin se sert du mythe de « voyageurs » (Weisman 488) qui vivaient avec les Indiens et souvent avaient, eux-mêmes, du sang indien (Poulin 222). Alors, nous pouvons voir que la vie en harmonie avec les autochtones était possible. À Saint-Louis, le parcours des protagonistes se greffe sur l'histoire d'un autre groupe de gens, ceux des années 1840, qui sont partis pour trouver la Terre promise à l'Ouest. Jack et Pitsémine ont une grande estime pour les pionniers qui rêvaient du bonheur et se demandent quelle sorte de gens auraient un tel courage de tout laisser et partir vers l'inconnu. Dans le guide ils apprennent

que les émigrants ne sont pas des héros. Ce sont des gens ordinaires. Ils étaient fermiers, artisans, professeurs, missionnaires [...], ce ne sont pas des aventuriers. Ce qu'ils cherchent, ce n'est pas l'aventure, c'est... *en fait, ils ne savent pas exactement*. Ils ont entendu dire que, dans l'Ouest, il y avait des terres très vastes et très fertiles ; ils ont décidé d'y aller, c'est tout. Ils pensent qu'ils vont trouver une vie meilleure là-bas [...]. Ce qu'ils cherchent au fond, c'est *le bonheur* (198, c'est nous qui soulignons).

Cette route ne reflète-elle parfaitement celle de Jack et Pitsémine ? Certes, et leur voyage est pareillement difficile. Puis, à un camping appelé Ash Hollows, les deux protagonistes aperçoivent « les ornières que les chariots des émigrants avaient laissées derrière eux : *creusées* dans le roc, *érodées* par les pluies, elles étaient étonnamment *profondes* et d'une couleur jaune, presque dorée » (203, c'est nous qui soulignons). Le dur voyage des pionniers est donc préservé non seulement dans les livres, mais également dans le paysage. Le parcours à travers le continent américain vérifie donc la mémoire officielle de l'Histoire, revisite les épisodes moins connus par tout le monde et la confronte avec ce qui n'a pas été dit jusqu'à alors.

### Les visions des Indiens

Nous venons d'analyser la mémoire contradictoire par rapport aux Blancs, qui ont conquis l'Amérique, telle qu'elle est présentée dans *Volkswagen Blues*. Traditionnellement présentés comme les natifs de ce continent, dans le roman poulinien, les Indiens ne sont pas dépeints ainsi, mais, au contraire, ils semblent y être arrivés, eux aussi, avant les Blancs. La Grande Sauterelle l'explique à Jack : « il paraît que les Indiens sont venus de l'Asie et qu'ils sont arrivés en Amérique par un pont de glace qui recouvrait le détroit de Béring » (29). Après avoir découvert le nouveau continent, plusieurs explorateurs y sont venus, notamment Brûlé dont le comportement était, comme nous l'avons vu, assez brutal. Pour n'en citer qu'un seul exemple, il suffit de rappeler l'épisode où, en lisant *Explorers of the Mississippi*, Pitsémine évoque d'autres Blancs qui maltraitaient les Indigènes : l'Espagnol – Hernando de Soto, Louis Jolliet, le père Marquette et Robert Cavalier de La Salle. Malheureusement, la cruauté des Blancs semble continuer. Son apogée a lieu au chapitre vingt-deux, intitulé « La Mitrailleuse Gatling », où la Métisse parle de sa haine envers les militaires et surtout envers le 7<sup>e</sup> régiment. Après, Pitsémine raconte des massacres des Indiens, notamment ceux de Sand Creek (1864), de Washita (1868) et de Wounded Knee (1890). À ce moment, nous voyons à quel point la mémoire de ses ancêtres et ces événements atroces l'habitent toujours.

Ce qui est étonnant, c'est que Pitsémine nuance cette mémoire tragique en faisant contrepoids à ces massacres entrepris par les Blancs, car, même avant

de les mentionner, elle parle de l'extermination intérieure des Indiens, particulièrement de celle de la tribu pacifique des Illinois. Après être arrivée à Starved Rock State Park, la Métisse narre l'histoire de Rocher de la Famine et de cette tribu disparue. Les Illinois « étaient obligés de protéger leur territoire contre les Iroquois, [...] contre les Renards [...] et surtout les Outaouais » (125) car le Rocher était un bon endroit stratégique. Au moment de l'arrivée des Blancs, ils leur ont offert l'hospitalité et ont vécu en harmonie avec eux. Vu cela, d'autres tribus étaient furieuses et désiraient se débarrasser des Blancs. Ne voulant pas y participer, la plupart des Illinois ont été tués et ceux qui ont survécu se sont cachés dans le Rocher. Lors du siège, ils ne voulaient pas se rendre et sont morts de faim et de soif.

Après avoir parlé des massacres du peuple amérindien, soit par les Blancs, soit par les Indiens eux-mêmes, nous souhaitons montrer encore un autre type de massacre, celui des animaux – des bisons dont le nombre égalait à 60 millions avant l'arrivée des Blancs. Au musée de Buffalo Bill, Pitsémine et Jack soulèvent ce sujet qui est proche aussi bien aux Blancs qu'aux Indiens. Surnommé Buffalo Bill, William F. Cody s'installe dans leur mémoire de manière paradoxale, car, d'un côté, « il avait abattu douze bisons par jours » (Poulin 187) et, de l'autre, comme le remarque Pitsémine, à « la fin de sa vie, il avait un ranch dans le Wyoming où il élevait un troupeau de bisons » (188). Alors, les protagonistes constatent que cette figure mal famée, et encore une fois contradictoire, a pu contribuer au fait qu'il y a toujours des bisons en Amérique.

Ancré dans l'Histoire, le roman poulinien nous fournit plusieurs visions des événements historiques. Préservée par la collectivité, la mémoire collective se confond avec la mémoire personnelle des deux protagonistes. Quant à la Grande Sauterelle, elle se voit la porte-parole du peuple indien. C'est pour cela qu'elle raconte de nombreuses légendes et contes appartenant à la tradition orale qui traitent du sort affreux de ses aïeux dont elle partage la mémoire collective. Quoique déchirée entre deux cultures, Pitsémine se présente plutôt comme Indienne qui veut préserver tout endroit lié à « son » peuple. Pour étayer notre propos, il convient de rappeler l'épisode du cimetière où se trouve la tombe du vieux chef Thayendanagea, appelé Joseph Brant par les Blancs. Jack savait qu'il était un grand guerrier des Mohawks qui combattait aux côtés des Anglais alors que

la Grande Sauterelle en savait plus long que lui [et] elle avait fait allusion au rôle important que les femmes jouaient au sein de la confédération des Six-Nations, dont les Mohawks faisaient partie, et elle avait l'air de croire que, d'une façon ou d'une autre, le vieux chef pouvait l'aider à se connaître elle-même (Poulin 88).

Afin d'atteindre cette connaissance, la Métisse décide de passer la nuit au cimetière près de la tombe du vieux chef. Bien que Pitsémine dorme bien, rien

ne se passe et elle le considère comme échec. Elle se demande pourquoi la femme du vieux chef n'est pas nommée, vu que la position des Indiennes dans leurs communautés était importante. Mais, comme elle ne ressent aucune différence, elle perd la confiance en ce chef indien. Alors, tout comme le héros de Jack, celui de Pitsémine tombe en miette d'où résulte la déception de la Métisse, une déception renforcée par d'autres épisodes de l'histoire des Indiens que nous avons déjà évoqués.

### Le « Nouveau » Québécois

Au sein de son œuvre, Poulin forge un mythe de l'Amérique qui paraît comme le paradis où on peut retrouver le bonheur perdu et qui fonctionne toujours dans la mémoire. Mais les deux voyageurs éprouvent une grande déception : ni les ancêtres francophones, ni indiens ne vivent plus, les pionniers au lieu de trouver le bonheur rencontrent une réalité brutale. Probablement, c'est dû au fait que, comme le dit le narrateur du roman, « toute l'Amérique a été construite sur la violence » (141). Comme nous l'avons vu plus haut, Poulin démontre à quel point la violence est omniprésente dans l'Histoire de tous les peuples de l'Amérique.

*Volkswagen Blues* renvoie à deux époques passées, celle des Indiens et celle des Canadiens français. D'après Adam Paul Weisman, le roman poulinien met en place une nouvelle vision de ces deux peuples qui partagent le même destin : l'un et l'autre sont arrivés en Amérique et, par la suite, ont été dominés par les Britanniques et puis par les Américains (493). Weisman souligne que les aspirations impériales des Français venus au Nouveau Monde sont éliminées, puisque, dépossédés par la France, les Canadiens français « se sont mariés » avec les populations natives de l'Amérique du Nord, car les deux se présentent comme les résidents non-antagonistes du Nouveau Monde qui n'ont plus aucune relation avec l'Europe (493). Par conséquent, une fois opposés l'un à l'autre, les deux groupes deviennent victimes de la colonisation britannique et américaine. C'est pourquoi, en voyageant de Gaspé à San Francisco, nous ne voyons que des traces des Indiens, des Francophones ou des personnes en quelque sorte liées à l'histoire française de l'Amérique. Quant à la référence à la mémoire des deux peuples, il y en a encore une qui apparaît vers la fin du roman : en observant l'île d'Alcatraz, Jack songe au film *Les Oiseaux d'Alcatraz*, tandis que Pitsémine raconte une dernière histoire de « son » peuple. Elle remonte à l'année 1969, quand les Indiens ont déclaré que l'île était un territoire indien, mais la police ne leur a pas permis d'y rester. Après avoir parlé de ces événements et de toutes les autres histoires, la Métisse formule une sorte de conclusion « que les Indiens perdaient toujours, qu'ils avaient perdu cette fois encore et qu'il n'y avait rien

à faire. C'était le destin ou quelque chose du genre » (281-82). Même si l'île d'Alcatraz symbolise plutôt le tournant dans les droits civils des Indiens et devrait être perçue comme symbole de résistance, les mots de Pitsémine démontrent que la protagoniste accepte le mythe d'Indien disparaissant et perpétue l'idée qu'il n'y a pas d'espoir pour la survivance des Indigènes.

Dépossédés, presque exterminés, les Indiens, tout comme les Francophones d'Amérique, appartiennent en quelque sorte au passé. Dans cette optique, pour réciter Heather Macfarlane, Jack et Pitsémine, tous les deux, personnifient le Québec changeant (5). Poulin ne fait pas seulement l'éloge de Pitsémine-hybride, mais d'une perspective plus globale, il semble suggérer qu'une fois homogène, pure-laine, toute nation québécoise s'approche de l'hybridité qui sera l'idéal d'une société tolérante et diversifiée. Macfarlane, elle aussi, observe que les Canadiens français et les Indiens s'identifient les uns aux autres et partagent le même sort de la marginalisation, mais en même temps elle souligne qu'il ne faut pas perpétuer le mythe d'Indien mort (9). Néanmoins, c'est à San Francisco, à la fin du roman, où les mémoires s'amalgament quand les protagonistes se disent au revoir, la Grande Sauterelle retient le vieux Volks et dit à Jack : « que les dieux vous protègent ! » (320). La dernière remarque du narrateur confirme que Jack assume, lui aussi, l'Autre : « [Jack] souriait malgré tout à la pensée qu'il y avait, quelque part dans l'immensité de l'Amérique, un lieu secret où les dieux des Indiens et les autres dieux étaient rassemblés et tenaient conseil dans le but de veiller sur lui et d'éclairer sa route » (320).

En somme, l'Histoire envahit le roman poulinien. Il s'agit du passé pluriel qui démontre diverses facettes de faits et de personnages historiques qui sont souvent contradictoires. René Labonté voit dans *Volkswagen Blues* un voyage de triple démystification : celle de Théo-Dieu, du héros Étienne Brûlé et celle du Grand Rêve de l'Amérique (809). À la lumière de nos propos, nous voudrions y ajouter encore une démystification : celle du peuple indien qui ne se voit pas toujours comme victime du génocide organisé par les Blancs, mais, comme nous l'avons démontré, est formé de groupes hétérogènes qui tuaient les Blancs et qui s'entretuaient aussi. Le roman de Poulin démontre qu'une seule mémoire des Blancs ou des Indiens n'existe pas et qu'il faut prendre en compte une vision de mémoires qui serait plurielle et qui présente des comportements aussi bien harmonieux que cruels entre les deux. Bien que la violence ait fondé l'Amérique et constitue sa partie intégrante même aujourd'hui, c'est l'hybridité, selon Poulin, qui est une solution pour les groupes minoritaires qui en s'assimilant peuvent former une nouvelle société. *Volkswagen Blues* ne gomme pas entièrement la version officielle de l'Histoire, mais y ajoute d'autres points de vues de groupes marginalisés jusqu'ici. De plus, le texte met en évidence à quel point l'histoire collective et personnelle s'entrecroisent. Grâce à l'Histoire, qui domine dans les deux récits

et qui envahit le présent, les personnages peuvent se réconcilier avec eux-mêmes et se voir comme des êtres multiples. La prépondérance des références à l'Histoire influe aussi sur la dimension idéologique que l'écrivain veut promouvoir. Poulin propose l'hybridité qui se présente comme le modèle d'identité de la société moderne et qui se compose de mémoire plurielle, métisse qui s'ouvre à toutes les voix.

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## CONFLITS IDENTITAIRES DANS LE CINÉMA DIRECT QUÉBÉCOIS DE LA RÉVOLUTION TRANQUILLE

### Abstract

Referring to certain concepts formulated by researchers about the Quebec cinema of The Quiet Revolution – « cinéma d'identification » (Christian Poirier), « national cinema » (Andrew Higson, Bill Marshall) and « transnational cinema » (Andrew Higson), « cinéma mineur » (Gilles Deleuze) – the aim of this article is to present identity conflicts, both social and linguistic, in Quebec cinema of The Quiet Revolution. The analysis will be based on three examples portraying the diversity of conflictual relations inscribed in the plot: *Le chat dans le sac* by Gilles Groulx (1964) which oscillates between the idea of progress of *Québécois* and their attachment to the traditional culture, in addition to contrasting the Quebec identity with the identity of « Others » : English Canadians; *Les Ordres* by Michel Brault (1974), with October Crisis (1970) and the War Measures Act in the background, to show the federal authority abuses experienced on the individual level and the formation of the collective identity of Francophones in Quebec; *La Vie heureuse de Léopold Z.* by Gilles Carle (1965) where the traditional disparity between Anglophones and Francophones is transcended by the use of irony as well as the reference to American values and culture.

**Keywords:** identity, The Quiet Revolution, direct cinema, national cinema, October Crisis

### Résumé

À partir de certains concepts proposés à l'endroit du cinéma de la Révolution tranquille – « cinéma d'identification » (Christian Poirier), « national cinema » (Andrew Higson, Bill Marshall) et « transnational cinema » (Andrew Higson), « cinéma mineur » (Gilles Deleuze), cet article se propose de cerner les conflits identitaires (sociaux et linguistiques) à l'œuvre dans quelques films représentatifs du cinéma québécois de la Révolution tranquille. L'analyse va s'appuyer sur trois exemples qui témoignent de la diversité des rapports conflictuels inscrits dans



l'intrigue filmique : *Le chat dans le sac* de Gilles Groulx (1964) qui balance entre l'idée de progrès des Québécois et leur attachement à la culture traditionnelle tout en opposant l'identité québécoise à celle des « autres » : Canadiens anglais ; *Les Ordres* de Michel Brault (1974), qui montre, sur fond de la Crise d'octobre de 1970 (la Loi des mesures de guerre), les abus du pouvoir vécus sur un mode individuel et la formation de l'identité collective des Québécois francophones ; *La Vie heureuse de Léopold Z.* de Gilles Carle (1965) où, grâce au recours à l'ironie, les clivages traditionnels entre les anglophones et les francophones s'estompent dans la culture et les valeurs américaines (« état-uniennes »).

**Mots-clés :** identité, Révolution tranquille, cinéma direct, cinéma national, Crise d'octobre

Le cinéma en tant qu'expression de l'imaginaire individuel de l'artiste mais aussi de l'imaginaire social du groupe dont le cinéaste peut se considérer le représentant offre un champ d'analyse du discours que la société se fait d'elle-même. C'est d'autant plus vrai pour le cinéma du Québec qui joue un important rôle identitaire et exprime les enjeux de la société québécoise. Cet article se propose d'analyser les représentations cinématographiques des conflits identitaires qui ont marqué la société québécoise sur l'exemple de trois films des années 1960 et 1970 : *Le chat dans le sac* (1964) de Gilles Groulx, *La vie heureuse de Léopold Z.* (1965) de Gilles Carle et *Les Ordres* (1974) de Michel Brault, en se référant aux concepts de « cinéma national » (Andrew Higson, Bill Marshall), « cinéma mineur » (Gilles Deleuze) et « cinéma d'identification » (Christian Poirier).

### **Cinéma québécois : cinéma « mineur » ou cinéma national ?**

Vu la situation de la province du Québec, francophone sur un continent américain où les francophones sont à la fois la majorité (dans leur province) et la minorité (au Canada), le cinéma québécois peut être analysé selon deux perspectives qui, d'ailleurs, ne s'excluent pas. D'un côté, on peut le considérer comme un cinéma « mineur », équivalent cinématographique de la « littérature mineure » définie par Deleuze et Guattari dans le texte sur Kafka (cf. 29-49). Dans la deuxième partie de son livre *Cinéma*, intitulée « Image-mouvement », Gilles Deleuze compare la situation des réalisateurs québécois à celle dont parle Kafka en évoquant l'impossibilité de ne pas écrire. Selon Deleuze, le caractère minoritaire de la culture québécoise privilégie son engagement dans la vie de la communauté et le cinéma est un moyen d'expression qui sert cette recherche identitaire. Le rôle du cinéma consiste non seulement à s'adresser à la communauté mais aussi à la créer. Ainsi, selon Deleuze, le cinéma « invente » le peuple (434-435). En tant que cinéma « mineur » ou minoritaire,

le cinéma québécois se définit par rapport à des cinématographies dominantes ou majoritaires : américaine et française.

D'un autre côté, il est possible de décrire le cinéma québécois dans les termes d'un cinéma national. Andrew Higson, dans l'article « The Concept of National Cinema », propose quatre approches de cette notion : le cinéma national peut englober soit toute la production cinématographique d'un pays, soit uniquement les films qui forment l'image de la nation ou interrogent les critères de l'appartenance nationale, soit les films regardés dans un pays ou, enfin, le cinéma artistique mis en avant par les critiques (cf. 36-37). Dans son analyse du cinéma québécois dans *Quebec National Cinema*, Bill Marshall reprend la notion de cinéma national dans les deux premières acceptions, mais, au critère du lieu de production, ajoute celui de la langue : « [...] par le "cinéma national québécois", je comprends un cinéma francophone, vu que c'est avant tout la langue française qui témoigne du caractère distinctif du Québec »<sup>1</sup> (Marshall X). Ainsi, selon le théoricien, le cinéma national québécois est un cinéma francophone car la langue française constitue un élément important de l'identité québécoise<sup>2</sup>.

Pourtant, dans l'article « The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema », Higson revoit ses idées sur le cinéma national qui serait, selon une nouvelle définition, le cinéma qui propose une image cohérente d'une communauté nationale fermée (cf. 62-63). Le théoricien remarque qu'une telle définition ne rend compte ni de la diversité au sein de la nation ni des relations que le cinéma produit par une nation entretient avec d'autres cinématographies. Il propose le concept de cinéma « transnational » (63) : cinéma qui, d'une part, reflète la diversité de la culture nationale et d'autre part, dépasse les frontières nationales. On pourrait interroger le cinéma du Québec en se référant à cet autre concept de Higson. Or, comme le note Marshall, le cinéma de la province francophone du Canada ne peut pas être décrit uniquement selon les critères nationaux et il faut tenir compte de ses liens avec d'autres cinématographies : celles du Canada anglophone, d'Hollywood et de la France :

[...] chaque fois en abordant le cinéma québécois, on doit prendre en considération les lacunes dans sa définition créées par ses relations cinématographiques avec le reste du Canada (notamment avec la province voisine d'Ontario), Hollywood (les gens du cinéma qui y finissent ou y passent leur temps, les goûts du public québécois, la dimension « américaine » de l'identité québécoise) et avec la France (X).

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<sup>1</sup> Si ce n'est pas indiqué autrement, les citations sont traduites en français par l'auteure de cet article.

<sup>2</sup> Les films réalisés en d'autres langues, surtout en anglais, seront considérés ainsi comme des cinématographies minoritaires réalisées au sein du cinéma national québécois (Marshall X).

Ainsi, si une partie des films québécois de la période de la Révolution tranquille s'inscrivent dans la définition plus étroite du cinéma national, il y en a certains qui appartiennent plutôt au cinéma « transnational » ou au moins l'annoncent.

### **Le cinéma de la Révolution tranquille et sa dimension identitaire**

Dans son article de 1989, Andrew Higson a souligné aussi que le cinéma national non seulement exprime l'identité nationale mais aussi la crée (cf. 44). C'est surtout ce deuxième rôle du cinéma en tant qu'art national qui va nous intéresser dans le contexte des films de la Révolution tranquille. Or, la Révolution tranquille constitue un moment de prise de conscience et de transformation de l'autoreprésentation des Canadiens français qui se considéreront dès lors comme des Québécois. Selon Józef Kwaterko, ce changement de nom est révélateur de modifications plus importantes du système des valeurs et des références (cf. Kwaterko 128). L'idéologie de la survivance, les valeurs religieuses et l'attachement à la France cèdent alors la place à une volonté d'autonomisation et de modernisation de la société qui, sans rompre complètement avec l'héritage français, cherche à se définir selon des catégories nouvelles. Le cinéma des années 1950 et 1960 s'inscrit dans ces recherches. Les films qui sont alors réalisés tentent de redéfinir l'identité de la communauté francophone du Québec et de lui donner une expression cinématographique proposant une idéologie nationale différente et de nouveaux critères d'appartenance nationale.

La Révolution tranquille est cruciale dans l'histoire du cinéma. Cela se reflète dans des périodisations proposées par les théoriciens qui y distinguent la période de la Révolution tranquille (cf. Poirier 14-15) ou considèrent cet événement comme une frontière et le point de départ du cinéma national québécois (cf. Marshall 18-19). Selon Christian Poirier, en remplaçant le clergé, le cinéma acquiert alors un nouveau rôle de porte-parole de la communauté canadienne-française et gagne ainsi une importance sociale (cf. Poirier 66). La volonté d'autonomisation, caractéristique de la société canadienne-française de cette époque, se fait sentir aussi dans le domaine de la cinématographie qui tente de se différencier à la fois du modèle français et américain. La mise en place de la filiale française de l'Office National du Film (ONF) à Montréal en 1956 privilégie cette autonomisation qui s'effectuera sur le plan organisationnel aussi bien que thématique et esthétique. C'est au sein de l'ONF qu'émerge le courant appelé « cinéma direct ».

L'importance du cinéma direct vient d'abord du fait qu'il apparaît au moment où la société québécoise se redéfinit et se cherche une nouvelle

identité. Gilles Groulx a mis en relief, dans le contexte québécois, la coïncidence entre le besoin du peuple de se représenter de nouveau et l'apparition du cinéma qui a permis une telle réinvention de la nation : « [c]'est un point de rencontre extraordinaire : au moment où nous nous posons la question de la survivance nationale, nous découvrons un moyen d'expression qui s'adresse à une nation » (10).

Le rôle « identitaire » du cinéma direct vient aussi du fait que ce courant a donné au cinéma québécois (documentaire aussi bien que celui de fiction) un éventail de procédés qui sont devenus ses traits distinctifs. Andrew Higson a noté que le cinéma national se distingue souvent par les moyens d'expression qui sont considérés comme caractéristiques pour la cinématographie d'une nation (cf. « The Concept... » 40). Les procédés du cinéma direct tels que les scènes et dialogues improvisés, le tournage dans des lieux « réels », les témoignages qui remplacent le commentaire de l'auteur peuvent être considérés comme ces moyens d'expression « nationaux ». Le documentaire et le recours à l'esthétique documentaire dans les films de fiction ont servi à se démarquer du cinéma hollywoodien et à souligner ainsi la particularité de la production québécoise. En plus, comme l'a noté Christian Poirier, le rejet de scénarios, en tant que discours préétablis et imposés avant la réalisation du film, s'est inscrit dans la volonté de se distancier des autorités (cf. Poirier 65).

Le cinéma de la Révolution tranquille ne se limite pas au cinéma direct mais en porte la marque au niveau esthétique et thématique. Le rôle du cinéma de cette période dans la formation d'une communauté permet de le considérer, selon le terme de Christian Poirier, comme un « cinéma d'identification », c'est-à-dire un moyen à la fois de représenter et de former l'identité d'un groupe :

Les cinéastes mettent alors l'accent sur l'importance de révéler les Québécois comme ils sont. C'est un cinéma d'identification, le film étant perçu comme un reflet de la réalité, participant à la construction identitaire du sujet québécois moderne en émergence. Il met l'accent sur la différence (nécessaire pour se définir et retrouver qui on est) (270).

Cette identité en train de se créer n'est pourtant pas évidente et sa formation donne lieu à des interrogations, voire des conflits, aussi bien intérieurs que sociaux, politiques et linguistiques. Les films de la Révolution tranquille témoignent de la diversité des rapports conflictuels de cette période où, aux anciennes oppositions (entre les francophones et les anglophones), viennent s'ajouter les conflits intérieurs dans le groupe en formation (systèmes de valeurs, tradition et modernité) ainsi qu'au niveau individuel.

Les trois exemples sur lesquels va s'appuyer l'analyse proposée dans cet article – *Le chat dans le sac* de Gilles Groulx (1964), *Les Ordres* de Michel

Brault (1974) et *La Vie heureuse de Léopold Z.* de Gilles Carle (1965) – constituent différentes représentations des conflits identitaires. Les films choisis ne sont pas des documents à proprement parler. Pourtant, on peut les analyser dans le contexte du cinéma direct de la Révolution tranquille. En effet, aussi bien *Le chat dans le sac* que *Les Ordres* puisent dans l'esthétique du cinéma direct bien qu'ils soient des récits fictionnels. En plus, tous ces films reprennent la problématique identitaire et l'interrogent sur le mode sérieux ou comique, voire ironique, tout en se référant au courant du cinéma direct. Si le film de Brault dépasse les limites temporelles de la Révolution tranquille, il prolonge, par son esthétique et par la manière d'aborder la problématique identitaire, la réflexion entamée à cette période. Enfin, comme le souligne Christian Poirier, les trois réalisateurs appartiennent à la même génération de cinéastes et commencent leurs carrières avec la Révolution tranquille en débutant avec des films dans le style direct réalisés grâce au support de l'ONF (cf. Poirier 63). Cette expérience commune leur fournit une base qu'ils vont ensuite reprendre, discuter ou négocier dans leurs films.

### ***Le chat dans le sac* de Gilles Groulx : identité canadienne française face à l'Autre**

Dans *Le chat dans le sac*, Gilles Groulx présente le conflit identitaire par le biais d'un couple de jeunes, Claude et Barbara, que les spectateurs sont invités à considérer comme représentatifs de la société québécoise. Le film s'ouvre par un commentaire du cinéaste : « Ce film représente le témoignage d'un cinéaste sur l'inquiétude de certains milieux de jeunes au Canada français. Vous êtes en 1964 à Montréal. L'hiver, exceptionnellement doux, jette une lumière grise dans la ville où Claude et Barbara vivent les derniers jours de leur intimité ».

Le conflit identitaire dans le film de Groulx est d'abord un conflit intérieur. Claude, un jeune Canadien français, se trouve balancé entre le désir de révolte et le manque d'action, entre la volonté du changement et l'attachement à la culture traditionnelle. D'une part, Claude critique l'état actuel de la société qu'il juge passive et conformiste. Ses lectures – *La Révolte noire* de Louis Lomax, *La Révolution cubaine* de Claude Julien, *Les Damnés de la terre* de Frantz Fanon, la revue *Parti pris* – mettent en parallèle la situation des Canadiens francophones et celle des populations colonisées et expriment la volonté d'autonomie. Claude voudrait rompre avec la condition du colonisé et sortir de la soumission économique aux anglophones. Pourtant, son désir de rupture ne s'accompagne pas de la volonté d'agir. S'il critique les générations précédentes, sa révolte n'est qu'intellectuelle et il ne fait rien pour changer sa situation. D'autre part, le héros est toujours attaché aux valeurs

traditionnelles : à côté de ses livres « révolutionnaires », on trouve un *Dictionnaire des proverbes, sentences et maximes* de Larousse, symbole de l'héritage français qui continue à constituer une part importante de l'identité du jeune Canadien français.

En fait, Claude hésite toujours entre la tradition et la modernité. Or, l'idée du progrès, quoique proche de ses lectures révolutionnaires, ne semble pas le satisfaire : il rejette aussi bien la société traditionnelle que celle qui est en train de se créer, influencée par le modèle américain. L'hésitation entre la volonté de rupture et la fidélité à la tradition est exprimée par l'opposition entre deux espaces : urbain et rural, ceux-ci marqués symboliquement et idéologiquement. En fait, l'opposition ville-campagne, motif fréquent dans l'histoire de la littérature et influençant le cinéma québécois, n'était pas uniquement celle des lieux. Józef Kwaterko remarque que cette opposition confrontait les valeurs telles qu'industriel-campagnard, protestant-catholique, anglophone-francophone (cf. Kwaterko 79). Gilles Groulx reprend les éléments de cette opposition. La ville de Montréal, où vivent Claude et Barbara, est présentée comme un espace en voie de modernisation mais aussi d'uniformisation avec le modèle américain, ce qui porte le risque de la perte d'identité. À cet espace urbain s'oppose le monde rural lorsqu'à la fin du film Claude décide de partir à la campagne. Avec les espaces clos, monotones de la ville contrastent les lieux ouverts et enneigés de la campagne où Claude retrouve une sorte de liberté qui l'encourage à la réflexion. Le départ du héros peut être interprété comme le retour à la tradition, la volonté de renouer avec l'héritage canadien-français, et il peut constituer ainsi une réponse à la question identitaire. Une telle interprétation s'inscrit dans les analyses du film proposées par exemple par Bill Marshall qui remarque que l'opposition des espaces est renforcée par la bande sonore du film : pendant que les scènes en ville sont accompagnées de la musique jazz de John Coltrane, celles de la campagne font entendre les pièces de Vivaldi et de François Couperin, deux compositeurs du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle – époque mythifiée de la Nouvelle France (cf. Marshall 57). Enfin, aux deux espaces correspondent deux personnages féminins : Barbara, juive anglophone, ancrée dans la ville et une fille francophone de la campagne qui fascine le héros. Cette dernière semble pourtant être l'expression du désir du héros plutôt qu'un personnage réel. Le retour à la vie rurale, à la tradition est ainsi représenté comme un rêve et non comme une solution possible de la question identitaire<sup>3</sup>.

Barbara aborde cette question de manière plus pragmatique mais aussi plus optimiste. Par le biais de ce personnage féminin, le film montre le conflit entre

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<sup>3</sup> En plus, on peut souligner, suite à Bill Marshall, que le voyage du héros vers la tradition – la campagne – s'effectue par un moyen de transport moderne – en voiture. Le réalisateur nuance ainsi cette opposition traditionnelle (Marshall 57).

deux manières de concevoir l'identité, deux approches face aux possibilités de se la forger, qui se présentent à un individu, mais aussi à la société. Si Claude ne cesse de s'interroger sur les fondements et l'essence de son identité (sa phrase – « Je suis Canadien français, donc je me cherche » – par la référence qu'elle fait à la maxime cartésienne exprime la nostalgie d'une identité définie qu'ont les Français de France mais qu'il n'a pas étant, selon ses propres mots, comme « le chat dans le sac »), Barbara accepte le caractère non-défini et instable de l'identité ainsi que la diversité de ses appartenances : d'origine juive mais non religieuse, elle est anglophone mais habite au Québec et joue dans un théâtre francophone. Dans la scène qui imite les témoignages du cinéma direct, où les personnages se présentent devant le caméra, Claude hésite, en cherchant ses mots. Par contre, Barbara déclare son identité de manière claire, en utilisant le pronom « je ». En même temps, elle ne se sent pas limitée par cette déclaration et elle reconstruit librement son identité. En tant qu'actrice, elle semble constamment jouer avec ce qu'elle est. L'entourage des miroirs et le maquillage suggèrent une constante construction de l'identité et la liberté d'être qui elle veut.

Cette liberté de jouer avec son identité est étrangère à Claude qui ne s'entend pas avec Barbara. La jeune femme peut être considérée comme une figure de l'« Autre » dans la mesure où elle représente une autre façon d'être mais aussi en tant que juive anglophone. Claude cherche en elle l'identité : originaire d'une communauté minoritaire – juive – elle pourrait s'identifier avec les Canadiens français. Mais Barbara refuse une telle identification et le fossé entre les deux personnages se creuse. Cette différence s'inscrit dans le conflit entre les francophones et les anglophones du Québec mais suggère aussi l'incapacité du héros à accepter l'altérité. Barbara, par contre, est fascinée par l'« Autre » ; elle voudrait voyager, connaître le reste du Canada et ses habitants, les Inuits et les autres groupes ethniques, partir en Europe. Si l'intérêt qu'elle porte envers l'altérité est empreint de la recherche de l'exotisme, il vient peut-être du fait que la jeune femme appartient également au groupe des « autres » dans le Québec francophone.

Gilles Groulx arrive ainsi à la constatation de l'impossibilité de redéfinir l'identité des Canadiens français de manière définitive. Au conflit intérieur, entre la modernité et la tradition, s'ajoute la contradiction entre deux manières de concevoir l'identité et celui qui oppose les Canadiens français à l'altérité pour laquelle il n'y a pas encore de place dans la communauté, mais qui est bien présente dans la province. Dans le film de Groulx, la société canadienne française en train de se transformer commence à peine à formuler les revendications d'une autonomie et est encore loin d'assumer sa diversité et sa complexité.

### ***Les Ordres* de Michel Brault : identité canadienne française face à la Crise d'octobre**

La même revendication d'autonomie mais exprimée de manière plus directe et la formation de l'identité collective des Québécois francophones toujours sur le mode conflictuel sont problématisées dans le film *Les Ordres* de Michel Brault. Ce long-métrage, qui est révélateur de la tendance caractéristique du cinéma québécois – mise en relief entre autres par Bill Marshall – à balancer entre la fiction et le documentaire (cf. Marshall 40), raconte les événements provoqués par la Crise d'octobre de 1970 et l'introduction de la Loi des mesures de guerre par le biais de l'expérience individuelle de cinq personnages. On peut remarquer que le conflit et la violence liés aux revendications d'autonomie étaient déjà suggérés dans le film de Groulx dans la scène où des enfants à la campagne jouaient à la guerre. Dans le film de Brault, cette violence est présentée de manière directe. Le réalisateur choisit, dans les événements d'octobre 1970, l'épisode des emprisonnements des citoyens suspectés de sympathiser avec le Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ). Le film n'abordant pas les causes politiques de l'événement, les abus du pouvoir sont envisagés dans une perspective individuelle, presque intimiste.

Brault n'est ni le premier ni le dernier à aborder la Crise d'octobre, son film se situant parmi plusieurs représentations cinématographiques de cet événement important de la société québécoise en transformation. L'intérêt porté à cet événement pourrait s'expliquer par son caractère symbolique ou, selon Bill Marshall, « performatif ». En effet, Marshall remarque que :

[...] la crise peut être aussi perçue comme performative, comme étant en réalité à la base du scénario (de l'émergence nationale et identitaire) dont elle se dit être le résultat. Des deux côtés de l'équation nationale, aussi bien canadien que québécois, la crise a donné le moyen de réaffirmer et mettre en scène la nation par le drame joué dans les médias de masse (37-38).

Le film *Les Ordres* présente le rôle identitaire du conflit qui encourage la naissance du sentiment d'appartenance à une société distincte où la communauté des expériences permet de dépasser les séparations de classe ou de génération. Les personnages qui subissent la violence du conflit appartiennent à des groupes différents : celui des ouvriers attachés aux valeurs canadiennes françaises, celui d'une nouvelle élite francophone en train de se créer, celui des jeunes Québécois qui ne suivent pas les modèles traditionnels. La scène dans laquelle un des héros regarde de la voiture le défilé de prisonniers où toutes les catégories de gens se confondent, souligne l'unité du groupe ainsi créé. Ce groupe, représentatif de la société canadienne française,



se transforme en société québécoise : un des personnages, Clément, interrogé sur sa nationalité, se déclare « canadien français » et se rectifie ensuite en disant qu'il est de nationalité « québécoise ».

Pourtant, Brault remarque avec inquiétude que c'est l'expérience de la violence qui est à la base de cette nouvelle identité. C'est une identité qui se forme « contre » : contre les ennemis que sont le pouvoir fédéral et les Canadiens anglais. Les scènes dans la prison où le personnel s'adresse en anglais aux prisonniers francophones soulignent cette séparation. En effet, selon Marta Kijewska-Trembecka, si la Crise d'octobre permet aux Québécois de s'unifier, elle ne fait que creuser le fossé, la distance avec la partie anglophone du Canada (cf. Kijewska-Trembecka 202-204).

C'est dans ce contexte de rupture avec l'héritage anglophone, mais aussi américain, que peuvent être considérés les choix esthétiques de Brault : le refus de la fiction au profit de l'esthétique proche du documentaire (la bande sonore diégétique et les espaces réalistes) et le recours aux procédés caractéristiques du cinéma direct. Dans l'impossibilité de filmer « directement » les scènes des événements passés, le réalisateur introduit une sorte de témoignages, comme dans les films du cinéma direct : les acteurs parlent de leurs personnages et commentent les événements présentés dans le film. Ce procédé met en relief le caractère fictionnel du film mais à la fois donne de l'authenticité émotionnelle aux événements d'octobre 1970 et les actualise.

Il faut pourtant remarquer que Brault ne se limite pas à ces oppositions entre les anglophones et les francophones. Il problématise les événements d'octobre en montrant que la violence était aussi du côté francophone. Si le film joue sur l'opposition entre l'intérieur et l'extérieur, le « chez nous » – la province du Québec et le « dehors » – le reste du Canada, il n'est pas possible d'instaurer une frontière nette entre « nous » et « eux ». Or, les représentants du pouvoir qui font irruption dans l'espace privé des personnages pour procéder à des arrestations dans leurs maisons parlent parfois français. Les partages ne sont donc pas si clairs et le conflit est présent au sein même de la société québécoise.

De même, par la phrase qui ouvre le film – puisée à même les mots prononcés en 1958 par Pierre Elliott Trudeau : « Lorsqu'une forme donnée d'autorité brime un homme injustement, c'est tous les autres hommes qui en sont coupables ; car ce sont eux qui par leur silence et consentement permettent à l'autorité de commettre cet abus. (Pierre Elliott Trudeau, 1958) », Brault met en évidence la responsabilité de la société qui reste passive et conformiste. Cette passivité est soulignée par le passage des images en blanc et noir aux images en couleur dans les scènes dans la prison. Le retour au

blanc et noir à la fin du film peut être interprété comme le retour au conformisme et à la monotonie de la vie quotidienne<sup>4</sup>.

### ***La Vie heureuse de Léopold Z.* de Gilles Carle : identité canadienne française comme richesse des appartenances**

Aussi bien Gilles Groulx que Michel Brault présentent la recherche identitaire sur le mode sérieux et conflictuel. Pourtant, ce n'est pas la seule perspective pour considérer la formation de l'identité québécoise. Christian Poirier remarque que dans le cinéma québécois deux récits identitaires se concurrencent :

[...] un récit hégémonique du manque, du vide, récit tragique de l'empêchement d'être qui recherche une essence identitaire en fermant la question ouverte que pose l'identité (illustré notamment dans les films de Pierre Perrault) ; et un nouveau récit de la pluralité, de l'ambivalence assumée positivement, récit de l'enchantement d'être permettant d'articuler une figure plus diverse de l'identité intégrant, à partir de la langue française, de multiples appartenances (québécoises, canadiennes, nord-américaines, autres origines ethniques, etc.) et une représentation plus positive du passé (12).

Si dans la période de la Révolution tranquille, c'est le premier type de récit qui prédomine, on y réalise aussi des films, quoique plus rarement, qui s'inscrivent dans ce deuxième récit qui va s'imposer dans les années 1980 et surtout 1990. *La Vie heureuse de Léopold Z.* de Gilles Carle en est un exemple<sup>5</sup>. Déjà le titre du film rompt avec une sorte de pessimisme lié à l'impossibilité de retrouver une nouvelle identité inscrit dans les œuvres analysées précédemment, suggérant ainsi qu'une « vie heureuse » est possible malgré la situation identitaire problématique des Canadiens français.

Le héros, Léopold Tremblay, est un Canadien français typique, pour ne pas dire stéréotypé : il vient d'une famille traditionnelle, il a une multitude de frères et sœurs, il travaille dans une entreprise de déneigement, il est attaché à la religion. Le film présente une journée de sa vie, la veille de Noël, et le but de Léopold est d'arriver à temps à la messe. Mais cette appartenance à la

<sup>4</sup> On peut remarquer également que les personnages masculins passifs, l'ouvrier Clermont et un jeune père chômeur Richard, renforcent cette image de la société incapable d'agir. Christian Poirier interprète les figures masculines, notamment paternelles absentes ou passives, dans le cinéma québécois comme l'expression de la perte de points de référence et l'incapacité de définir l'identité dans le discours identitaire québécois (272).

<sup>5</sup> L'ensemble de l'œuvre de Gilles Carle est représentatif pour ce deuxième type de discours identitaire dans le cinéma québécois (Poirier 12).

communauté canadienne-française ne lui pèse pas du tout. S'il vit de manière peu réflexive, cela ne veut pas dire qu'il reste indifférent à la question identitaire. Au contraire, Léopold assume l'identité complexe du Canadien francophone en dépassant les clivages traditionnels entre les francophones et les anglophones, entre la vie traditionnelle et la société de consommation liée au modèle américain, et il le fait comme si c'était une évidence. Ainsi, s'il arrive à l'église, c'est avec une fourrure qu'il a achetée pour sa femme. Il met sous le signe commun, celui des talents familiaux, le chant de son fils dans le chœur de la paroisse et la carrière de chanteuse de jazz de sa belle-sœur. La scène dans laquelle il parcourt en voiture la ville de Montréal avec la sœur de sa femme fait voir cette capacité à assumer la diversité des références identitaires d'un Québécois. En présentant Montréal à sa belle-sœur, Léopold se vante des éléments qui constituent l'héritage français mais aussi britannique : il désigne la Place Ville-Marie comme le monument le plus haut de l'empire britannique, le métro – construit sur le modèle parisien mais plus moderne, l'île Sainte-Hélène, nommée ainsi en mémoire de la femme de Samuel de Champlain, gouverneur de la Nouvelle France. Cette diversité des appartenances n'est plus considérée comme un empêchement à la construction d'une identité mais constitue sa richesse. En plus, le héros ne se sent pas un « colonisé » comme Claude du *Chat dans le sac*. Lorsque la conversation tourne autour de Tahiti, il le confond avec Haïti, mais non pas pour souligner la communauté des expériences des nations francophones colonisées. Le sentiment d'infériorité se transforme en celui de supériorité : Léopold constate que, si les Haïtiens parlent français, c'est sûrement grâce aux missionnaires du Québec.

On peut y voir, bien sûr, l'ironie du cinéaste envers le manque de culture de son personnage mais cette ironie et le comique qui en résulte participent aussi au récit identitaire nouveau, non conflictuel. Or, la plupart des films de la période de la Révolution tranquille aborde la question identitaire sur le mode sérieux, voire tragique. La force du film de Carle vient, par contre, du comique qui permet à la fois l'identification et la distance d'avec les personnages et, ce qui plus est, le traitement plus distancié de la problématique identitaire. Le recours à l'ironie ainsi qu'à la fiction, qui n'est plus dominée ni même accompagnée de l'esthétique documentaire, constitue un nouveau mode de parler de l'identité qui, loin d'être fixe et stable, est quand même vécue de manière non conflictuelle. L'acceptation de la pluralité des références et de l'appartenance au monde américain permet au héros de vivre heureusement.

## Conclusion

Le film de Carle annonce ainsi un autre récit identitaire : celui où les conflits se trouvent dépassés au profit d'une identité complexe qui unit l'héritage français avec l'expérience américaine et ne rejette pas la composante anglophone du Québec, où l'ouverture à la différence favorise la formation de la société plus ouverte. Dans les années 1980 et surtout 1990, ce récit va s'enrichir encore sous l'influence de la diversification de la société québécoise et par l'apport des artistes issus de l'immigration. La figure de l'Autre sera non seulement représentée en tant que partie intégrante de la société québécoise mais accédera à la parole, comme sujet du discours. Si l'identité est souvent perçue sur le mode conflictuel, les cinéastes essaieront, tout de même, de questionner les partages traditionnels, de proposer des solutions possibles et de concilier les diverses composantes de l'identité québécoise en faisant du cinéma québécois un cinéma « transnational ».

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**LA RENAISSANCE DE LA LÉGENDE MÉTISSE ? LES  
ENJEUX DE LA TRADUCTION DE LA BANDE DESSINÉE  
SUR L'EXEMPLE DE LA VERSION POLONAISE  
ET FRANÇAISE DE *LOUIS RIEL : A COMIC-STRIP  
BIOGRAPHY* DE CHESTER BROWN**

**Abstract**

The comic book *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography* outlines the historical background of the conflict between the Métis and the Canadian government which led to the Red River Rebellion (1869-1870) as well as the Northwest Rebellion (1885). The author of the comic book which was awarded three Harvey Awards shows the life of the Métis' charismatic leader – Louis Riel – the iconic character and the founder of the province of Manitoba, until his trial and execution by hanging. The historical context of Brown's book in connection to language problems, such as the main character's bilingualism, is the main challenge for the translator. Another issue, related to the form of the comic book, concerns the relation between text and image. Referring to the theories of comic books translation considered as a semiotic complex, this paper will examine the translation of cultural elements, the historical background, proper names as well as bilingualism in French and Polish versions of *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography* by Chester Brown.

**Keywords:** comic books, graphic novel, graphic/visual translation, semiotic complex, the Métis people

**Résumé**

La bande dessinée *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography* retrace l'histoire des relations tendues des Métis avec le gouvernement canadien ayant abouti à la Rébellion de la Rivière Rouge (1869-1870) et à la Rébellion du Nord-Ouest (1885). Sur ce fond historique, dans sa bande dessinée récompensée de trois prestigieux prix Harvey Award, l'auteur raconte la vie du chef des Métis – Louis Riel – le personnage

emblématique et fondateur de la province du Manitoba, jusqu'à son procès et sa pendaison. Vu la densité du contexte historique présenté, la traduction de l'ouvrage de Brown constitue un défi de taille pour le traducteur, qui doit transmettre non seulement les faits historiques, mais aussi les problèmes linguistiques (bilinguisme du personnage principal) et respecter les contraintes du genre traduit (relation entre le texte et l'image). En nous basant sur les théories de la traduction de la bande dessinée considérée dans les catégories du complexe sémiologique (la traduction graphique), nous nous pencherons sur les questions de la traduction des éléments appartenant à l'univers culturel de l'époque, la traduction des noms propres et la transposition du bilinguisme dans la version française et polonaise de la bande dessinée historique de Chester Brown.

**Mots-clés :** bande dessinée, roman graphique, traduction graphique, complexe sémiotique, les Métis

De nos jours, la bande dessinée qui cesse d'être considérée dans les catégories habituelles du genre destiné au jeune public, occupe une place importante au sein des arts visuels. Le cercle des enthousiastes et des créateurs du *neuvième art* s'élargit successivement et comprend désormais les représentants de toutes les générations et de tous les milieux sociaux. Tout en gardant la forme dessinée, les artistes contemporains élargissent leur perspective pour aborder de nouveaux sujets, comme des problèmes sociaux, économiques, historiques ou interculturels, et participent à la légitimation culturelle de la bande dessinée. Ainsi, on a assisté à la naissance d'un genre nouveau – *le roman graphique (graphic novel)* qui est une bande dessinée plus longue, plus avancée au niveau graphique et littéraire, destinée au public adulte. Dans l'analyse qui suit, nous nous pencherons sur la problématique de la traduction de la bande dessinée dans le contexte des deux soulèvements des Métis canadiens dans les années 60. et 80. du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Afin de présenter les enjeux de traduction liés à la bande dessinée et au roman graphique et pour défendre la thèse selon laquelle cette problématique est digne d'occuper la place au cœur de la réflexion traductologique, d'abord nous nous concentrerons sur les particularités de ce genre d'activité par rapport aux autres types de la traduction pour pouvoir passer ensuite à la présentation du contexte historique des soulèvements des Métis et de leur chef charismatique – Louis Riel. Une telle ouverture théorique permettra de passer à l'analyse des exemples provenant de la traduction française et polonaise de l'ouvrage de Chester Brown.

## 1. Les enjeux de la traduction graphique

La bande dessinée, qui depuis les années 60. du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle est aussi désignée comme *neuvième art*, est le texte multimodal qui met en jeu des interactions entre le verbal et le pictural. Il s'agit d'un discours pluricode à dominante visuelle constitué « d'unités signifiantes iconico-linguistiques dans un système de dépendances internes » (Fresnault-Druelle cité dans Cómित्रe Narváez 134). La création du sens dans le contexte multimodal est un processus qui implique le décodage des relations entre l'élément iconographique et linguistique. D'emblée, le message verbal n'est qu'un composant du réseau sémiotique complexe et le message final est véhiculé en tant que compilation des aspects visuels, sonores et linguistiques (comme au cinéma ou en cas des pièces de théâtre). Comme le note le chercheur espagnol José Yuste Frías, l'entité iconotextuelle en traduction est une structure indissociable où le texte n'est pas *subordonné* à l'image et l'image n'a pas seulement une fonction *illustrative* du texte :

Le couple texte-image en traduction n'est ni un mélange *fusionné* ni un ensemble *hybride* où le texte serait *subordonné* à l'image et l'image simplement *illustrerait* le texte. La nouvelle entité iconotextuelle formée par le couple texte-image est une entité mixte, métisse [...]. Traduire le couple texte-image est donc *une pratique métisse*, c'est-à-dire, métissée et métissante où le texte est image et l'image est texte dans un dialogue permanent d'identités sémiotiques différentes mais ne perdant aucun pourcentage de leur propre caractère sémiotique (255 ; italique dans l'original).

Jakub Jankowski, le chercheur de l'Université de Varsovie, praticien et théoricien de la traduction de la bande dessinée, souligne que malgré des ressemblances avec d'autres types de la traduction audiovisuelle (p. ex. le sous-titrage des films), la traduction de la bande dessinée représente les caractéristiques qui permettent de la classer en tant que type à part. Le chercheur emploie aussi le terme de *traduction graphique* car la bande dessinée est créée « à l'aide d'un langage graphique ou visuel » (67)<sup>1</sup>.

Ascension Sierra Soriano, dans son article consacré au problème de la traduction des interjections dans les bandes dessinées, met aussi l'accent sur le rôle de ce que l'on vient de qualifier de *langage graphique* en précisant :

L'enchevêtrement de l'écriture (du texte), du dessin (de l'iconisme) et du bruitage (de l'onomatopée visuelle ou phonique) définit le langage typique de la BD. Le texte et l'image coexistent donc et doivent s'entremêler pour rendre « l'illusion de la vie » en imageant le mouvement, les sons, la psychologie des personnages (583).

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<sup>1</sup> Si ce n'est pas indiqué autrement, les citations sont traduites en français par l'auteur de cet article.



Pour donner l'exemple de l'*illusion de la vie* créée par les bédéistes, il suffit de rappeler que dans les bandes dessinées, la forme graphique des mots – p.ex. leur taille, leur couleur ou la police de caractère – porte un sens précis qui est complété par la forme de la bulle. Ainsi, une exclamation écrite en lettres majuscules et en gras, placée à l'intérieur d'une bulle éclair représente le cri d'un personnage. L'exemple évoqué illustre encore un autre trait distinctif de la bande dessinée, à savoir la redondance. Le message y est répété à plusieurs niveaux – graphique et linguistique pour augmenter l'effet visé par l'auteur.

Bien évidemment, le sens ne peut être décodé que par le lecteur qui connaît les conventions graphiques du genre constituant aujourd'hui une sorte de langage universel employé par les bédéistes du monde entier. Pierre Fresnault-Druelle l'appelle *la fonction imageante* de la bande dessinée et l'explique sur l'exemple des onomatopées : « Les onomatopées s'intègrent de façon si absolue au dessin [...] qu'elles sont devenues des conventions du code pictural de la BD et se transforment ainsi en 'sons visuels' qui s'appliquent automatiquement, tels quels, à une situation concrète aussi bien en français qu'en espagnol » (43).

Bref, les traits graphiques qui s'ajoutent au message textuel permettent de lui donner une forme audible que le lecteur habitué à cette forme d'expression peut quasiment entendre dans sa tête, comme si c'était prononcé. Si l'on veut y ajouter les traits qui relèvent strictement du dessin – l'expression du visage d'un personnage, ses gestes – et le contexte situationnel, le message véhiculé par cet ensemble sémiotique peut être entièrement décodé et actualisé.

## **2. Louis Riel : A Comic-Strip Biography de Chester Brown – le sujet historique dans la forme moderne**

*Louis Riel : A Comic-Strip Biography* est une bande dessinée historique ou le roman graphique – les deux noms étant employés par les critiques – de l'artiste canadien anglophone – Chester Brown, parue dans sa version originale, en anglais, en 2003 dans la maison d'édition montréalaise Drawn and Quarterly. Dans son ouvrage, Chester Brown retrace la vie du chef charismatique du peuple métis, Louis Riel – né en 1844 à Saint-Boniface, en se concentrant sur les causes et le déroulement de deux soulèvements contre le gouvernement canadien à Ottawa – la Rébellion de la Rivière Rouge (1869-1870) et la Rébellion de Nord-Ouest (1885).

Louis Riel qui dirigea deux gouvernements métis populaires, joua ainsi un rôle central dans l'entrée du Manitoba dans la Confédération (*père du Manitoba*). Après le deuxième soulèvement et la défaite des Métis pendant la bataille de Batoche, Louis Riel fut déclaré coupable d'une haute trahison, et suite à un procès qui souleva de nombreuses controverses, il fut pendu en

novembre 1885. Ce personnage aussi fascinant que mystérieux (à cause de sa prétendue maladie mentale et ses visions messianiques) fut un grand oublié de l'histoire canadienne pendant presque cent ans. C'est seulement dans les années 60. du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle que le Canada devenant à l'époque officiellement bilingue et multiculturel, a redécouvert Louis Riel qui est vite devenu l'idole de la jeunesse révoltée de l'époque et « le précurseur des soulèvements pour la liberté dans les pays dits Tiers Monde » (Swoboda 5-6).

Son mythe, né il y a 50 ans, continue à nourrir les esprits des Canadiens à l'époque contemporaine :

Louis Riel occupe aujourd'hui une meilleure place dans l'histoire canadienne. Pour plusieurs, Louis Riel est désormais un héros canadien, car il incarne de nombreux enjeux modernes du pays, notamment le bilinguisme, le multiculturalisme, le respect de la différence, et le sens aigu de la justice sociale, mieux que nombre de ses contemporains (Stanley).

L'auteur de l'ouvrage analysé – Chester Brown, a donc choisi un sujet historique aussi intéressant que polémique, surtout en prenant en considération les limites imposées par sa forme d'expression artistique. Néanmoins, il faut souligner que sa bande dessinée présente un grand nombre de particularités. Ainsi, son créateur, qui s'était inspiré de Hergé et son célèbre *Tintin* et de Harold Gray avec son *Little Orphan Annie*, a misé sur la forme classique : « Les 221 planches de bande dessinée proprement dites obéissent toutes au même cadre sévère : un gaufrier de six cases de forme carrée parfaitement identiques [...] donne l'impression que toutes les scènes sont d'égale importance » (Paquin 9).

À cette forme classique s'ajoutent encore « des vignettes explicatives, des cartes simplifiées, des phylactères rectangulaires identifiant les personnages par leur nom, leur titre, ou leur fonction, ou encore une bibliographie [qui] éclairent la situation » (Morisson 5).

Qui plus est, dans un souci de garder l'objectivité et de rester en conformité avec l'histoire, l'auteur s'est basé sur les travaux des historiens et il a placé à la fin de son livre 20 pages de notes explicatives avec les références bibliographiques. Dans ses « Notes », il explique en détail les méandres historiques et parfois justifie ses propres décisions (par exemple l'omission de certains faits et personnages, condensations et simplifications au niveau de la narration). Pour cet ouvrage hors du commun, l'auteur a été récompensé en 2004 de trois prix prestigieux Harvey Award (la plus grande distinction pour la bande dessinée décernée en Amérique du Nord) dans les catégories les plus importantes, dont le meilleur créateur de bande dessinée et le meilleur album de l'année précédente.

Il importe de souligner que, même s'il est paru originalement en anglais, le roman graphique de Chester Brown a suscité l'enthousiasme des représentants de deux communautés linguistiques du Canada et a fait l'unanimité parmi les critiques dont témoignent les extraits cités sur le site Internet de la maison d'édition Drawn and Quarterly :

Complete with exhaustive footnotes and an index, it has the thoroughness of a history book yet reads with the personalized vision of a novel. Louis Riel coalesces many of the themes Brown had explored in his earlier works : the relative 'truth' of nonfiction, the relationship between madness and religious experience, the dubious intentions of authority. – *Time*

Brown dresse un portrait saisissant, profondément humain et parfois lyrique à souhait d'une figure qui, après son exécution, est entrée dans la légende d'un pays encore divisé à son propos. Pour ce faire, il a eu à démontrer son extraordinaire maîtrise de la narration graphique et a eu recours à une ligne claire pure, agréable à contempler... Louis Riel est sans contredit un sommet de la BD canadienne, peu importe nos allégeances et nos opinions politiques. – *Le Soleil*

...généreuse, puissante et inspirée, peut-être même incontournable en matière de bande dessinée et de document historique... Et on goûtera fort l'élégance du dessin de Brown. – *Le Devoir* (Maison d'édition Drawn and Quarterly).

### 3. La traduction graphique – deux modes d'application

Dans la suite de notre analyse, afin de démontrer les enjeux de la traduction de l'ouvrage de Chester Brown, nous nous pencherons sur les extraits provenant de deux versions, dont la première – la traduction française par Siodnie Van Den Dries, est parue sous le titre *Louis Riel* dans Les Éditions de la Pastèque à Montréal en 2012. La deuxième version – la traduction polonaise par Bartosz Sztybor intitulée *Louis Riel. Biografia Komiksowa* est sortie en Pologne en 2014 dans la maison d'édition Timof I Cisi Wspólnicy.

Dans l'analyse comparative proposée ci-dessous, vu qu'il s'agit des unités de signification icono-textuelles, chaque exemple sera illustré par une série d'images dans laquelle le premier extrait provient de l'original, le deuxième de la version française et le troisième de la version polonaise de la bande dessinée (les exemples sont également annotés respectivement des dates de parution et des numéros de page).

Ainsi, le premier exemple qui relève de la traduction graphique par excellence, c'est la traduction des onomatopées. Comme le fait remarquer Valérie Morisson :

La variété et le nombre des onomatopées créent un arrière-plan sonore presque naturaliste. Des onomatopées évoquent de manière conventionnelle des tirs, des

craquements mais aussi des coups de hache, des gémissements, des coups sur une porte ou plus singulièrement la rupture d'une corde, le grattement d'une plume sur le papier, le bruit d'une feuille que l'on déchire, le souffle de Riel (37).

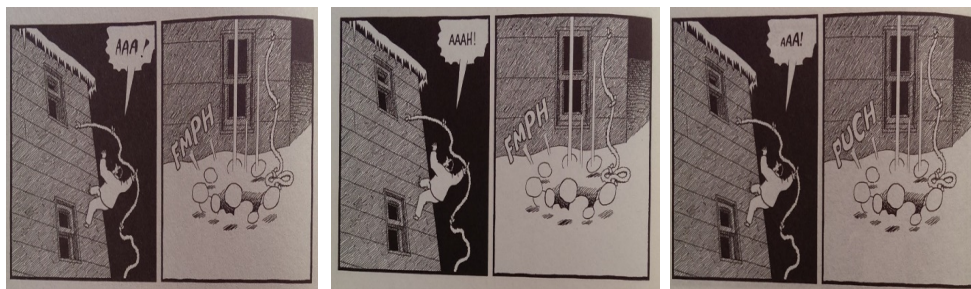


fig. 1 – la traduction des onomatopées (Brown, 2006 : 42 ; Brown, 2012 : 50 ; Brown, 2014 : 42)

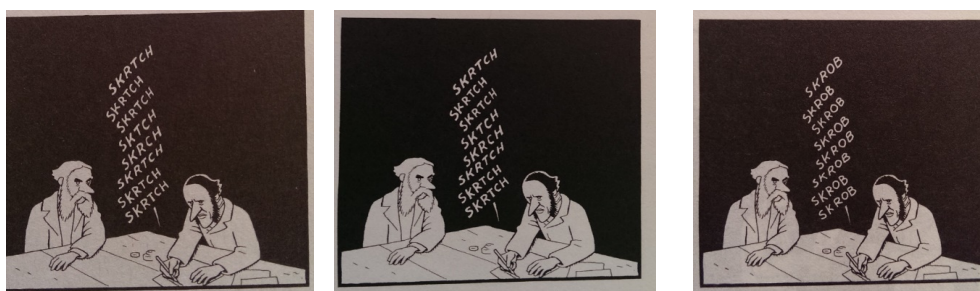


fig. 2 – la traduction des onomatopées (Brown, 2006 : 22 ; Brown, 2012 : 30 ; Brown, 2014 : 22)

Dans les deux extraits évoqués ci-dessus, nous avons affaire à deux types d'onomatopées : celles qui sont inscrites dans les bulles (fig. 1) et celles qui sont intégrées à l'image (fig. 2). Ainsi, le traducteur polonais (troisième dessin de la série), contrairement à la traductrice française (deuxième dessin dans chaque série) a recouru aux équivalents polonais des onomatopées anglaises. De plus, dans la version polonaise les onomatopées sont intégrées au dessin, ce qui a demandé une intervention au niveau graphique d'un lettré – la personne qui écrit les textes dans les phylactères et adapte les dessins. Les spécialistes de la bande dessinée remarquent que les onomatopées anglaises se sont aujourd'hui tellement universalisées que leur reproduction dans la traduction n'est pas une erreur (Sierra Soriano 585). Néanmoins, il faut apprécier une telle intervention graphique qui demande un effort supplémentaire non seulement de la part du traducteur.

Le deuxième problème-clé de l'ouvrage de Brown, c'est la façon de présenter les enjeux du multilinguisme canadien, car « Brown place scrupuleusement différents types de guillemets en fonction des langues utilisées par les protagonistes » (Morisson 37). Ainsi, les propos prononcés par les Métis en français sont marqués par l'emploi des parenthèses et les énoncés en dialecte Cri sont marqués par une double parenthèse (voir la fig. 7). Aussi le bilinguisme et l'accent du héros principal sont marqués. Dans une interview, Chester Brown a expliqué qu'il voulait montrer au lecteur anglophone que Louis Riel parlait anglais mais avec un accent français. C'était particulièrement important dans la dernière partie du livre – le procès. Louis Riel se défendait lui-même contre neuf juges uniquement anglophones. Il se trouvait alors dans une position d'infériorité linguistique et culturelle. Chester Brown a décidé de faire une sorte de transcription graphique de l'accent, donc il omet systématiquement la lettre « h » car ce phonème n'est pas prononcé par les utilisateurs de la langue française (Verstappen).



fig. 3 – la transcription de l'accent de Louis Riel (Brown, 2006 : 228 ; Brown, 2012 : 236 ; Brown, 2014 : 228)

Comme le montrent deux séries ci-dessus, Sidonie Van Den Dries – la traductrice française – n'a employé aucun procédé pour marquer l'accent de Riel, ce qui nous paraît justifié. Le traducteur polonais – Bartosz Szybor – a décidé de remplacer systématiquement la lettre « r » par la lettre « h » pour

marquer l'accent français de Riel. L'idée qui a guidé le traducteur polonais, c'était le désir de montrer, d'une façon assez stéréotypée, la prononciation française du phonème [ʁ]. Il y a quand même un certain paradoxe qu'il faut noter – pendant que l'auteur de l'original omet la lettre « h », le traducteur polonais l'utilise en tant que signe marquant l'accent français.

Deux exemples qui précèdent, c'est-à-dire la traduction des onomatopées et la transcription de l'accent, montrent que le traducteur polonais opte pour l'adaptation à la culture cible. Il est d'autant plus surprenant que, déjà à la première page de la bande dessinée, on trouve dans la version polonaise les unités de mesure de superficie anglo-saxonnes, en polonais *akr* (au pluriel *akry*), qui ne sont pas converties en unités de mesure propres à la culture réceptrice. Ce fait peut provoquer chez le lecteur polonais une confusion entre deux unités dont les noms se ressemblent, à savoir *akr* (4 046,856 422 m<sup>2</sup>) et *ar* (100 m<sup>2</sup>). La traductrice française emploie la technique d'adaptation pour que le lecteur puisse se rendre compte facilement de quel étendu du territoire canadien il s'agit. Dans les autres parties de la BD, on observe une situation analogique avec les unités de longueur ; le traducteur polonais garde les miles tandis que la traductrice française les convertit systématiquement en kilomètres pour faciliter la réception de l'ouvrage.

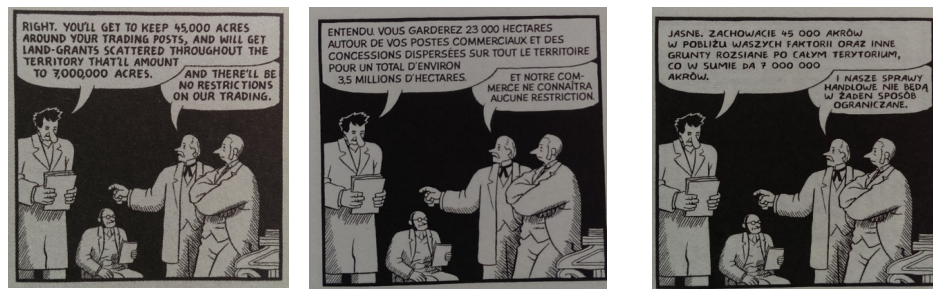


fig. 4 – la traduction des éléments culturels (Brown, 2006 : 7 ; Brown, 2012 : 15 ; Brown, 2014 : 7)

Comme l'action du roman graphique se déroule dans un contexte culturel et historique précis, l'auteur y fait souvent référence aux éléments de la culture locale. En cas du roman traditionnel, telles allusions peuvent être transmises à l'aide des techniques de traduction comme les notes en bas de page, les équivalents descriptifs, les explications définitionnelles<sup>2</sup>. Néanmoins, en cas de

<sup>2</sup> Dans la présente analyse des techniques de traduction des éléments culturels, nous nous inspirons de la typologie proposée par Peter Newmark qui a distingué dans son ouvrage *Approaches to Translation* (1998) les procédés suivants : équivalent culturel – consistant à remplacer un élément culturel du texte original par un autre, qui est adapté à la



BD, vu les contraintes spécifiques du genre (l'espace dans les bulles est limité), l'emploi des techniques explicatives devient impossible. Ainsi, deux exemples qui suivent illustrent les procédés utilisés par les traducteurs confrontés au problème de la présence dans le texte des noms des plats et des aliments.



fig. 5 – la traduction des éléments culturels (Brown, 2006 : 39 ; Brown, 2012 : 47 ; Brown, 2014 : 47)

Dans la série évoquée ci-dessus, la femme d'un Canadien anglophone emprisonné par les Métis lui apporte un dessert – *Apple Brown Betty* (fr. crumble aux pommes – dessert d'origine britannique) – à l'intérieur duquel elle a caché un couteau pour faciliter à son mari la fuite de la prison. La traductrice française a employé le nom du gâteau *la tourte aux pommes* – que l'on peut considérer dans les catégories d'équivalent culturel de *apple pie* américain. Le traducteur polonais a puisé son inspiration plutôt dans la cuisine allemande et autrichienne. Par conséquent, il fait apparaître dans la BD, enracinée dans le contexte culturel nord-américain, d'une façon surprenante et inexplicable le nom du plat de provenance allemande – *strudel*.

L'exemple suivant comprend le nom de l'aliment typiquement amérindien, à savoir *pemmikan* (le nom d'origine cri) constitué d'une graisse animale, de la viande séchée du bison et des fruits de bois. Pour des raisons de conservation, *pemmikan* était utilisé pendant les voyages, notamment les expéditions polaires.

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culture de la langue cible ; équivalent fonctionnel – remplaçant un terme inconnu dans une culture donnée par un autre, ayant la même fonction et équivalent descriptif – une explication, une définition d'un terme nouveau dans le texte d'arrivée.



fig. 6 – la traduction des éléments culturels (Brown, 2006 : 61 ; Brown, 2012 : 69 ; Brown, 2014 : 61)

Comme il s'agit d'un plat faisant partie de la culture métisse, Sidonie Van Den Dries a employé un emprunt. Le traducteur polonais, Bartosz Sztybor, a effacé le contexte culturel, recourant à un équivalent descriptif incompréhensible, même répugnant pour le récepteur polonais, à savoir *miska tłuszczu*, en français littéralement « un bol de graisse ».

Le dernier exemple montre à quel point l'enracinement dans le contexte historique relativement éloigné du pays récepteur peut constituer un défi pour le traducteur. La série ci-dessous met en scène les personnages historiques, deux chefs des Indiens Cri (Poundmaker et Big Bear) qui ont rejoint les Métis dans la Rébellion de Nord-Ouest. L'extrait montre aussi la façon de présenter les éléments descriptifs assumés par le narrateur de l'ouvrage – les notes explicatives dans les phylactères carrés (nom et fonction du personnage) et en bas de case (remarques de nature linguistique).



fig. 7 – la traduction – les personnages historiques (Brown, 2006 : 131 ; Brown, 2012 : 139 ; Brown, 2014 : 131)

La version polonaise du fragment ci-dessus prouve que le traducteur, bien qu'il maîtrise les principes de la traduction graphique, néglige le contexte historique qui est primordial pour l'ouvrage de Brown. Étant donné qu'il



s'agit des noms propres et des personnages historiques, le traducteur devrait opter pour l'exotisation, comme dans la traduction française. Le traducteur polonais s'obstine à donner aux chefs Cri les noms polonais (*Duży Niedźwiedź* et *Łamignat*). Par ce fait, il fait preuve de son ignorance de l'histoire canadienne. De plus, dans le contexte de la bande dessinée polonaise, le nom propre *Łamignat* (littéralement « celui qui brise les os ») existe déjà grâce à un personnage créé par Janusz Christa dans la série intitulée *Kajko i Kokosz*. Ce lien intertextuel peut rendre le récepteur polonais de l'ouvrage de Chester Brown encore plus confus et l'induire en erreur.

Le même extrait montre aussi un problème au niveau terminologique. Le nom anglais *buffalo* peut signifier, selon le contexte, soit *le bison* (pl. *bizon*) soit *le buffle d'Afrique* (pl. *bawół*). Le traducteur polonais a opté pour un équivalent incorrect. Chaque personne qui s'intéresse à l'histoire de l'Amérique du Nord sait que c'est la chasse au bison qui constituait un élément important de la tradition des peuples autochtones.

#### 4. Conclusion

Vu la densité du contexte historique présenté, la traduction de la bande dessinée de Brown met à l'épreuve les compétences du traducteur, qui se trouve confronté non seulement aux éléments historiques, mais aussi aux problèmes linguistiques (bilinguisme du personnage principal) et graphiques. Ainsi, la traduction d'un ouvrage aussi ancré dans l'histoire, à côté de la maîtrise des conventions du genre (p. ex. traduction des onomatopées) et des principes de la traduction graphique, demande de la part du traducteur les connaissances biculturelles et une application consciente d'une stratégie de traduction. Dans l'analyse présentée, qui ne prétend pas à l'exhaustivité, vu le nombre limité d'exemples analysés, nous avons démontré que la traduction française respecte le contexte historique et culturel du texte de départ. En ce qui concerne la traduction polonaise, qui s'était avérée réussie au niveau graphique (le lettrage, la traduction des onomatopées), elle n'est pas acceptable du point de vue historique et culturel. Si l'on considère comme Jakub Jankowski que : « la bande dessinée composée des signes graphiques interactifs devient l'œuvre ouverte selon le concept d'Umberto Eco : c'est au lecteur de la compléter par ses connaissances concernant les conventions du genre de la bande dessinée ainsi que son savoir extratextuel » (80), on doit admettre aussi que la responsabilité qui pèse sur le traducteur en tant que lecteur et en même temps *deuxième auteur* est considérable. On confirme donc la thèse selon laquelle la traduction de la bande dessinée, soit du « genre métissé » (Yuste Frías 255), est une pratique complexe, qui met en jeu les compétences qui relèvent de plusieurs domaines.

Enfin, il est nécessaire de placer l'exemple de la traduction polonaise de *Louis Riel : A Comic-Strip Biography* dans une perspective plus large, voire interculturelle. Faute de compétences suffisantes du traducteur polonais, la version polonaise ne pourra satisfaire ni aux besoins des adolescents ni aux attentes des passionnés de l'histoire du Canada (à cause du contexte historique déformé et d'un grand nombre d'informations fausses). La traduction polonaise constitue donc une occasion manquée de faire connaître au large public l'histoire du Canada par le biais d'un médium moderne. Une bonne traduction de ce type d'ouvrage aurait pu avoir non seulement une valeur artistique et historique, mais aussi pédagogique, comme au Canada où l'on utilise cette bande dessinée dans le cadre scolaire et universitaire. On ne peut sous-estimer ni la bande dessinée en tant que genre, ni les compétences requises pour sa traduction. Un tel désintérêt augmente le nombre des traductions médiocres qui condamnent ce type d'ouvrage à circuler en marge de la culture et renforce encore davantage le stéréotype d'un « petit livre insignifiant pour les ados ».

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**LA TRADUCTION LITTÉRAIRE AU CANADA :  
DOMINATION, COEXISTENCE PAISIBLE OU SOURCE DE  
FERMENT INTELLECTUEL ?**

**Abstract**

This analysis is an attempt to describe the specificity of the literary translations market between Quebec and English-Canada. The author studies an evolution of translation relations between the “two solitudes” which first concerned pragmatic translations from French into English, but which in the course of time has started to involve also literary translations, strongly supported by the State. Moreover, some Quebec translated works have been subsequently incorporated into the English-Canadian literary system, and numerous feminist works have influenced the authors writing in English.

**Keywords:** literary translation, feminism, Quebec, Canada, impact

**Résumé**

La présente analyse constitue une tentative de description de la spécificité du marché des traductions littéraires entre le Québec et le Canada anglais. L’auteure démontre une certaine évolution propre aux relations traductologiques entre les « deux solitudes » qui concernaient tout d’abord des traductions pragmatiques du français vers l’anglais mais qui avec le temps se sont enrichies des traductions littéraires, fortement appuyées par l’Etat. Qui plus est, certaines œuvres québécoises traduites se sont par la suite intégrées au système littéraire canadien-anglais, et bon nombre d’œuvres féministes ont fortement influencé les auteures écrivant en anglais.

**Mots-clés :** traduction littéraire, féminisme, Québec, Canada, influences

Commençons par un petit rappel des débuts officiels de l’activité traductive au Canada. Comme le font remarquer Grant et Mezei, il s’agit d’un acte violent de Jacques Cartier qui en 1534 capture les deux fils du chef iroquois de

Stadaconé (Québec) pour les amener en France en vue de faire d'eux des interprètes pendant des voyages suivants (cf. Grant, Mezei). Les chercheuses voient dans cet événement une preuve de l'appropriation culturelle et de l'exploitation coloniale qui d'une certaine manière aura, dans des siècles à venir, aussi ses répercussions sur la traduction.

Et pourtant, traditionnellement, le Canada est perçu comme un modèle idéal de l'État qui, tout en respectant le bilinguisme officiel, a su élaborer un modèle cohérent non seulement de la formation des traducteurs, mais aussi du marché de traduction. Dans notre analyse, dans un premier temps, nous tenterons de décrire la spécificité propre au marché de traductions, en nous penchant particulièrement sur la situation des traductions littéraires entre le Québec et le Canada anglais et en vérifiant si ce marché reflète le modèle officiel tellement admiré dans le monde entier ou s'il cache au contraire certaines tensions sous-jacentes. De plus, nous essaierons de démontrer une certaine évolution dans les relations traductologiques entre le Québec et le Canada anglais et nous trancherons sur des facteurs qui les ont influencées. Finalement, nous nous pencherons sur le changement de perception de la traduction dans le contexte canadien qui de la fonction d'une simple transmission et médiation d'un message, le plus souvent du Québec vers le Canada anglais, dans les années 1970 et 1980, s'est transformée en phénomène de « traduction déviante » qui a pour but d'exprimer une affiliation fragmentée.

Au Canada bilingue et multiculturel, la traduction a toujours joué un rôle essentiel. Selon Pierre Cardinal,

[p]artout la langue est une institution sociale nettement caractérisée par sa fonction première : la communication entre les hommes. Il est donc normal que, dans des pays à population hétérogène comme le Canada, le moyen essentiel de communication interlinguistique qu'est la traduction se voie, lui aussi, promu au rang d'institution (141).

L'organisation du marché de traduction au Canada découle donc d'une nécessité d'ordre institutionnel et pragmatique car tous les documents officiels doivent être dotés de deux versions langagières. C'est le Bureau de la traduction, le plus grand employeur de traducteurs au Canada, qui est officiellement responsable des traductions et qui a longtemps été le fournisseur exclusif des services de traduction aux organismes fédéraux. Pour illustrer l'ampleur du travail effectué par le Bureau, rappelons d'après Jean Delisle que l'année de son cinquantenaire, il comptait plus de 900 traducteurs, une centaine d'interprètes et autant de terminologues. Son budget annuel s'élevait à plus de 85 millions de dollars. On estimait le nombre de mots traduits par année à environ 300 millions (Delisle, *La Traduction...* 22).

Or, pour garantir un haut niveau de services de traduction, il fallait tout d'abord former des traducteurs de qualité. C'est pour cela que le Bureau fédéral des traductions a parrainé en 1968 un programme de formation universitaire ayant pour but de promouvoir des candidats sollicitant plus tard le travail en tant que traducteurs-interprètes. La création du système cohérent de formation en matière de traduction s'est donc avérée une nécessité. Les débuts des programmes universitaires de traduction remontent à la fin des années 1960 où tout d'abord l'Université de Montréal, suivie bientôt par l'Université Laval à Québec et par l'Université d'Ottawa, a inauguré les premiers programmes complets offrant l'enseignement de la traduction<sup>1</sup>. La traduction peut être ainsi perçue au Canada aussi bien comme profession, industrie et programme d'études, tous les trois découlant en fait des facteurs socio-politiques et non pas tant économiques ou commerciaux.

À en croire Jean Delisle, « si la traduction littéraire n'a jamais été une tradition au Canada, la traduction de textes pragmatiques, par contre, imprègne nos institutions et la vie quotidienne de tous les groupes culturels et linguistiques, qu'ils soient minoritaires ou majoritaires » (*La Traduction...* 22). Et pourtant, il semble que l'avis du traductologue canadien puisse être mis en doute, si l'on se souvient des démarches administratives et politiques visant à encourager le développement de la traduction littéraire, et notamment la *Loi sur les langues officielles* adoptée par le Parlement canadien en 1969, qui – tout en instituant un bilinguisme officiel au niveau fédéral et en accordant des droits égaux à l'anglais et au français, a aussi d'une certaine manière facilité la promotion et le soutien de la traduction littéraire, notamment par la création au sein du Secrétariat d'Etat d'un programme de subventions pour la traduction des livres québécois et canadiens-anglais vers l'autre langue. Par la suite, la traduction prend de l'ampleur, surtout celle du français vers l'anglais, vivement encouragée par le gouvernement fédéral qui, par l'appui du bilinguisme officiel, tente de réagir aux aspirations souverainistes du Québec (cf. Grant, Mezei). A part la loi de 1969, il convient de rappeler aussi la stratégie gouvernementale de 1971 qui visait à promouvoir le bilinguisme, et ceci grâce au programme de subventions parrainé par le Conseil des Arts du Canada adressé aux éditeurs canadiens qui se décideraient à publier les traductions entre les deux langues officielles.

Selon Patricia Claxton, les profits tirés de ce programme sont énormes :

C'est sans aucun doute ce programme qui a vraiment changé le paysage de la littérature traduite de l'anglais au français et du français à l'anglais. À noter que

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<sup>1</sup> Pour plus de détails concernant le système d'enseignement de traduction au Canada, voir entre autres : Mareschal, 2005 ; Bujnowska, 2015.

les ouvrages écrits dans d'autres langues par des Canadiens et traduits vers le français ou vers l'anglais sont également admissibles à ce programme (Claxton).

Le premier grand projet de traduction est inauguré par la maison d'édition montréalaise Le Cercle du Livre de France (aujourd'hui les Éditions Pierre Tisseyre) qui, en 1973, lancera la « Collection des Deux Solitudes », faisant appel au titre du roman de Hugh MacLennan *Two Solitudes* (1945). Or, un des objectifs du programme fédéral est, comme le remarque Delisle, de « permettre aux Canadiens, par le biais de la littérature, de s'ouvrir sur l'autre solitude et d'apprendre à mieux la connaître » (« Traduction au Canada : Survol... »). Après l'adoption en 1974 par l'Assemblée nationale du Québec de la *Loi sur la langue officielle* (la "loi 22"), la traduction littéraire, surtout celle sous le signe d'avant-garde, a pu connaître du succès grâce à de petites maisons d'édition subventionnées par l'État. Un autre projet d'envergure est celui de la maison d'édition Québec-Amérique qui a inauguré à son tour en 1989 la collection « Littérature d'Amérique ». Plus tard, on subventionnera aussi les traductions des langues autochtones vers l'anglais ou le français (cf. Sévigny 24) ainsi que les traductions des littératures minoritaires et migrantes (en espagnol, italien, chinois, arabe et autres).

Qui plus est, le Canada s'ouvrira aux traducteurs venant d'ailleurs. Beaucoup d'initiatives intéressantes veront le jour comme celle réalisée au Centre international de Traduction littéraire de Banff (CITLB) grâce auquel les traducteurs du monde entier viennent traduire auprès des auteurs d'Amérique du Nord ce qui donne souvent des échanges fructueux et finit par l'apparition des traductions d'œuvres littéraires dans des endroits éloignés (comme c'était le cas de la rencontre d'Hélène Rioux avec une traductrice bulgare) (cf. Sévigny 24).

A ces démarches officielles s'attachent des initiatives des traducteurs eux-mêmes, notamment la fondation de l'Association des traducteurs et traductrices littéraires du Canada en 1975 qui est censée soutenir la traduction littéraire et militer en faveur d'une rémunération plus juste des traducteurs littéraires. C'est ainsi que l'Association rappelle elle-même les débuts de l'institutionnalisation de la traduction au Canada :

Étant donné la dualité culturelle et linguistique du Canada, vous trouverez peut-être surprenant que la traduction littéraire soit un phénomène assez récent au pays. Essentiellement, cet art n'a vu le jour qu'au cours des années 1970, en réaction à la crise du FLQ au Québec. Quand cette situation politique a fait les manchettes, les éditeurs ont commencé à vouloir supprimer la barrière culturelle en faisant traduire les œuvres littéraires écrites en français pour un public anglophone. Bon nombre des traductrices et traducteurs qui ont participé à ces premières activités (notamment Patricia Claxton, qui travaille toujours comme traductrice, et feu Philip Stratford) ont fondé l'Association des traducteurs et

traductrices littéraires du Canada (ATTLC) en 1975, afin de partager leurs expériences et de promouvoir leurs objectifs (Carter 2).

Après avoir esquissé les démarches officielles et institutionnelles concernant le marché des traductions littéraires, regardons maintenant de plus près quelques détails avec cette réserve que la présente étude n'a pas prétention d'être exhaustive. En général, on peut diviser l'histoire des traductions littéraires entre le Québec et le Canada anglais en deux temps : le premier engloberait la période d'avant l'institutionnalisation de la traduction littéraire, soit d'avant les années 1970 mentionnées ci-dessus où on traduisait en moyenne un titre par an, le deuxième, après cette date charnière symbolique où, selon Godard, un trois quarts d'œuvres traduites ont paru entre 1972 et 1985, puis on a noté un déclin de nombre de traductions du français en anglais avec 16 titres en 1995, soit la moitié du chiffre de 1986 (« French-Canadian Writers » 477).

Quant à la première période, il y a une dizaine d'années, Annette Hayward a analysé la réception de la littérature québécoise au Canada anglais dans les années 1900-1940. Dans son étude, elle s'appuyait aussi bien sur ses recherches personnelles que sur celles fournies dans la *Bibliographie de livres canadiens traduits de l'anglais au français et du français à l'anglais* par Philippe Stratford. Hayward a constaté l'absence des traductions de la poésie de cette période-là, ainsi que la non-existence du théâtre canadien-français en version anglaise, ce qui découle du fait que la production théâtrale était peu développée dans la province durant les quatre premières décennies du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Même si Stratford a tranché avec fermeté qu'« aucun roman canadien-anglais d'envergure ne fut traduit avant 1960 » (Stratford xiii), Hayward réussit à compléter une liste de romans<sup>2</sup> et convainc que

[s]i l'on s'en tient aux œuvres traduites au Canada, il est évident que le portrait qu'on pouvait se former du Canada français à partir des traductions littéraires [...], mis à part *Les Demi-Civilisés*, était celui d'une société rurale fidèle au passé et aux traditions, profondément attachée à la religion catholique. Dans une ère

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<sup>2</sup> *Les Anciens Canadiens* de Philippe Aubert de Gaspé, père (1863 ; trois traductions différentes, en 1864, 1890, 1996) ; *Les Révélations du crime ou Cambray et ses complices* de François-Réal Angers (1837, trad. 1867) ; *Le Centurion* d'Adolphe-Basile Routhier (1909, trad. aux États-Unis en 1910) ; un choix de textes de Fréchette (trad. en 1917 aux États-Unis) ; *Maria Chapdelaine* de Louis Hémon (1916, trad. 1921 (2) et 1989) ; *Chez Nous* d'Adjutor Rivard (1914, trad. 1924) ; *Récits laurentiens* du Frère Marie-Victorin (1919, trad. 1922 et 1925) ; *Grand Louis l'Innocent* de Marie LeFranc (1925, trad. en 1928 aux États-Unis) ; *Vieilles choses, vieilles gens* de Georges Bouchard (1926, trad. 1928) ; *À la hache* d'Adolphe Nantel (1932, trad. partielle 1937) ; *Les Demi-Civilisés* de Jean-Charles Harvey (1934, trad. 1938) ; *Trente arpents* de Ringuet (1938, trad. 1940).



d'urbanisation et d'industrialisation, cette vision stéréotypée et folklorique devait sans doute être agréable, rassurante. Mais avant de céder à la tentation d'interpréter ce choix d'œuvres à traduire comme un signe de condescendance de la part des Anglo-Canadiens, il faudrait se rappeler que telle était aussi l'image que le Québec (ou ce qu'on appelait alors le Canada français) voulait (se) projeter de lui-même à l'époque (22).

Parmi les romans, c'est sans aucun doute *Maria Chapdelaine* de Louis Hémon qui connaît une fortune exceptionnelle en se dotant presque simultanément de deux traductions, la première créée par sir Andrew Macphail, la deuxième – par William Hume Blake. Les deux hommes ont tout d'abord travaillé ensemble sur la traduction, mais après une divergence d'opinions sur la nécessité ou non de la fidélité envers l'original ont décidé de préparer deux versions séparément. Comme le fait remarquer Hayward,

ce récit écrit par un Français qui a passé fort peu de temps au Québec, deviendra vite, au Québec comme au Canada anglais, le roman « canadien » par excellence (c'est-à-dire canadien-français pour les Québécois d'alors, et canadien tout court pour les Anglo-Canadiens) contre lequel toute œuvre subséquente dans les deux cultures devra, pendant de longues années, se mesurer (26).

Il va sans dire qu'à part le fait que dans la période analysée nous avons affaire à des contacts moins institutionnalisés entre les « deux solitudes », c'est aussi un autre phénomène qui s'accroît. Selon Hayward,

[I]ors de certaines périodes d'ouverture à l'autre, d'« entente cordiale » entre les deux « races », comme on disait, on acceptait de se tendre la main comme à des égaux. Dans le domaine littéraire, cependant, il faut avouer qu'à cette époque-ci la réception de la littérature québécoise du côté anglais s'accompagnait en général d'une vive admiration et d'un grand désir d'émulation. Combien de fois ne lit-on pas, sous la plume des critiques anglocanadiens, que la littérature canadienne-française est nettement supérieure à celle du Canada anglais, à moins qu'ils ne disent – et c'est souvent le cas – que la littérature du Canada français est en fait la seule des deux qui puisse se prétendre distincte, « nationale » (36).

En général, la liste des traductions forgée par la chercheuse témoigne du fait, observable par ailleurs d'une manière générale, que la consécration d'une œuvre littéraire par les marchés éditoriaux en France et aux États-Unis, n'y est pas pour rien. À cela s'ajoutent les constatations de Delisle, selon qui, avant 1960, parmi une soixantaine de titres (principalement les récits des explorateurs et des voyageurs français), la moitié a été traduite et publiée à l'étranger (Angleterre, États-Unis, France) (Delisle, « Traduction au Canada : Survol... »).

Les années 1960 constituent une période fort intéressante durant laquelle on observe une certaine accélération dans les travaux traductologiques : on traduit en moyenne six titres par an, surtout des textes liés d'une manière ou d'une autre à des tendances séparatistes. Ainsi, apparaissent les versions anglaises des œuvres suivantes : *Ethel et le terroriste* de Claude Jasmin (1965, trad. David Walker), *Prochain épisode* d'Hubert Aquin (1967, Penny Williams), *Le couteau sur la table* de Jacques Godbout (1968, Penny Williams). On traduit aussi tels auteurs que : André Langevin, Gérard Bessette et Marie-Claire Blais (Godard, « French-Canadian Writers » 479).

Par contre, dans la période qui commence dans les années 1970 avec l'institutionnalisation de la traduction, plusieurs phénomènes auront lieu. Comme le constate Philip Stratford, premièrement, apparaît une sorte d'« identité collective » (xvii) : les traducteurs, bien que la plupart d'entre eux ne vive pas uniquement de la traduction littéraire, ont l'impression de participer à une mission ayant pour but de faire connaître la littérature québécoise. Sheila Fischman en est l'exception, car elle se consacre presque uniquement à la traduction littéraire, et propose en anglais plus de soixante titres des meilleurs auteurs québécois, parmi lesquels A. Hébert, M.-C. Blais, M. Tremblay, J. Poulin, V.-L. Beaulieu, Y. Beauchemin et R. Carrier.

Suite aux démarches institutionnelles, plusieurs programmes fédéraux et subventions, le nombre de traductions augmente considérablement. Qu'il suffise de rappeler que seulement dans les années 1972-1984 on a traduit plus de 100 romans québécois vers l'anglais. Ainsi, d'après Delisle rappelons que

[d]ans les années 70, le nombre de livres traduits a doublé tous les cinq ans. Jusqu'aux années 80, il y a toujours eu à peu près deux fois plus de traductions littéraires (au sens restreint) du français vers l'anglais que l'inverse. Les statistiques pour 1977 sont les suivantes : F → A : 380 titres ; A → F : 190. Cinq ans plus tard, l'écart s'était rétréci : F → A : 550 ; A → F : 400. Les trois quarts de toutes les traductions littéraires publiées au pays l'ont été depuis 1972, et plus de quatre-vingts pour cent des traductions sont subventionnées (« Traduction au Canada : Survol... »).

En 2004, André Vanasse des Editions XYZ a remarqué que le nombre de traductions de l'anglais en français avait même dépassé peu à peu le nombre de traductions en sens inverse (d'après Grant, Mezei). Un an plus tard, Patricia Claxton a analysé les statistiques concernant le nombre de traductions anglais-français/français-anglais au Canada et la répartition d'aide financière. Selon ses estimations, qu'elle appuie sur les données reçues du Conseil des Arts, 2220 livres ont été traduits et diffusés au Québec et au Canada depuis le début du programme d'aide financière. En ce qui concerne les détails, elle a constaté ce qui suit :

1) pour la non-fiction (catégorie de conception plutôt anglaise), un intérêt plus prononcé et soutenu à traduire en français ; 2) pour la fiction, un intérêt plus marqué à traduire en anglais jusqu'en 1984, puis à peu près égal des deux côtés, avec une légère avance cependant en anglais ; 3) en ce qui concerne le théâtre, intérêt mitigé vers le français ; vers l'anglais, un sursaut au cours de la troisième année, ensuite un intérêt plus modeste mais assez régulier jusqu'en 1995, puis rien sauf en 1998, 2000 et 2001 (3, 1 et 2 respectivement ; 1 seul vers le français dans ces 10 ans) ; 4) en littérature jeunesse, un intérêt vers le français dès la cinquième année, s'accroissant des deux côtés français et anglais en 1988 mais en général plus vif vers le français ; 5) en poésie, intérêt faible vers le français, souvent rien du tout ; du côté anglais, plus régulier, modéré cependant et parfois nul (Claxton)<sup>3</sup>.

Depuis 1983, la SODEC, la Société de développement des entreprises culturelles, soutient et promeut la culture québécoise, notamment en apportant une aide financière. Parmi beaucoup d'autres activités, elle soutient la traduction des œuvres québécoises et appuie l'exportation et la promotion de la littérature québécoise à l'extérieur du Québec.

Le travail des traducteurs est aussi fortement appuyé par l'attribution des prix. Ainsi, déjà en 1974, le Conseil des Arts a créé un prix de 2 500 \$ destiné aux deux meilleures traductions de l'année, l'une en français, l'autre en anglais. Ce prix, d'une valeur de 5 000 \$ à partir de 1976, fait partie de 1987 des Prix littéraires du Gouverneur général. Parmi les lauréats de cette distinction nous pouvons retrouver entre autres : Jean Paré, Sheila Fischman, Yvan Steenhout, Frank Scott, Gilles Hénault, Philip Stratford, Charlotte Melançon et Jane Brierly. De plus, l'Association des traducteurs littéraires a créé en 1981 le Prix John Glassco à la mémoire de cet écrivain et traducteur d'envergure. Ce prix couronne chaque année une œuvre qui constitue pour le traducteur une première traduction littéraire publiée sous forme de livre.

Ceci dit, il convient de noter que le marché de traduction au Canada et les enjeux entre deux groupes langagiers inégaux ne se soumettent pas à l'analyse du champ littéraire, tel qu'il est perçu par Pierre Bourdieu, étant donné le rôle prépondérant de l'aide financière au niveau fédéral et provincial. Ainsi, comme le fait remarquer Godard, « [c]ette intervention gouvernementale directe structure deux marchés superposés : un modèle national subventionné coexiste avec un marché capitaliste soumis aux contraintes économiques internationales » (« La traduction comme... » 75).

Passons maintenant aux choix des œuvres québécoises traduites en anglais pour les lecteurs canadiens à partir des années 1970. Il va sans dire que la sélection se fait avant tout au niveau éditorial : ce sont les maisons d'édition

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<sup>3</sup> Selon Godard, ce déséquilibre renforce parmi les Québécois l'impression d'être une culture traduite, donc dominée (« French-Canadian Writers » 476).

canadiennes-anglaises qui effectuent un choix « d'admission, de légitimation et de consécration » (Godard, « La traduction comme... » 65). A cela s'ajoute la consécration par des marchés étrangers, en particulier français et états-unien, qui augmente énormément l'intérêt des lecteurs au Canada et au Québec<sup>4</sup>. Par la suite apparaît, comme le dit Godard, « le discours poétique des œuvres et le discours socio-culturel qui produisent une représentation de la littérature québécoise et une image du Québec au Canada anglais » (« La traduction comme... » 65).

D'après Jane Koustas qui a analysé l'index *Canadian Translation*, les textes d'Anne Hébert, de Gabrielle Roy et de Marie-Claire Blais sont les textes traduits parmi les auteurs québécois (Koustas 18). Godard attire l'attention sur le fait que le nombre de traductions d'un auteur donné engendre par la suite l'augmentation du nombre de recensions critiques, ce qui encourage ensuite de nouvelles traductions (« La traduction comme... » 66). D'ailleurs, les conclusions de Réjean Beaudoin, Annette Hayward et André Lamontagne, qui – dans le cadre du Projet de recherche subventionné par le CRSH et désigné par le sigle CALQ (Canada anglais – Littérature québécoise) – ont travaillé sur la réception de la littérature québécoise au Canada anglais, confirment cette régularité (cf. Beaudoin, Hayward, Lamontagne). Ainsi, toujours selon Koustas qui a analysé non pas le nombre total des traductions pour chaque auteur mais le pourcentage de l'œuvre traduite, on a traduit vers l'anglais : 90% de l'œuvre d'Anne Hébert, 75% de l'œuvre de Gabrielle Roy et 60% de l'œuvre de Marie-Claire Blais. Vont ensuite : Michel Tremblay, Hubert Aquin, André Major, Jacques Poulin et Nicole Brossard avec 40% de son œuvre traduite (cf. Koustas).

Qui plus est, quelques-uns des auteurs québécois ont été intégrés au système littéraire canadien anglais. Ainsi, trois romans, avec *The Tin Flute* (*Bonheur d'occasion*)<sup>5</sup> de Roy, figuraient parmi les 100 meilleurs romans « canadiens » et la traduction anglaise de *Est-ce que je te dérange ?* (1998) d'Anne Hébert a été nommée finaliste pour le prix Giller en 1999, décerné pour le meilleur roman canadien-anglais, et c'est pour la première fois qu'un roman en traduction est choisi comme finaliste (cf. Godard, « La traduction comme... » 67).

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<sup>4</sup> Rappelons le cas d'Anne Hébert et de ses *Fous de Bassan* qui a quintuplé la vente après avoir reçu le Prix Fémina (Sirois 158) ou encore de Gabrielle Roy et de son *Bonheur d'occasion* traduit en anglais qui a connu la vente élevée à plus de 750 000 exemplaires (Godard, « La traduction comme... » 76).

<sup>5</sup> C'est un peu surprenant vu la qualité de la traduction de Hannah Josephson, fort problématique étant donné plusieurs fautes dans la transmission des éléments culturels, notamment ceux renvoyant à Montréal de l'époque (cf. Godard, « French-Canadian Writers » 478).

Des relations réciproques ayant pour racines l'opération de traduction prennent une forme particulière grâce aux féministes et théoriciennes québécoises (Nicole Brossard, France Théoret) qui ont inspiré énormément les traductrices Barbara Godard et Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, créatrices de « la traduction au féminin ». Ensuite, ce sera entre autres un périodique littéraire féministe bilingue *Tessera* qui encouragera le développement de la théorie féministe de la traduction, non pas limitée uniquement aux asymétries du pouvoir découlant des différences sexuelles et langagières, mais également d'une manière plus générale, à la problématique de l'autorité textuelle et de la transmission du savoir. Le dialogue des féministes québécoises et canadiennes-anglaises sur les pages de *Tessera* aboutira aussi à l'apparition d'un nouveau genre littéraire : la « théorie/fiction » / « fiction-theory ». Ce genre, pratiqué tout d'abord par Nicole Brossard, Suzanne Lamy, France Théoret ou Madeleine Gagnon, trouvera de réalisations élargies par des Canadiennes-anglaises, par exemple Margaret Atwood (poèmes en prose), Smaro Kamboureli (journaux), Aritha Van Herk, Gail Scott (« ficto-criticisms »). Les traductions se font majoritairement du français vers l'anglais, les romancières, poètes ou théoriciennes féministes québécoises (N. Brossard, L. Bersianik, L. Gauvin, F. Théoret, M. Gagnon, J. Marchessault) étant traduites par leurs collègues canadiennes-anglaises. Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, Barbara Godard, Kathy Mezei, Marlene Wildeman, Fiona Strachan, Yvonne Klein, Gail Scott figurent au nombre des principales représentantes de l'approche féministe de la traduction au Canada.

Carolyn Perkes s'est servie de la théorie des polysystèmes pour analyser les enjeux entre les littératures canadienne-anglaise et québécoise en traduction. Selon elle, en général les textes québécois en version anglaise, et ce sont le plus souvent les romans et les nouvelles, n'ont pas bouleversé le système de la culture d'arrivée, avec une seule exception, c'est-à-dire l'écriture féministe qui a pris une position primaire et a réussi à transformer la culture cible de manière à introduire des changements dans le discours péritextuel canadien-anglais et à encourager des traductions « adéquates » (Perkes 1196). Godard polémique avec cette opinion en prétendant que la première génération d'écrivaines québécoises, soit les textes traduits de Roy, Hébert et Blais « ont initié un changement dans le discours littéraire canadien-anglais à leur parution, car la critique y voyait les signes annonciateurs de la modernité longtemps attendue au Canada anglais, même si ce discours a souligné la continuité ensuite » (Godard, « La traduction comme... » 71). D'autre part, toujours selon Godard, la deuxième génération d'écrivaines québécoises, soit les féministes radicales, tout en ayant encouragé par la suite un changement dans le discours traductologique des traductrices féministes au Canada après 1980, n'a pas quand même quitté la périphérie de la production littéraire canadienne en ne gagnant pas de grand public (Godard, « La

traduction comme... » 71). Quoi qu'il en soit, force est de constater que cette influence est palpable et sans aucun doute ne découle pas uniquement d'une traduction réussie du français en anglais, mais aussi d'une nouvelle perception du processus de traduction, comprise en tant que ré-écriture qui ne se fonde pas sur une opposition binaire, mais comme « simultanété » ou « continuum » (Bjerring 169)<sup>6</sup>.

Au terme de ce rapide parcours, qui ne prétend en aucun cas être exhaustif, quelques constatations s'imposent. Ce qui est particulier, c'est l'importance de l'institutionnalisation du marché de traductions littéraires ce qui rend impossible l'observation des tendances qui régissent en général les choix du marché éditorial, décrit notamment par Bourdieu. L'ingérence de l'Etat s'avère en fait positive, vu un nombre plus considérable de traductions par rapport à la période d'avant le processus d'institutionnalisation et la qualité des œuvres traduites, parmi lesquelles on dénombre celles qui n'auraient pas été traduites à cause de leur caractère, disons, peu rentable. Qui plus est, on peut observer non seulement un accueil favorable des œuvres québécoises de la part de la critique canadienne-anglaise, mais également une forte influence de la pensée féministe qui a abouti à un ferment intellectuel hors pair reliant « les deux solitudes ». Pour conclure, rappelons les mots d'Anette Hayward déjà évoquée qui résume l'évolution de la perception de la traduction au Canada de manière suivante :

Pour être parfaitement juste, il faudrait adopter la définition proposée par *Le Désert mauve* de Nicole Brossard, où la traduction n'est plus une simple question de passage d'une langue à une autre, mais recouvre aussi toute reprise d'une histoire pour la raconter autrement, voire la simple tentative de traduire le vécu en mots... [...] L'évocation du *Désert mauve* est d'ailleurs d'autant plus appropriée ici que Nicole Brossard, par l'influence énorme qu'elle a exercée sur certaines féministes du « Canada anglais », rappelle aussi l'importance que peut exercer « la réception de la littérature québécoise » dans l'évolution du (poly) système littéraire canadien anglais (38).

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<sup>6</sup> Il va sans dire qu'aujourd'hui la littérature canadienne, y compris les relations traductologiques au sein du pays, s'est dotée de nouvelles perspectives : ainsi, on écrit aussi dans d'autres langues, notamment en espagnol et ceci fait que la bipartition linguistique : français – anglais ne semble plus valable. Or, dans notre étude, nous avons décidé de nous pencher uniquement sur les enjeux traductologiques entre le Québec et le Canada anglais, vu que ce sont eux qui pendant longtemps constituaient la substance de l'activité de traduction dans le pays.

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**NANCY BURKE BEST M.A. THESIS  
AWARDS**

**PRIX NANCY BURKE POUR LES  
MEILLEURES THÈSES DE MAÎTRISE**



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**UNLAYERING THE MULTILAYERED:  
AN INTERTEXTUAL STUDY OF *A SHORT SAD BOOK* BY  
GEORGE BOWERING**

***A Short Sad Book* – “the encyclopedia of deconstructed  
cultural myths” (Kröller 57)**

*A Short Sad Book*,<sup>1</sup> (1977) Bowering's second published novel,<sup>2</sup> did not draw practically any critical interest until Bowering was awarded Governor General's Award for Fiction for *Burning Water* in 1980. *ASSB* is part of a trilogy together with two book-length poems *Autobiology* (1972) and *Curious* (1973). The author himself calls *ASSB* a truly Canadian work – it is literally brimming with countless in-jokes and references to Canadian and American geography, history, culture and literature. The novel abounds in names of famous poets, novelists, historians, politicians and other figures from Canada and the US, whose presence there is by no means arbitrary, even though it may seem so at first glance. The narrator, who bears strong resemblance to the author and actually claims to be Bowering (speaking from his own experience, continuously making the reader aware of his presence), rejects the natural, the established and the given. The unitary or universal visions of history, culture, literature, the country and the nation are deemed inapplicable, prejudiced and exclusionary. In his essay on *ASSB*, Jason Wiens states that the reader of Bowering's novel is expected to be capable of recognizing “the references not only to other literary texts, but to the workings of literary and cultural politics in Canada.” (299) *ASSB* is the source of infinite intertextual references, both explicit and indirect. The author/narrator inscribes numerous historical, literary and cultural phenomena in order to subvert them. He comes to terms

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<sup>1</sup> Henceforth *ASSB*.

<sup>2</sup> Bowering's first novel *Mirror on the floor* was published in 1967.

with his Canadian origins, his initially troubled identity and the culture of his nation by deconstructing certain Canadian myths.

Intertextuality in *ASSB* is very complex and multilayered making it an arduous task for the reader/critic to unlayer the narrative. In general, intertextual references in the novel are literary, even if the author approaches the subject of history, be it a historical figure or a certain historical event. To shed more light on this it is worth mentioning Linda Hutcheon's theory of "history as intertext" that finds application in *ASSB*. Hutcheon believes that in postmodern novels, history "becomes a text, a discursive construct upon which literature draws as easily as it does upon other artistic constructs" (169-170). The author shows tendency to tamper with historical facts, re-contextualize historical events, "unframe" myths and make the reader look at the history of the country from a completely different perspective. The Canadian literary tradition is being referred to in numerous ways, with the author provoking discussions about Canadian major literary authors, works and literary tendencies. Even though the Hutcheonesque idea of double-dimensional intertextuality makes itself visible in Bowering's novel, such a clear-cut twofold thematic division cannot be straightforwardly applied to the analysis. The reason for this lies in the fact that intertextual referents, be it historical, cultural or literary, intertwine with and depend on one another. They resist separation. Still, the analysis will be roughly divided into three main parts: the first part will be devoted to general intertextual problems, while the second and the third will revolve around historical and literary referents respectively.

### **"Unframing" Canadian Cultural Myths. Canadian Geographical Myth**

The geographical myth is prevalent within Canadian culture, especially the dichotomies between the East and the West as well as the North and the South, so wilfully investigated in Canadian literature. Basically, the dichotomies are believed to stem from economic, social and climatic disparities between Canadian geographical regions. For example, the majority of Canadians live in the South of the country, along the border with the United States. Therefore, the development of the South has been progressing rapidly, in contrast to the North. Three northern Canadian territories: Northwest territories, Nunavut and Yukon have a very harsh climate, often making it impossible for people to live there and sustain a decent living. However, this is a settler-made view fossilized in the course of history. The situation is different in the eyes of the aboriginal people, for whom the northern territories are home. The nature and the climate of the North have been the reasons for the creation of the "mainstream" view of the region imagined as hostile, dangerous and inhuman.

Also, there are historically conditioned dichotomies between regions inhabited by French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians, often referred to as “two solitudes”. It can be said that, in terms of power, the country has been divided into the western and central part, with the latter being the cradle of all the power in the country. The position of eastern provinces is certainly more advantageous than that of the western ones, for – thanks to their geographical location – they are more connected to central Canada. These days, however, the situation is shifting to the advantage of the West which becomes more and more significant to the everyday politics of the country. The geographical myth is present to such an extent, especially in the literature of Central Canada, that it has started to “define Canada’s identity” (Kröller 57). Bowering, an ardent opponent of the Eastern hegemony and Easterners’ proclivity for fixing the culture and producing books on thematic criticism, decides, to use Jason Wiens’s term, to “unframe” the myth. The “unframing” starts with the argument the narrator makes in the part of the novel entitled “The Canadian Geography”:

In the North they don’t<sup>3</sup> say South or down south, they say out. When they are in the north they say out. They have been out or they are going out. In the South we dont say the south but we say up north. Sometimes in the north they say down north. The river flows but you can drive over the line & not see the line & you do & you dont. We have all been and done the same (*ASSB* 22).

The narrator’s seemingly confusing argument is, in fact, pretty clear. The vastness of the country is the reason for the existence of diverse and multiple designations and words Canada’s inhabitants use to describe their location. What matters is also the position of the speaker, whose “there” depends entirely on their “here”. The myth speaks of merely four directions (East, West, South, North), but the narrator realizes the issue is much more complex and cannot be simplified by any means. The discussion continues: “We say back east & back east they say down east & back east & down east they say out west. But along the St. Lawrence river they go north, not down north but north, & they say they are going east” (*ASSB* 22). The narrator describes his experience in Montreal (Bowering lived there for some time), and recollects the need he felt to conform to the way the people of Montreal were speaking. The language may be the same, but the ways of using it differ across Canada hence one has to be careful to adapt to the reality they are in. There is no

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<sup>3</sup> In all of the quotes, non-standard spelling, punctuation and capitalization remains in its original form. The lack of apostrophe in contractions is typical of Bowering’s style, in his poetry and prose alike. The author is also known for his tendency to shorten certain words, for example, ‘thru’ instead of through, and use an ampersand.

Canada, but “Canadas” (Wiens 306). Easterners are being portrayed as indifferent and prone to generalizations: “In the east they say the west coast if you are no longer in Alberta. They think all mountains are the rockies” (*ASSB* 23). The reason for this may lay in their perception that they live in the privileged part of the country and what they are accustomed to is, most probably, applicable to the entire country. Yet, the diversification of geographical divisions resembles the diversification of the Canadian nation. The narrator believes that Canadians “don’t know each other very well” and “have to learn [their] way,” they “have to get [their] directions” (*ASSB* 23). The reader may assume that this is one of the narrator’s dreams mentioned in the foreword, the dream to have Canadians learn their way and get together in this vast country. Bowering deconstructs and “unframes” the Canadian geographical myth. He certainly does not deny it, but augments it by implying that as easy as it may seem to generalize, attach, define and classify, the reality looks completely different – every attempt at unity will eventually prove futile.

### **“National” Yet Not Truly “Canadian”.** **On the Non-Canadianness of Canadian National Symbols**

Every country takes pride in its national symbols and so does Canada. The beaver, ice hockey and the maple leaf are among key symbols that connect and, most importantly, represent the country and its people around the world. The majority sees the three symbols as encompassing the grandeur and history of the country, the country that is hard-working, unique, wise, strong and enduring. However, this perception is disturbed by Bowering on the pages of *ASSB*, where the narrator questions the relevance of the symbols by suggesting that they may actually be furthering divisions among the citizens of the country. Moreover, the truth behind the symbols does not always come to light in its entirety because certain facts are favoured over others so that, for example, while praising diligence and wisdom of the beaver, people forget that it also stands as the symbol of exploitation. Hence symbols are capable of revealing the sad truth about Canada’s history. In *ASSB*, Bowering deconstructs the well-established visions of national symbols, criticizing their “uncritical installation” (Kröller 57).

In 1975, two years before the publication of *ASSB*, the beaver was acknowledged as the national animal. The official designation was just a formality because this animal known for its ingeniousness, resilience and diligence had affirmed its position in Canada long before. It is the creature that connects coats of Arms of the Hudson’s Bay Company and the University of Toronto, the logo of Canadian Pacific Railway, Canadian five-cent piece and

the first pictorial postage stamp issued in the Canadian colonies. The silhouette of a hard-working beaver has been used by national companies and institutions which associated their Canadianness with all the admirable features the animal represented. In *ASSB*, the references to the beaver show that the author aims to deconstruct the notion of the animal being a national symbol, a symbol which connects the entire nation. The narrator asks the reader whether he has ever seen a beaver and says: "I am trying & I cant quite remember & I'm afraid I imagine" (*ASSB* 46). It is clear that this question bothers the narrator, he recollects the five-cent piece on which "there was nearly always a beaver". He admits to having seen a beaver on a stamp, having seen pictures of beavers and holding "fake memories of beavers" (*ASSB* 47). The beaver seems to be a product of imagination, something immaterial, in contrast to an eagle: "I have certainly seen an eagle [...] but have I seen a beaver" (*ASSB* 47). The eagle represents the US, their cultural symbol exists and can be seen, it is material. Does it mean that Canada is simply a country of imagination? "Where are they," the narrator asks, "in Ontario where the maple leaves & silos are & where they really do say 'aboot,' where the maple syrup is where Barbara Ann Scott was where the Happy Gang got paid once a month?" (*ASSB* 47 [punctuation in the original]) Since the narrator has never seen a beaver it must be somewhere in the east, where they have all the rest of Canadian "national" symbols, including a two-time world Champion figure skater and a radio lunchtime show, one of Canada's most popular programs of all time. The beaver seems to have forgotten the Canadian west. The problematic notion of the untraceable beaver is parodied when Laurier Lapierre asks the Prime Minister John A. Macdonald whether he has ever seen a beaver and the response he receives is that he has never seen one. In a way, the author ridicules the key figure on the country's political scene, the father of Confederation and the established father of the country who admits to not having encountered the animal considered to be the symbol of his nation. Perhaps he cannot see the beaver because it has already been eradicated due to the economy- and profit-driven practices of those who run the country.

The narrator is astounded at how difficult it is to see the real beaver. His search for it is reminiscent of the search for an identity. At one point he says: "I have never seen a beaver dying but I have seen Montcalm dying" (*ASSB* 87). These words appear right after the narrator ascertains that "The Death of Montcalm" and "The Death of General Wolfe" are the most important paintings in the history of Canada, known to everyone in the country. In a way, he has not seen Montcalm and Wolfe dying either, for he has seen only culture-mediated representations of their deaths. The same applies to the beaver, who seems to be just a product of a culture. Both paintings mentioned by the narrator portray the deaths of the two commanders during the Seven Years' War: General Montcalm was the commander of the French army while

Wolf was the commander of the British. Both deaths occurred during the Battle of Quebec (also known as the Battle of the Plains of Abraham) in 1759. The battle was a key event in the Seven Years' War, which resulted in the defeat of the French and the beginning of British supremacy in Canada. Both figures have become iconic in the country, every Canadian knows that "Wolfe wore red silk & Montcalm wore blue silk & both wore white wigs" (*ASSB* 87). Paintings, made by European painters, have become greater symbols than the beaver itself. This is most probably the reason behind the parodic undertone of the sentence where the narrator admits to never having seen a dying beaver.

In part four of the novel, which reflects on the state of the publishing industry in Canada, the narrator claims that writers, who are constantly published are not "Canadian literature" but "mindless beaver freaks", and the beaver is not "a national emblem" but "a union label" (*ASSB* 141). The description "mindless freaks" most probably refers to all those writers fixated on the subject of national symbolism, which favours the symbol of the beaver. All in all, the message is simple. The beaver sells. As a result, it becomes an agent of exploitation. One cannot forget that in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries the fur industry in Canada prospered at the expense of beavers, which were killed in large numbers. Fur hats were in vogue in Europe and, according to Shelley White, because "North America had a massive beaver population to exploit, soon both English and French traders were selling pelts at 20 times their original purchase price from North American aboriginals" (par. 4). Even though the fur industry no longer exists in the form it used to more than two centuries ago and the beaver is no longer killed for its fur, the animal has remained a union label.

Ice hockey and lacrosse are officially two national sports. Canadians as a nation are viewed through the prism of their devotion to these two disciplines. Undoubtedly, a lot of Canadians take pride in ice hockey and lacrosse. The narrator of *ASSB* attempts to show how baseless and exclusionary it is to favour certain disciplines over others with regard to their national value. The following is what the narrator has to say about hockey, the allegedly national sport, when he talks about his father, a keen baseball, basketball, and badminton player: "But no hockey. But hockey. Our national game he said on the radio though some more political people even then said lacrosse but that was in a textbook or back east & here we never saw anyone play either it was baseball, versus Grand Coulee" (*ASSB* 29). Then he continues by adding that, in fact, there has never been any "versus", but it has always been "us against them". The repetition of the word "but" at the beginning of the quote seems quite significant as it indicates a kind of necessity to accept something you barely know. The dichotomy between West Canada and Central/Eastern Canada comes to the fore again. The national sport turns out not to be that national, because only a certain group of Canadians can identify with it. Still,



hockey is deemed a Canadian sport, and Canadians tend to be seen as avid hockey fans. The question arises whether anyone has ever cared how prejudiced and stereotypical such labelling really is. Western regions are automatically excluded as areas where ice hockey would prosper due to the fact they do not provide natural ice because of less harsh winters. The myth of hockey as a “unifying” game is deconstructed, though, as Kröller argues, “Bowering’s deconstruction of that myth remains grounded in a southern BC regionalism” (29). This may be true, apart from the fact that Bowering has always refrained from calling himself a regionalist. However, Bowering’s attachment to BC helps him underscore the fact that hockey may not be a truly Canadian sport.

The symbol of the maple leaf undergoes a similar process of deconstruction. As it was in the case of the beaver and national sports, the narrator feels no bond with the maple leaf, which appears in the national anthem and on the flag. He says that he confuses maple leaves with other leaves in his garden, they seem to be characteristic of Central Canada, part of the country where everything “exotic” comes from (*ASSB* 48). “I can’t remember when I first saw a maple tree,” says the narrator, “It was in a zoo. Behind bars” (*ASSB* 52-53). The tree in a zoo symbolizes something exotic, something to look at. It may as well represent Canadian culture as being constrained by all the symbolism imposed on it. References to the maple leaf escalate once the novel progresses:

The maple leaf forever. We used to sing that song & it was just like the barns & silos just like Jerry’s father at the office, things I had never seen. Your father told you about things you had never seen because he was an adult. & the same with Canada. *It told you to sing about things you had never seen.* What did a maple leaf look like. [...] Thirty-five years later I have a tree outside the window of this room & I think it might be a maple tree. But it might not. If they were serious of about making us grow up & become Canadians they should have sent us a maple leaf [emphasis added] (*ASSB* 60-61).

This fragment carries a very clear message. The first sentence refers to one of the two Canadian anthems, the unofficial one, “The Maple Leaf Forever”. By definition, the anthem should reflect the virtues of the nation and be something in which the nation finds its reflection. Most of all, however, the anthem should be something every citizen identifies with and finds comfort in. Unfortunately, the narrator does not know what he sings about, the maple leaf does not evoke any well-known images. In the sentence “They should have sent us a maple leaf,” the pronoun “they” most probably indicates the Easterners or the Central Canada in general, part of the country where all the “national” decisions are made by the government. The narrator may speak for

Westerners in general, who have difficulties conforming to the vision of the culture proposed to them since they cannot identify with it. The unofficial anthem, taught to Canadian children, “conveys messages of English domination and unwanted federalism” (Kröller 58). Indeed, the lyrics praise Britain, the Queen and English officer General Wolfe. No wonder the anthem has remained “unofficial” and never been translated into French. The French would never accept its exclusionary character.

### **“I love This Country, I Didn’t Then...” (ASSB 15). Identity Troubles of a British Columbian**

In the course of Bowering’s career, certain critics (Sparrow, a character in *ASSB* represents one of them) have accused him of being more of an American than a Canadian (Wiens 206). Those who are acquainted with the writer’s *oeuvre* know that, as a student, he was under great influence of American writers, the influence visible in both his poetry and prose. The narrator of *ASSB* devotes much space to the discussion of the identity dilemma he found himself in at a certain moment in his life: “I love this country, I didn’t then, thirty years ago. [...] When I grew up I was going to be an American boy. I loved that country. That was human nature not my mind” – these are the thoughts the narrator shares with readers at the beginning of the novel (*ASSB* 15). Through the narrator’s words, Bowering teases critics who have openly challenged his love of the country and, at the same time, foregrounds his youthful devotion to the US (Rae 166). The devotion to and enthusiasm for the US may stem from the fact that Bowering grew up in Western Canada and could not identify himself with the East. Central Canada and the East in general have been the centres of power from the very beginning. In one of his critical works, Bowering mentions the idea of Eastern Canada as being exotic to him when he was a child. He says it was “anything from Regina on back” (Bowering, *Errata* 84). Another passage in *ASSB* indicating the narrator’s split identity reads as follows: “Let me introduce myself. I am eight years old & my name is George Bowering & I will change that & the name of my country when I grow up. I will shoot the guns out of their hands the way all us Americans do” (*ASSB* 16). What becomes clear is that, as a child, the narrator is more likely to identify with Americans than Canadians. In *Errata*, Bowering recollects his childhood and says that all the schoolbooks he had were addressed to children back east and that he “covered textbooks with Bank of Montreal brown paper, another exotic and eastern thing” (84). Undoubtedly, living in the west made one identify with stereotypes of the nation (US) that was literally closer than Canadians living in the east. *ASSB* indirectly alludes to this fact from his childhood when Stan, a publisher on his search for the

Pretty Good Canadian Novel, follows the novel's footprints and goes east, "toward the text books" (151). The author underlines the division of the country and the fact that even though Westerners live in Canada, they are not the same as people in the East. Unfortunately, the government in the East remains inclined towards the cultural simplification and generalization.

### Reinventing Canadian History

The narrator of *ASSB* makes it clear that to talk about the history of Canada is to talk about the history of the Middle East/Central Canada. In *Errata*, Bowering points out that "In the East the easterners try to get their own history," while "In the West, we westerners try to get something else" and "live west of history" (35). "In Toronto they want the history of Canada instead of the appendix to the history of Britain or Babylon. In the west we make *Tay John*, the West Edmonton Mall and bill bisset. [...] We tried history and it beat us," says Bowering (*Errata* 35). Western writers tend towards invention and anti-conventional practices. They do not try desperately to establish history, but treat it as something malleable, an infinite source of inspiration that gives rise to new myths and 'histories'. In his works, Bowering has often stressed the fact that Canadian west is often treated as peripheral and that, as a child, he felt he was part of a completely different country. The textbooks were addressed to Easterners and so was everything else "exotic" (Bowering, *Imaginary* 84). Unsurprisingly, a lot of attention in *ASSB* is given to the process of writing history, and the notion of history in general – the history that is written down by someone, therefore it is subjective and selective. Bowering is known for treating history as a story, recreating historical events and imagining them anew, as is the case with the history of George Vancouver in *Burning Water* and the history of the McLeans in *Shoot!*. In his essay *A Great Northward Darkness*, the author argues:

Novelists who believe that history is a force or a law tend toward realism and naturalism – Zola, Dreiser, Hugh MacLennan. They believe that history speaks and teaches. Fiction writers who believe that history is someone's act of narrative *tend toward myth and invention* – Conrad, Borges, Robert Kroetsch. History comes from an old European word meaning possession of knowledge. Fiction comes from an old European word meaning the act of shaping [emphasis added] (Bowering, *Imaginary* 3).

The inclination towards myth and invention is characteristic of western Canadian writers. Robert Kroetsch states that "the West does not think historically. I don't think the West wants to move into a historical role, or to

accept history. Myth is more exciting” (Neuman and Wilson 134). Bowering believes that history is someone’s act of narrative; therefore, his view differs from the vision of determinists who perceive history as a given and governing force that “happens before writing” (*Imaginary* 14). Bowering says: “Westerners, perhaps, see Eastern written history as an attempt to manipulate them, who do not think in that language”. Moreover, he states that if anyone wants to “do something about the past” they “do not have to record someone’s recording of it” but “resurrect it, or raise it for the first time” (*Imaginary* 14). This is precisely this resurrection and raising for the first time Bowering pays homage to. His novels mirror the author’s fascination with and devotion to invention. In *ASSB*, the narrator writes his own “short sad history of this country” by bringing to life and incorporating numerous historical figures and events into the plot, in which they are transformed, subverted and parodied in the Hutcheonesque way with the critical distance, though some room is left for the traditionally understood parody as ridicule.

“Canada is the country in which writing history is history” (*ASSB* 74). This sentence is the key statement underlining the entire discussion about history and history writing in Canada. The narrator alludes to the abundance of history books, mostly written in the central regions of the country, but also compares a relatively “uninteresting” and “uneventful” history of Canada to the rich histories of the US and France filled with momentous events: “In some countries killing natives is history & in some countries killing kings is history but in Canada writing history is history” (*ASSB* 74). According to him, every historian in Canada knows that “he is the history of Canada in many volumes”. The most probable allusion here is to the *Tercentenary History of Canada*, a work in three volumes referred to at several points in the novel, written by an Easterner, Frank Basil Tracy. The narrator states that Americans “have more history than they know what to do with,” history rich in such memorable and grand (although tragic) events as the assassination of president Kennedy. In the process of writing the short sad history of Canada, the narrator introduces Lee Harvey Oswald into it “with a bang” (*ASSB* 90). This time, the assassin shoots John A. Macdonald, and as the narrator informs the reader, he is “cold stone sober” when he commits the crime. The reference to the assassin’s sobriety alludes to Macdonald’s publicly known drinking problem. “It [the killing] never got into the history books & you know why” (*ASSB* 100). The reader knows why because several chapters earlier, the narrator states the following: “Have you ever heard of a Canadian prime minister being killed. Of course you havent. It would not be history” (*ASSB* 75-6). However, a figment of Bowering’s imagination enters his own history of the country, underpinning the constructedness of historical writing.

Lester B. Pearson, the protagonist of one of Bowering’s short stories titled *Joining the Lost Generation* (2002) also marks his presence in *ASSB*. The

narrator states that “Lester B. Pearson did not go down in history until he wrote history, then he was part of history” (*ASSB* 75). What Bowering tries to illustrate is the idea that despite Pearson’s remarkable achievements (he was a war veteran and the only prime minister of Canada to receive the Nobel Peace Prize), he would not have found his place in history had he not written memoirs and other books dealing with history. “Napoleon would be nobody here,” says the narrator, turning readers’ attention towards one of the most prominent figures in the history of the world (*ASSB* 75). He did not write history books and “In Canada, the only history is in the history books where it happened. Nobody ever does anything about it, *they write history & enter history*” [emphasis added] (*ASSB* 75). Hence, the conclusion arises that, in a way, historical figures become “real” only when they are “written”. The power of the written word is tremendous and Bowering often touches upon this subject by referring to how history can silence others by not including them in its books, records, etc.

Writing his short sad history of Canada, the narrator desperately tries to assess who the first Canadian was: “If once there were no Canadians & now there are twenty-three million Canadians, sometime there had to be the first Canadian. Either that or there are still no Canadians” (*ASSB* 77). The narrator expresses his insecurity in relation to his own nationality. There are several possible scenarios that are quickly done away with, the narrator ridicules everything he thinks of. Asians, “who walkt across the Bering Sea & became Indians if they did” could not have possibly been the first Canadians because one does not become a Canadian by simply going to Canada from another country (*ASSB* 77). There are references and allusions to the early explorers as well. They, on the other hand, “were French & then they were Scotch. I can tell you the same thing about Lief the Lucky, he was not a Canadian, he was lucky” (*ASSB* 78). The name “Lief the Lucky” – at the same time referring to the children’s book of precisely the same title authored by US immigrant writers Ingri and Edgar Parin d’Aulaire – designates the explorer Leif Erikson, who is considered by some to be the first European to land in North America before Christopher Columbus. However, no one will ever know whether it really was Erikson. Taking into consideration the fact that history books name Columbus the first man to ever step on the American soil, he is the one holding an advantage.

The readers are told that Cartier is in Canadian history, but just like Ernest Hemingway was not a Spaniard, he was not a Canadian. As the narrator remarks hilariously that “You cant even say Hemingway in Spanish”, he adds that Hemingway did not find his way into Spanish literature while Cartier is all over Canadian history (*ASSB* 78). George Vancouver could not have been the first Canadian either, for even though he has a city and an island in Canada, he also has “a city in the United States & a rock in Australia & an arm

in New Zealand & a mountain in Alaska” (*ASSB* 78). What is underlined is that Canadian history is not really about Canadians, but about people of other nationalities who have become main Canadian historical figures. The endeavour to search for the first Canadian proves futile.

### **Where Two Myths Collide – Evangeline and John A. Macdonald**

One of the historical events the narrator refers to in the novel is the exile of the Acadians. Acadians were primarily French settlers in the 17<sup>th</sup> century Canada, who came to the American continent to settle a new land and create their own culture. The Grand Derangement is the major tragic event in their history: in 1755 about 6,000 Acadians were exiled from Canada to the American colonies and England. This dishonourable event is not only part of their history, but also part of the history of Canada. It has been the source of numerous legends and stories. One of them is the story of Evangeline, who is one of the protagonists of *ASSB*. Evangeline is the heroine of the poem entitled *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie*, written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, one of the most famous American poets. The work was published in 1847, and is considered one of the most popular poems in the history of American literature. It is said that Longfellow was inspired to write the long poem having heard the story of young lovers separated during the exile of the Acadians only to find each other at the end of their lives. The enormous popularity of the poem has elevated Evangeline, the Acadian girl, to mythical, almost mystical proportions. In the 1920s, the chapel and statue of Evangeline were built in Grand-Pré, Nova Scotia, the land that had belonged to Acadians before they were deported. Nowadays, the area is part of Grand-Pré National Historic Site, a park commemorating the Acadian settlement. Most importantly, the site has become a famous tourist destination, entirely due to the publication of Longfellow’s poem (Giblett 59). It is a rallying point for Acadians who treat it as their sacred land and believe it to be a key element of their cultural heritage. Longfellow had created the myth which became history, history competed for by Americans (Louisianans) and Canadians. Giblett calls *Evangeline* “a site of struggle between Americans and Canadians, between empire and border, for cultural and natural ownership of the story” (61). The persona of Evangeline has become a constituent of Canadian history, Canadian history created by an American. In *ASSB* Bowering remarks that Americans stand by their word, implying that they believe in Evangeline and revere her and the legend she represents while in Canada no one gives Acadians much thought.

In the novel, Evangeline begins a conversation with a man, whose name can only be guessed at, about the situation of Acadians and tells him that she knows that they (Canadians) want to send Acadians to Louisiana (*ASSB* 38). A suggestive conversation ensues: “‘Well your heads are whatever vegetables you prefer to call them,’ he said. ‘You got that out of a book,’ she replied. ‘Yes,’ he confest. ‘History is us.’ ‘History is us, too.’ ‘Perhaps,’ he smiled. ‘But history is written by winners.’ He moved between her & the tree. ‘& I will write this book’” (*ASSB* 38-39). What the man says mirrors the narrator’s conviction that in Canada writing history is history. The author of a book can write about whatever and whoever he wants, therefore, he is history. In this case, he is the winner who writes it. Evangeline insists that the man remembers her in his book and he concurs to it but refuses to call his book “Evangeline” since he already has a name. The name is “The Tercentenary History of Canada, Volume II, From Champlain to Laurier, MDCVIII – MCMVIII”. He adds that the book will be published by “P.F. Collier & Son” (*ASSB* 39). It is a direct reference to the history book of the same title (with Arabic numerals), published by the same publisher and authored by Frank Basil Tracy. Hence it may be assumed that Evangeline is having a conversation with his persona, to whom the narrator refers later in the text by saying that Frank Basil Tracy told him that Evangeline’s head resembles a turnip (*ASSB* 100). He “soberly” says he will remember her and her comrades. Only if he fulfils his promise will the story of Acadians become history. What is underlined in this peculiar conversation is the subjectivity of history, written by individuals, who often find themselves under the influence of various ideologies, personal beliefs and preferences. Shameful episodes from the country’s history are neither known to the larger audience nor taught at schools. Histories of the oppressed minorities tend to be omitted by history books. Minorities end up being silenced. In fact, there is a chapter on the expulsion of the Acadians in Tracy’s second volume of *Tercentenary History of Canada*, however, there is no mention of the tragedy that struck Acadians, just dry facts. This is how Tracy describes Acadians: “[Their] simplicity meant ignorance, woolly-headed credulity, and dazed perceptions. They had no brains. They were, mentally, cabbages or any other vegetables you please” (Tracy 403). Taking into consideration that Tracy is a historian, he is a person of great authority and power to shape people’s views. In fact, he is endowed with all the tools necessary to, in a way, “establish” history. In consequence, descriptions he makes carry a strong ideological message.

One of the two main plotlines in the novel is built around two people: Evangeline and John A. Macdonald, the first prime minister of Canada (in office between 1867–1873 and 1878–1891). Both of them embody the so-called “founding myths”: Evangeline stands for the myth of the Acadians and their expulsion while Macdonald is linked to the myth of the nation linked to

the story of the building of the railway (Kröller 64). These two myths are being unframed, they “undergo mutations” as their protagonists “step out of the bondage of history [...] and engage in implausible dialogue” (Kröller 64). One of the dialogues between them implies they are engaging themselves in a seemingly sexual intercourse for they converse about sexual positions. Once they turn to position two, Macdonald says: “Oh lovely, yes. I feel the dictates of biology. [...] In any case, since it is the fault of this large *thing* & not your own fault, you can neither be blamed for your position nor be expected to do anything about it” [emphasis in the original] (*ASSB* 71). Anyone who has ever taken any interest in the history of Canadian literature will know the fragment refers to Margaret Atwood’s *Survival*, a thematic guide to Canadian literature, in which she elaborates on the vision of Canada as a “collective victim”, as emerging from Canadian literature, and proposes four basic victim positions (Atwood 36). The definition of position two reads as follows:

Position Two: *to acknowledge the fact that you are a victim, but to explain this as an act of Fate, the Will of God, **the dictates of Biology** (in the case of women, for instance), the necessity decreed by History, or Economics, or the Unconscious, or any other large general powerful idea.* In any case, since it is the fault of this large thing, and not your own fault, you can neither be blamed for your position nor be expected to do anything about it [emphasis added] (Atwood 37).

Not only does Bowering refer to Atwood’s work, but he literally takes one of its sentences. There are several possible interpretations of this allusion and appropriation. Firstly, it is a clearly cut parody of Atwood’s positions stemming from the fact that Bowering is an ardent opponent of any kind of universalizing thematic criticism<sup>4</sup> favoured in the 1970s and 1980s by the writers of the East such as Margaret Atwood and Northrop Frye. In *ASSB*, “the large *thing*” seems to represent a certain organ on the body of a man, who is governed by his physical needs and as a result exploits and subjugates women. The author points to male dominance over women and criticizes the idea that women are destined to be subjugated to men. This criticism is interspersed in the narrative precisely by the transposition of victim positions to sexual positions, or in other words, the author expresses his critical stance by translating “the power relationship” into “sexual terms” (Kröller 64). As Kröller argues, Macdonald’s predominance is “undermined by [the fact that] Evangeline [is endowed] with intellectual independence, initiative and irony, in other words the ability to remake history according to her own wishes” (64). She is independent and ironic enough to take her stance against

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<sup>4</sup> Bowering’s stance towards thematic criticism in Canada will be discussed in greater detail later in the article.



Macdonald's wishes. At a certain point she says that her name is not Evangeline and that she is going to assume position four: "You have to assume position four in a wheelchair. You have to be a creative non-virgin" (*ASSB* 71). (Atwood's fourth victim position speaks of creative non-victims.) The endowment of the silenced and the marginalized (in this case women) with "intellectual independence, initiative and irony" is a characteristic feature of postmodern works (Kröller 64). The marginalized and often silenced groups, such as Indians, women, halfbreeds, social outcasts, are given voice in Bowering's later novels, such as *Burning Water* (1980), *Caprice* (1987), or *Shoot* (1994).

In *ASSB*, Evangeline is portrayed as a real figure, an emotionally-stable, independent woman, who is in love with the Canadian prime minister. In Longfellow's poem, Evangeline is suffering from the loss of her lover Gabriel, the Acadian boy. The inscription of the persona of Evangeline in *ASSB* and the fact that she develops a relationship with Macdonald, something that could not have happened in real life, may carry several significant possible meanings. For example, Evangeline embodies the suffering of Acadians, people who were deprived of Canadian, yet still "their", soil in a merciless way, while Macdonald represents Canadians. His devotion and love towards the Acadian girl may suggest a certain kind of historical reconciliation. On the other hand, in the novel he does not do anything to keep her with him or to save her compatriots. He exposes his corrupted nature as he cannot give her the land because it has already been promised to someone else. The narrator defines the relationship between Evangeline and Macdonald as a "love-hate relationship" (*ASSB* 81). This designation applies to both of them seen as individuals, but also to them as being the representatives of two main Canadian cultures. Evangeline represents French-Canadians while Macdonald is an English-Canadian to the core. It is common knowledge that historically the relationship between the French and the English in Canada has been a fraught one.

Through Evangeline and Macdonald the narrator touches upon other aspects of Canadian politics and culture. There is the passage in the novel where Macdonald offers Evangeline alpine flowers while in the mountains. She responds that "the flowers are nice", but that she "would rather have the earth they grew in". She represents Acadians, and requests the land that was taken away from her compatriots. Macdonald answers her that "this land is promised to Macmillan-Bloedel. [...] Everything over a thousand feet to Macmillan-Bloedel, everything under a thousand feet to CPR" (*ASSB* 80-81). On being asked who Macmillan-Bloedel is the prime minister says he does not know but that *he* is a part of the national policy [emphasis added] (*ASSB* 81). The national policy was an economic program developed and introduced by Macdonald's Conservative Party. Through this parody, the narrator criticizes

one of the most important figures in the history of Canada, so often praised and named the Father of Confederation, as well as the father of the country. Here, he is pictured as an opportunist who has no idea what is being done in front of his eyes. Supposedly, he has no idea what the national policy represented by him stands for. Macmillan-Bloedel, founded in 1908, seventeen years after Macdonald's death, was a leading Canadian forestry company with its offices in Vancouver, BC. This fact exposes one of the postmodern characteristics of the novel – the author's proclivity for tampering with history. It goes without saying that Macdonald could not have possibly met Evangeline or known about the company that did not exist when he was in office. The presence of Macmillan-Bloedel, often referred to as "Mac-Blo", should be interpreted as symbolic, for the subversive appropriation of historical facts in postmodern works is never unsubstantiated. By underlining the division of land between two companies, the narrator accentuates the problem of the commodification of land. The activities of "Mac-Blo" in the forest industry sparked much controversy among environmentalists. The company was responsible for extensive clear-cutting practices, dangerous and destructive to Canadian environment. Peter C. List, in his book *Environmental Ethics and Forestry*, states that "Mac-Blo" benefited tremendously from the cooperation with the government, which substantially lowered prices of concessions on public lands, including "the lowest stumpage fees in the world" (283). Therefore, the persona of Macdonald, the most important man in the country, together with two companies among which the land is being divided symbolize the government's reliance on public companies which, in fact, have more power than the most powerful men. Macdonald's remark that the land is "promist" suggests a certain kind of reciprocal benefits. National authorities exploit the land to their own advantage, the land becomes a commodity, an instrument within the realm of politics. "Mac-Blo" had its headquarters in Vancouver, BC – Bowering's homeland. The exploitation does not come from the East only, it also has its roots in the Canadian west. The parodic undertone of Macdonald's words is exemplified by his referring to the company as "he". Once again, his indifference and short-mindedness are exposed because, apparently, he has no idea what he is talking about. On hearing Macdonald, Evangeline, unafraid of expressing her bold opinions, seems to be more commonsensical than her lover and concludes by saying that "it sounds to [her] like a classic rip-off" (*ASSB* 81).

*ASSB* marks the presence of two Métis leaders, Gabriel Dumont and Louis Riel, the two key figures in the Métis history. Louis Riel, the francophone hero, was the supporter of the Métis culture, who led two resistance movements against the Canadian Confederation (Bumsted 31). He was the leader of the so-called Red River Rebellion in 1869, while Dumont was an ally of Riel, who commanded the Métis forces in the North-West Rebellion of

1885 (Gaudry 2008). Both rebellions (these were the two key ones) were the result of the Canadian government's ignorance towards the Metis people and their cause. They were deprived of the right to their land, the issue directly connected to the commodification of the land of the Canadian West – the subject that is undertaken by Bowering in his novel *Caprice* (1987) – and the destruction of resources. The narrator of the novel makes a reference to Riel's death by hanging: "What has an end. The rope Romantic Louis depends from" (*ASSB*, 97). Macdonald is the one who orders to have Riel hanged. As Bumsted states in *The Peoples of Canada: A Post-Confederation History*, Riel's execution "had a lasting negative impact in Canada, polarizing the new nation along ethno-religious lines" (31). The persona of Macdonald may also be perceived as the embodiment of the "myth of the unified country", the myth that is eventually being deconstructed. Macdonald may have signed the British North America act, which established the Canadian Confederation, but deep down he held no respect for ethnic and religious minorities and eventually divided the country even more so that the division became even more bitter and deeper after the hanging of Riel, who was and is now considered a heroic victim by Francophones and indigenous people of Canada. Besides, *ASSB* parodically alludes to Macdonald's drinking problem and racist outlook. While being under the influence of alcohol, he calls Gabriel Dumont a "lunatic redskin", showing his attitude towards the Natives who, in his eyes, are no one but savages (*ASSB* 93). No mention of that in history books.

The part of *ASSB* with the suggestive title "The Return of Evangeline", centres on the scene when Evangeline comes from women's heaven and wants to go back to Canada. It is year 1976 and the main characters of the scene are Sparrow the nationalist critic, Robert Fulford, the journalist from Toronto, and "the bilingual head of the government" (*ASSB* 175) whose name is not known, yet the adjective "bilingual" and the given year would suggest Pierre Trudeau. The narrator commences by saying that "[m]any a weary year had passt since the burning of Grand-Pré, & while no one was forgiving anything many were forgetting something" (*ASSB* 175). The history of Acadians is gradually forgotten, Canadians and the government do not seek their forgiveness and offer nothing to assuage the pain of past heinous events. Evangeline wants to create history anew by putting her story once again to Fulford and when they finally meet, the journalist warmly welcomes the heroine "in her own land" (*ASSB* 176). He says:

The PM said *we just want to correct a sad political misdeed of the past, & type thirty at the bottom of another happy story. [...] What we are really after is to assuage our guilt & bring relief from a national neurosis regarding opprest minorities such as Louis Riel & yourself [emphasis added]* (*ASSB* 184).

Sparrow's response to these words exposes his nationalist narrow-mindedness: "Riel wasnt even a citizen *either*" [emphasis added] (*ASSB* 184). Fulford's words, on the other hand, expose government's opportunism. The PM and other Canadians do not really bother with making it up to Acadians, they just want to make themselves feel better with the burden they have to carry. On hearing these words the vision of Evangeline replies: "you are arguing psychology, & psychology is a system of cyclical time" (*ASSB* 184). The conversation ensues between her and the narrator. Evangeline assures him that since the narrator "mouths" the novel, he surely knows there is mythical time and adds that "These three easterners are from a text book, they are admythical in short. Myth is a truth of repetitive time. It is a blot that bleeds thru all time" (*ASSB* 184).

**Reinventing Canadian Literary Tradition.  
Bowering's Criticism of Thematic Criticism.  
How Truly Canadian is CanLit?**

"Canadian literature will not understand this novel"  
(Bowering, *ASSB* 132).

*ASSB* heavily relies on references to literature. Numerous authors and works, be it Canadian, British or American, reappear throughout the novel and play a vital part in the process of its interpretation. George Bowering has never conformed to the mainstream. Since his college years, he has been engaging himself in literary practices that often remain at odds with the mainstream Canadian literary scene. Because of that, many a time he has been accused of anti-Canadian sentiments. *ASSB*, "the encyclopedia of deconstructed myths" (Kröller 57), embodies Bowering's vision of the Canadian literary tradition and literary scene in general. *ASSB* touches upon issues such as the prevalence and hegemony of Eastern thematic criticism promoting literary clichés and the realist roots and characteristics of the majority of Canadian works. Besides, Bowering/the narrator alludes to and compares the natures of American and Canadian literature(s) delineating key differences between the two. Last but not least, *ASSB* generates intertextual connections with works of eminent American writers such as Gertrude Stein, William Carlos Williams and Charles Olson, whose styles and theories have wielded an enormous influence on Bowering the writer.

The subject of the literary thematic criticism prevalent in the 1960s and '70s in Canada recurs in the novel. The narrator refers to two Canadian critics, Northrop Frye and Margaret Atwood (she is referred to as 'Peggy'), whose works preoccupied with thematic criticism have been tremendously influential

in the shaping of the Canadian literary scene. Back in the second half of the twentieth century, Canadian literature was very often interpreted in the light of Frye's and Atwood's works, which make attempts at discovering and describing allegedly common and unifying *Canadian* literary themes and meanings. Even though these interpreting practices are no longer in vogue to the extent they used to be, Frye's and Atwood's criticism resulted in establishing certain themes, styles and tastes as more favourable than others. Bowering has already been portrayed as the man who opposes the so-called "culture-fixing", that is the creation of one culture viewed through the prism of certain established features, be it cultural or literary. Frye is directly referred to only once in the novel, when Stan is astounded at why Evangeline's name takes on various forms:<sup>5</sup> "Why does your name keep changing, askt Stan, but this was not the question he had walkt three hundred & fifty miles to put to her or to *the Frye school in general*" [emphasis added] (*ASSB* 162). Undoubtedly, it is the allusion to Frye, who, in his *The Bush Garden: Essays on Canadian Imagination* (1971), presents a set of myths that supposedly "haunt the Canadian imagination" and discusses several important yet rhetorical "Canadian" identity questions (Boyd, par. 3). One of them is "Where is here?", a question that he believes preoccupies the Canadian mind (Frye 222). However, as Bowering suggests, British Columbia writers tend to replace it with one of their own: "Where can I lay down my head?" (Bowering, *Imaginary* 24). What Bowering suggests is that Frye's Canadian cultural mythology may be, in fact, applicable to Central Canada only, and this is not the entire country.

Together with Frye, Margaret Atwood belongs to the group of the most famous Canadian writers of thematic criticism. Her much criticized *Survival: a thematic guide to Canadian Literature* (1972) has not ceased to be CanLit's canonical work. Bowering and Atwood have always held each other in high esteem, therefore Bowering's appropriations and judgments on Atwood's work do not have any disrespectful undertones. What Bowering does, to paraphrase Hutcheon's term, is distance himself critically from what Atwood's seminal works, *Survival* and *Surfacing* (1972) stand for.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Stan is the protagonist of the second plot line in *ASSB* (next to the story of Evangeline and Macdonald). He is the disguised character of Stan Bevington, the founder of Coach House Books publishing company that publishes experimental poetry. In *ASSB*, Stan travels the country searching for "The Pretty Good Canadian Novel".

<sup>6</sup> One very important intertext with regard to Atwood, *Survival* and the victim positions have already been discussed in the first part of the article and will not be analysed further. As it was mentioned at the beginning, it is worth noticing that the double dimensionality of intertextuality does not always allow the critic to separate the two, historical and literary, dimensions for they exist in mutual relation to one another.

A little treatise on snow. In Fredericton you cant look out your window across the street because the snow is piled half as high as an elm tree. They say Canada has a frozen heart, a heart made of ice, kept hard all summer like under sawdust. *They say* her breath is terrible & she will track you thru & snap your body into pieces & eat them. For this reason we have invented the snowmobile. It is the triumph of the machine over obvious mythology [emphasis added] (*ASSB* 43-44).

This passage from *ASSB* depicts the narrator's attitude towards the view of Canada as the mythical land of snow and hostile nature that can always find a way to kill a defenceless human being. This view of nature and the country as a frozen land has been recurring in Canadian literature to the extent it has become a literary cliché. In the introductory chapter to *Survival*, Atwood explains that, in the book, she attempts to outline key patterns which "constitute the shape of Canadian literature" and that "[this] shape is also a reflection of a national habit of mind" (13). Moreover, in the title chapter she generalizes that "every culture has a single unifying and informing symbol at its core": America has the Frontier, Great Britain has the Island, while Canada has *Survival* (31-32). In one of his essays treating British Columbia novels, Bowering counteracts this statement by saying that "*Survival* seems as important to Australian literature as to Canadian" and proposes his own "unifying and informing symbol for the culture of British Columbia. The symbol is Home, or more specifically, the attempt to find or make a home" (Bowering, *Imaginary* 23). What Bowering means by "Home" is "family". Moreover, he states that families are not, as Atwood suggests, "traps in which you're caught", because "traps are still" and B.C. families are not (Bowering, *Imaginary* 24):

Like a lot of things in *Survival*, this notion [family as a trap] is likely feasible in the imaginations of central and eastern Canada, but not easily applicable to the situation in B.C. and its literature. People in B.C. are less likely to feel trapped in their families than to be several thousand miles from them, or working with them on a patch of land out of sight of the next family (Bowering, *Imaginary* 23).

Hence the key Canadian literary patterns are not necessarily true for the Canadian West. British Columbia writers often employ a completely different set of motives, incomparable to their Eastern counterparts. Bowering distrusts this kind of assignments and sees them as acts of fiction themselves (*Imaginary* 23).

"The really smart ones will remember that Peggy has been here since chapter VI & now here she is..." (*ASSB* 161-162). Peggy is alluded to in all the references to snow, lakes, surfacing, death by nature and death by drowning. This by no means an exhaustive list of phenomena included next to Atwood's nickname underscores the thematization of the natural landscape.

The publication of works on thematic criticism led to the situation in which readers read and interpreted literature almost solely through the prism of themes. In *A Great Northward Darkness*, Bowering makes a bold statement that one does not have to “shovel snow or Louis Riel into your book to write a Canadian text” (13). Paradoxically this is exactly what he does in *ASSB*, which has both Riel and a considerable pile of snow in it. Hence what Bowering may allude to is his own novel which, on the other hand, both epitomizes and parodies everything he dislikes about CanLit criticism. In one of the chapters Bowering explicitly refers to himself as the narrator by admitting to smoking one cigar for each chapter during the writing process. Humorously, he advises the reader to have a cigar while reading in order to “to get your mouth around Canadian literature,” and adds that “that is more than they manage to do on de Maisonneuve Boulevard in Montreal” (*ASSB* 128). It is the address of Concordia University hence Bowering alludes to academics’ lack of interest in, or rather, their misguided perception of Canadian literature. By saying that his (or David McFadden’s) smoking makes cigars more meaningful to CanLit than the beaver, snow and lakes are, Bowering exposes the author’s role in shaping myths and literary trends. Cigars are truly Canadian to him, lakes are truly Canadian for Atwood. Subjectivity and constructedness are the words that need no further explanation here. The narrator states: “The Black Mountain Influence wasn’t interested in lakes. Raymond Knister was interested in lakes. Peggy was interested in lakes. A.J.M. Smith was interested in lakes. It had to be the lakes” (*ASSB* 130). All the authors mentioned come from Central and Eastern Canada, the land of grand lakes that shapes their imaginations. Yet the Black Mountain Influence “wasn’t interested in lakes,” and this reference to the Black Mountain literary practices hints at another intertextual discussion that will be discussed in the later part of the article.

### **“It’s Not a Clear Lake with a Body on the Bottom” (*ASSB* 134) – Exposing Canadian Modernist Realism**

It is so easy to write something & make it appear as if it is there. We all like to read about something as if it is there. This is not writing it is thinking, I mean this, yes, *a mirror on the floor*. It is all around us, writing that makes it appear as if it is there. [...] The reader loves Canadian literature because he can just about see it is as if it is there. [...] Put it another way, it is not a clear lake with a body on the bottom. It is a body & who needs a lake. This is the real body of literature [emphasis added] (*ASSB* 134).

Throughout *ASSB*, Bowering refers and alludes to realist conventions, being aware of the fact that what he presents to the reader falls short of the

expectations of a realist novel. The quote opening this section shows Bowering's attitude towards realist literature. He objects to the prevalence of this kind of works on the Canadian literary scene, believing that modernist realist<sup>7</sup> works are not focused on the real 'writing' and the language. However, he does not fail to allude to his own experience with realist fiction. The "mirror on the floor" mentioned by the narrator is, at the same time, the title of the first novel published by Bowering. Written in the realist mode, the novel centers on the lives of two students, Bob Small and George Delsing, in Vancouver, BC. Both characters, Delsing being an alter-ego of Bowering, recur in Bowering's later novels (including *Burning Water* and *Caprice*) and short stories. After the publication of *Mirror on the floor* (1967), however, Bowering rejected most of realist conventions such as the omniscient narrator, the linearity of plot and time etc. that became the subject of his criticism. What he knows and opposes simultaneously is the fact that realist tendencies in Canadian literature have been prevalent to the extent that they have become, in a sense, traditional. He himself turns towards post-realist fiction, fiction that is a "stained-glass window" on the world.

*ASSB* lacks almost everything that characterizes a well-constructed novel. In a way, it is an anti-novel, with its discontinuity, incoherence, shattered plots and lack of descriptions. It is a book imbued with parody and subversion. The only moments in the novel when the reader has a chance of reading a description are the passages taken verbatim from famous Canadian modern realist works. Two of them are Hugh MacLennan's *Two Solitudes* (1945) and Ernest Buckler's *The Mountain and the Valley* (1952). The narrator of *ASSB* incorporates other texts, treats them as his own and even transforms them in order to parody a certain convention. For example, there is a passage in *ASSB* describing one morning from the life of David, the protagonist of Buckler's novel. The fragment is taken from Buckler's novel, it is narrated from the third person perspective and contains several sophisticated similes. At the end, however, the illusion of continuity and realist description is shattered when the reader reads the following words: "Jesus, I feel shitty in the morning, thought David. All the description and sentimentality feels like a bloody screech hangover" (*ASSB* 152). Eventually, even the protagonist of the novel cannot bear the overwhelming and omnipresent metaphorical descriptions. Later on, the narrator uses wordplay to allude to Buckler by saying that David is going to "be buckling on some snow shoes" (*ASSB* 153). In both cases, MacLennan's and Buckler's, the reader who is not acquainted with the novels will not be able to grasp intertextual allusions.

All the discussion over what the novel is and what it is not is also parodied by Bowering. He believes that he can do whatever he wants with the characters, underlining the constructedness and subjectivity of fiction. He



challenges the well-known rules governing the structure of a novel by trivializing them:

Now you dont have a novel unless you have a person & then you have a person talking to another person & later on perhaps many people but usually a person talking to another person. Stan is running water in the bathtub, & in comes Carol wearing nothing but some beads around her waist. Why do we say Stan, because we have been talking about Stan, & that's the way it goes, the novel. It could have been Laurier Lapierre (*ASSB* 145).

For all those people who object to Bowering's stance on the novel, the author has a piece of advice: "& if you say this isnt the way a novel is supposed to grow what can I say. [...] If you expect me to do that well why dont you follow me around for a day & make me be continuous" (*ASSB* 142). In other words, Bowering revels in his own, discontinuous tradition, teasing all the aficionados of modernist realist continuity. It is worth noticing that in the 1970s Canadian literature shifted towards more experimental and unconventional literature, while modernist realist tendencies started to shrink.

### **Doing it the American Way? Charles Olson's, Gertrude Stein's and William Carlos Williams' Influence on Bowering's Style**

In his numerous interviews and critical essays Bowering often refers to Charles Olson, Gertrude Stein and William Carlos Williams, whose works and beliefs have been of paramount importance to him during his formative years as a writer. In general, Bowering's style owes much to the Black Mountain poetics, the Beat Generation, as well as the American avant-garde and Imagism, yet it is Olson, Stein and Williams, whose artistic "imprints" recur with the greatest frequency. This is also true of *ASSB*, which contains references to Bowering's literary gurus that are of importance to this study. *ASSB* is a novel in which the author enters into the dialogue with the literary tradition of his country hence Bowering underscores, refers to and hints at his own tradition, the tradition standing in opposition to its Canadian counterpart.

Charles Olson and Robert Creeley are two key figures associated with the Black Mountain College in North Carolina, the place that became the centre of avant-garde poetics in the 1960s. Even though Black Mountain poets did not share one particular style, they were all influenced by Charles Olson's seminal essay *Projective Verse* (1950) and the belief that it was necessary to break up with the traditional Eliotian poetry and delve into the language-oriented, unrestricted poetry of William Carlos Williams. This is what Bowering has been doing in his poetry. What he also does, however, is transpose his poetic style to his novels. *ASSB* is a perfect example of a novel aware not only of its

linguistic constructedness, but also of the role of the reader in noticing this constructedness and making sense out of it. At one point, the narrator directly refers to the Black Mountain influence:

“If you can hear it you have the right to speak.” & that’s the trouble with Canadian literature. Canadian literature was once written by fake Hurons & now it is written by the Immigrant Experience. It is never written by the Black Mountain Influence. It is written by anthropologists who know what a maple leaf looks like but dont know *how it speaks* [emphasis added] (*ASSB* 131).

The allegation that Canadian Literature “is never written by the Black Mountain Influence” directly relates to Bowering’s experience as a Canadian author. Nowadays, after being awarded Governor General’s Awards for both poetry and fiction, he has gained a widespread recognition. In *ASSB*, however, he mocks Central Canada’s tendency to set up national literary standards by saying that “[l]ately they have been pretending that there is succession in Canadian literature. One of them said there are two main lines of Canadian poetry & I notices that I’m not in either. This is happening around the Great Lakes & down the St Lawrence River, the same place Canadian history happened” (*ASSB*, 166). These words underline the issue that has already been discussed, namely the western writers’ feeling of being excluded from the Canadian literary tradition. Bowering remains critically distanced and seems not to be holding a grudge, asserting throughout the novel that he loves his country. Nevertheless, he points out to a very crucial phenomenon in the Canadian literary landscape, adding: “[t]o get into Canadian literature it helps to be a little child named Alec or Ian or Malcolm. Canadian literature like Canadian history is largely Scottish” (*ASSB* 166).

One of the most important things stressed in the quotation above, however, is the importance of the language itself. The “problem with Canadian literature” most probably relates to the over-abundance of realist fiction fixated on themes. It was the problem that was really overwhelming to writers such as Bowering in the 1970s, when *ASSB* was published. Once written by “fake Hurons” and now by “the Immigrant experience”, CanLit heavily relied on themes. How the language speaks was of lesser (if any) importance than what it says and by whom it is used. Bowering, similarly to Williams and Olson, is known for his love of words and attention to every syllable. Why can poetry not be about poetry? Why should a novel be about “the immigrant experience” and not about what it really is – the power of words? Why should subject matter be deemed more important than structure? There are no easy answers to these questions. One cannot say that there are no poets and novelists focusing exclusively on the language and structure of their works. There are many of them; unfortunately, their experimental, avant-gardist and

innovative works are often marginalized and dismissed as either ‘unapproachable’, ‘difficult to follow’ and ‘intellectually demanding’ or ‘simplistic’ and ‘unappealing in subject matter’. The practice of elevating the theme over the structure of a literary work is what Bowering strongly opposes. *ASSB* touches upon numerous very significant issues pertaining to Canada, literature, history and culture so, in a way, it is thematically dense. Yet, this intertextual analysis proves how inconspicuous references in the novel can be. It is often the language that guides the reader and opens their mind to all the possible interpretations. In one of his essays on Williams, Bowering says that “[o]ur experience is learned and transmitted and believed in only when we form language – thus the importance of the care for words and lines and sentences (prior to thought of “subject”), that will not falsify experience” (*Imaginary* 124). Bowering presents “the perception and the things perceived”, just like Williams – who takes “such care with construction as to make the ideas and emotions arise in the reader’s own consciousness, as in music, architecture and other non-verbal arts”. The “principle of precision of observation” characterizes Williams’ poetry, in which he recreates rather than describes the simple, the well-known, and the ordinary (Bowering, *Imaginary* 125-127). He also values imagination as one of the greatest human endowments: “In William’s terms, the imagination is the means by which a human being may find his place in the universe of flux, in the storm of time, because the imagination is itself capable of producing change” (Bowering, *Imaginary* 130). Bowering also believes in the power of imagination, the concept of which is fundamental to his poetry and prose. Imagination remains an indispensable tool for both the author and the reader, opening multiple possibilities of recreation and interpretation.

The intertextual study of *ASSB* would not be complete without mentioning the role of Gertrude Stein. With its title, *A Short Sad Book* directly yet not so obviously refers to Gertrude Stein’s book *A Long Gay Book* (1933). As it has already been mentioned, Stein’s penchant for language and her almost intimidating avant-gardism have wielded a considerable influence on Bowering. Taking into consideration Bowering’s preference of language and structure to the subject matter, it comes as no surprise that the intertextual relation between the two novels does not rely on shared themes. Traces of Stein are woven into the structure and language of *ASSB*, with only one direct reference to the author in the course of the novel:

Novels always have the emotion of the novelist in them. *Thick heart felt emotion.*  
The blood of others pumped by the man in the attic. & people say why archaic  
avant garde writing. This is warmed over Gertrude Stein *there I said her name*  
why are you doing it [emphasis mine, MM] (*ASSB* 154).

Stein's works are often heavily autobiographical; the author's presence can be felt in the very process of reading. Bowering has always opposed the presumption that novels bear no traces of their authors in them and live a life of their own. He elaborates on this subject in his essay "*A three-sided room: notes on the limitations of modernist realism*", where he comes to a rather paradoxical yet well-grounded conclusion that modernist realist novels are, in fact, unrealistic. One of the most important reasons for this is that authors of modernist realist prose deny both their and the readers' presence. Bowering believes that novels "have the emotion of the novelist in them" (24), the emotion by no means invisible.

In his study of *ASSB*, Ian Rae makes several insightful remarks with regard to structural similarities between *ASSB* and *A Long Gay Book*. The first thing he notices is pretty obvious to those who are acquainted with both works and is linked to Bowering's drawing on Stein's cubist syntax characterized by repetitiveness. Rae makes an accurate observation that by implementing Stein's syntactic technique, Bowering "deconstruct[s] a Canadian literary tradition he considers Eurocentric and biased towards realism and the east" (169). He also says that this form of syntax "dispels the realist illusion of the mirror image, yet he breaks this imposed code through parody, both in Linda Hutcheon's sense of repetition with a difference and in the popular sense of satire" (Rae 169). Stein's unique style originated in her dismissal of conventional realist techniques. This dismissal is visible in Bowering's works, not only in *ASSB*, but also in *Autobiology*. In order to visualize Steinian echoes on the syntactic level in *ASSB* it is worth comparing short fragments from both works. Putting the subject matter aside, this is *how* Stein writes:

Loving is loving and being a baby is something. Loving is loving. Being a baby is something. Having been a baby is something. Not having been a baby is something that comes not to be anything and that is a thing that is beginning. (...) Loving is something. Anything is something. Babies are something. Being a baby is something. Not being a baby is something (1933).

Next, there is a passage from Bowering's novel:

Try to think hard & try to imagine or really try to remember, try hard to picture it if you can remember, & in fact forget imagine & remember remember: have you ever seen a beaver. Remember this is prose have you ever seen a beaver. I am trying & I cant quite remember & I'm afraid I imagine (*ASSB* 46).

This is how, in Rae's terms, Bowering "employs Stein's looping patterns of repetition" (169). Rae's remark that Bowering, contrary to Stein, does not "derail the narrative" and produce "mind-wandering monotony" slightly misses the point. Stein creates her own, unique style; her own, unconventional

narrative, and so does Bowering. Drawing on, to paraphrase what he said about Williams, the mother that he chose, Bowering still remains innovative and true to his very own self. The grand American modernist seems to be a source of power for Bowering, who does everything in order not to get caught in the realist web that entangles the literary tradition of his country. All that has been said seems to answer the seemingly rhetorical question inscribed in the sentence “[t]his is warmed over Gertrude Stein [...] why are you doing it” (*ASSB* 154).

*ASSB* is the source of infinite allusions and intertextual references. Each of them, however, seems to be significant in its own way, giving proof to the postmodern stance that postmodern intertextuality is not merely about the resurrection of past styles and voices. Bowering draws on the history of his country to recreate it, to shape it anew, to turn it into a narrative. He enters into a dialogue with cultural myths of his country, exposing and deconstructing them. Importantly, parodic intertextuality is present in the novel, endowing the author with the ability to successfully inscribe and subvert historical facts, literary tendencies, conventions, discourses, stereotypes, myths and signs. Even though this intertextual study of *A Short Sad Book* is by no means exhaustive and numerous intertextual references have been omitted, the original purpose has been achieved, for the novel has been presented in its multilayeredness. Of tremendous importance is also the fact that the workings of intertextuality are distinctly postmodern, all the signs, allusions, hints, signals and references are there to make a statement, a statement that has to be read by the reader.

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**REVIEWS**

**COMPTES RENDUS**





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**MAGDALENA PALUSZKIEWICZ-MISIACZEK.  
*NAJEŹDŹCY W SUKNIACH. AWANS SPOŁECZNY  
I ZMIANA WIKTORIAŃSKIEGO WIZERUNKU KOBIETY  
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239 PAGES. ISBN: 978-83-8019-259-1***

The recently published book by Magdalena Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek offers a thorough historical overhaul of the shift Canadian women and Canadian society on the whole experienced at the turn of the 19th and the 20th centuries. The author leads the readers from the heart of the Victorian Era, with all its limitations posed on Canadian women, to the World War I when suffragettes achieved their long-term goal: the voting rights for women. The phrase “invaders” used in the title, derives from a 19th century colourful, almost hysteria-mongering poem describing the worldly threats posed by women’s emancipation, clearly hints this book aims not only at providing an in-depth academic sources, but also at entertaining the reader. The latter has been accomplished to the fullest.

The author Magdalena Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek, a graduate of English Language Department, Jagiellonian University, holds a Ph.D. in history and currently works as an Assistant Professor at the Institute of American Studies and Polish Diaspora at the Jagiellonian University. History of women in the USA and Canada with particular emphasis on women’s organizations as well as social and charitable work are one of dr. Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek’s main areas of scholarly interests, which she has been continually exploring for years, as her Ph.D. dissertation (2004) was also devoted to the women of the Victorian Era in Canada. It is thus clear that the qualifications and the author’s knowledge on the subject guarantee the book’s high credibility.

The book is divided into six logically structured chapters. Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek opens the book with an outline of the historical background, capably describing women’s roles in Canadian society, starting from

indigenous communities, through the New France period, finally reaching the British North America era. Neatly shortening such a vast area of topics and time frames into one chapter is never an easy task but the author managed to accomplish it smoothly, offering a synthesis useful for those familiar with the issues as well as the readers who are only now beginning to explore the history of Canadian women.

The second, perhaps the most colourful and captivating chapter, describes the harsh reality of the Victorian era and the social expectations Canadian women were subject to. By evenly combining legal analysis of current legislation with archival testimonies of actual individuals' stories, Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek paints a not-so-pretty picture of everyday life in the 19th century Canada. The chapter includes thoughts and in-depth information on the institution of marriage and separation, raising children and further issues connected with male-female interactions, even as unseemly as seduction. It is bluntly shown how lowly valued a woman in the Victorian era's family was. This is especially interesting in relation to the common idea of women ruling the household in the discussed period. The parade of outrageous – in today's terms – court rulings presented by the author in a gripping literary manner makes the chapter highly engaging to the reader.

The author decided to devote the third chapter to the introduction of certain institutions and organizations active in the turn-of-the-century Canada as well as the type of work they were responsible for (i.e. philanthropic, religious or fighting towards granting temperance in Canada). The next part in a clear manner depicts the state of educational paths available for girls at this peculiar time, from the most basic stages to higher educational possibilities, however weak they might have been. The situation of female teachers is also brought up.

This leads to the highly engaging fifth chapter of the book and its key question: the professional work performed by Canadian women of the era and, most importantly, the obstacles they were forced to overcome in order to earn basic respect from their co-workers, employers and the society. Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek pays a fascinating homage to those who pioneered in the fields traditionally considered as masculine – especially law and medicine. Even for those familiar with the social situation of professional women workers in Canada at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the stories of unfair treatments and the hostility they experienced versus their personal strength, courage, success and the highest prices some of them had to pay are still thought-provoking and refreshing.

The last part of the book focuses on the suffragettes' struggle and the process which eventually led Canadian women to winning their right to vote in federal elections, which occurred during the World War I. The Victorian Era was inevitably far gone and it was more clear than ever how dramatically

the female role in the society had changed. This moment in history serves as a logical end to the book in focus.

What makes Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek's book successful is the perfect balance between engaging storytelling and scientific data provided, which the author has smoothly accomplished. A wide variety of legal documents, archival information and written sources on the topic presented in the book are highly notable on their own, yet it is the colourfully written individual stories of remarkable personas of the time which makes this work an exceptionally good read. Every chapter comes with shortened biographies of some outstanding Canadian women, which are listed in the table of contents.

If I were to point out any weaknesses of the book, I would draw attention to sometimes oversimplified answers provided when it comes to the complex issues of social changes in the turn-of-the-century Canada. It may seem at times the author wanted to draw a clear cause and effect line between multifaceted problems, which is not always possible and as such should be mentioned in a book of this kind.

However, this does not have to be considered as a flaw necessarily, since the book could be treated as a satisfying introductory reading for those only developing their interest in the history of women and the social history of Canada. Due to its almost textbook-like feel, I recommend Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek's book as a useful source of content for educators and academic teachers looking forward to engaging their students in a discussion on women's rights and history of Canada, especially since credible writings on this topic in the Polish language are still not easily accessible.

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**JOANNA WARMUZIŃSKA-ROGÓŻ, *SZKICE  
O PRZEKŁADZIE LITERACKIM. LITERATURA RODEM  
Z QUEBECU W POLSCE. KATOWICE: WYDAWNICTWO  
UNIwersytetu śląskiego, 2016. 312 PAGES.  
ISSN 0208-6336, ISBN 978-83-8012-773-9***

*Szkice o przekładzie literackim. Literatura rodem z Quebecu w Polsce (Essais sur la traduction littéraire. La littérature québécoise en Pologne)*, ouvrage de Joanna Warmuzińska-Rogóż, paru en 2016, propose une réflexion sur les textes littéraires – romanesques, poétiques et théâtraux – écrits au Québec en français et traduits vers le polonais. À part l’inventaire des traductions (présenté sous forme de liste à la fin de l’ouvrage) et des remarques générales sur la présence de la littérature québécoise en Pologne et les modalités de sa traduction, l’auteure interroge un certain nombre de traductions choisies. Dans l’« Introduction », Warmuzińska-Rogóż insiste sur le double caractère de son ouvrage, inspiré à la fois des études littéraires et de la traductologie. Elle signale la difficulté de parler de la littérature québécoise en polonais, l’adjectif « quebecki » (« québécois ») n’étant pas admis dans les dictionnaires. D’autres termes utilisés (« littérature canadienne d’expression française ») insistent trop sur le lien avec la France ou ne rendent pas compte de la définition territoriale de cette littérature, issue d’une province, mais n’englobant pas la totalité des textes littéraires francophones écrits au Canada.

Le premier chapitre propose un panorama des traductions de la littérature québécoise en polonais selon les genres (romans, poésie, théâtre). Après avoir souligné le peu de savoir des lecteurs polonais sur la littérature canadienne en général, et québécoise en particulier, l’auteure passe à l’analyse des facteurs qui conditionnent les choix des textes à traduire, à savoir la décision de l’éditeur et du traducteur, leur fascination personnelle, l’ensemble des problèmes et valeurs entre la culture de départ et celle d’accueil, les prix littéraires, la renommée de l’œuvre à l’étranger, notamment en France. Malgré cette diversité des motifs, les traductions polonaises se rapportent aux œuvres

les plus représentatives de la littérature du Québec, et le nombre croissant des publications scientifiques en polonais sur cette littérature contribue à sa connaissance parmi les lecteurs polonais.

Dans le deuxième chapitre, l'auteure interroge le paratexte des romans québécois traduits en polonais. Joanna Warmuzińska-Rogóż souligne pertinemment que des éléments comme profil de la maison d'édition, couverture, quatrième de couverture, traduction du titre du roman, présence ou absence de la préface témoignent des stratégies qui ont pour but non seulement de présenter le texte et son auteur mais aussi de leur assurer une visibilité dans le système littéraire de la culture d'accueil.

À partir du troisième chapitre, on retrouve l'analyse des textes particuliers. L'étude de la traduction est à chaque fois accompagnée de la présentation du contexte littéraire et culturel du texte en question. La première de ces analyses concerne *Maria Chapdelaine* (1916) de Louis Hémon en tant que l'unique exemple de « série » (Balcerzan) qui autorise une « diagnose interprétative » (Legeżyńska) des traductions en présence dans une culture allophone, le roman étant traduit en polonais deux fois : en 1923 par Stefan Godlewski et en 2012 par Kinga Rydzewska. La comparaison des deux traductions du roman (traduction des « québécismes », des toponymes, des noms propres, des éléments culturels) permet de juger le texte de Rydzewska comme plus fidèle au texte de départ. Pourtant, Warmuzińska-Rogóż remarque que les deux traducteurs s'éloignent de l'objectif que s'était fixé Hémon, à savoir de présenter à ses compatriotes le peuple et la culture canadiens-français, étant donné que la spécificité culturelle et linguistique du Québec disparaît souvent des textes polonais.

Le chapitre suivant est consacré aux romans qui sont à la fois cruciaux pour l'évolution de la littérature québécoise et représentatifs au plan de la créativité des traducteurs. L'auteure analyse ici *Agaguk* de Yves Thériault (qui pose le problème de la traduction des éléments culturels de la culture amérindienne), *Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel* de Marie-Claire Blais (où la difficulté réside dans le langage des personnages), *Kamouraska* d'Anne Hébert (où le défi réside avant tout dans le niveau expressif de la narration) et *La petite fille qui aimait trop les alouettes* de Gaétan Soucy (où le traducteur doit faire face à l'ambiguïté sexuelle du narrateur(trice) et à son inventivité langagière). Elle constate que ces défis et difficultés montrent que leurs traducteurs sont loin de rester invisibles. Leur créativité se manifeste par leur intervention au niveau de la fonction poétique et émotive du langage (les amplifications et les réductions, l'archaïsation), ce qui leur permet souvent de garder la fidélité aux idées de l'auteur du roman. Certains, comme la traductrice du roman d'Anne Hébert, n'ont pas pourtant évité des erreurs qui déforment la réception de l'œuvre auprès des lecteurs polonais.

Le cinquième chapitre aborde les traductions polonaises de l'œuvre de Dany Lafférière, écrivain haïtien du Québec qui représente bien les *écritures migrantes*. Par leur appartenance à plusieurs cultures (québécoise, française, haïtienne, nord-américaine), ses romans publiés en polonais – *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer*, *Le goût des jeunes filles* et *Pays sans chapeau* – posent le problème de la traduction des codes culturels. Les éléments tels que la présence de la langue créole ou les références au contexte social et littéraire québécois sont gardés dans la langue d'arrivée, mais ils dépendent de la compétence du décodage des lecteurs polonais.

Dans le chapitre suivant, les traductions polonaises de l'œuvre de Régine Robin (les nouvelles *Le dibbouk inconnu* et *Gratok. Langue de vie et langue de mort* ainsi qu'un fragment du roman *Le cheval blanc de Lénine ou L'Histoire autre*) servent à illustrer une relation particulière entre l'original et sa traduction. Car ce qui y était étranger pour le lecteur québécois, à savoir les références au passé biographique de l'auteure, notamment à la bourgade juive de Kałuszyn, et à la culture juive polonaise, devient familier au lecteur polonais qui les retrouve dans le texte d'arrivée. En reprenant l'analyse de l'espace-temps du texte de départ et celui d'arrivée proposée Barbara Tokarz, Warmuzińska-Rogóż remarque que les mêmes éléments du texte seront interprétés différemment par les lecteurs québécois, français et polonais, d'autant plus que la présence de Kałuszyn, le *shtetl* juif évoque pour ces derniers des rapports conflictuels et un sentiment de culpabilité envers les Juifs disparus. L'analyse que l'ouvrage propose ici de ces textes hétérogènes est très riche et révélatrice : elle met bien en relief la nécessité de redéfinir la traduction. Celle-ci ne signifierait plus un transfert à sens unique, c'est-à-dire d'un texte écrit dans une langue et dans une culture vers une autre langue et une autre culture ; elle signale que le texte de départ peut participer déjà à plusieurs langues et cultures et implique une traduction capable d'être à l'écoute d'une culture plurielle qui nourrit le texte original.

Dans le septième chapitre, l'auteure aborde la question de la traduction des textes dramatiques québécois en analysant les publications polonaises des pièces de Michel Tremblay : *Les Belles-sœurs* et *Le vrai monde ?*, traduites par Józef Kwaterko ainsi que *Albertine, en cinq temps* dans la traduction de Jacek Mulczyk-Skarżyński. L'usage que le dramaturge fait du *joual* (niveau de langue populaire et urbaine, truffée d'anglicismes) rend ses pièces pratiquement intraduisibles. Pour recompenser l'absence d'un tel langage dans la culture d'arrivée et afin de reproduire fidèlement la langue qui sert à caractériser les personnages, les traducteurs ont eu recours à des éléments des dialectes polonais et de la langue familière, sans pour autant remplacer le *joual* par un dialecte précis ni le neutraliser par la langue standard. Les effets de langue intraduisibles sont compensés dans ces traductions surtout par des moyens lexicaux.

Les deux derniers chapitres sont consacrés à des traductions marquées par l'hybridité éditoriale (Risterucci-Roudnicky), c'est-à-dire publiées dans des anthologies et des revues littéraires. Warmuzińska-Rogóż analyse deux anthologies des textes québécois : *Antologia poezji Quebecu (Anthologie de la poésie québécoise)* et *Antologia współczesnej noweli quebeckiej (Anthologie de la nouvelle québécoise contemporaine)*. La première, bilingue, rédigée par J. Heistein, reprend, avec quelques ajouts, les textes choisis pour une anthologie hongroise, conçue et éditée par E. Kushner, dont elle est une version polonaise. La deuxième, sous la rédaction de Krzysztof Jarosz et Joanna Warmuzińska-Rogóż, présente les textes publiés après 1980. En analysant les éléments tels que la préface, le choix des textes (en comparaison avec les anthologies publiées au Québec), l'auteure conclut que les traductions des anthologies ont pour but de présenter les œuvres du canon de la littérature québécoise. Elle souligne le rôle des « patrons » (A. Levefere) – rédacteurs, traducteurs – dans la création de l'image de la littérature étrangère. Le rôle des traducteurs est mis en relief aussi dans l'analyse des revues littéraires où ont été publiées les traductions des œuvres littéraires québécoises. Les revues polonaises qui consacrent un numéro entier à la littérature québécoise (*Literatura na Świecie*) ou canadienne (*Fraza*) ainsi que celles où sont publiés les textes ou fragments des textes québécois (*Twórczość, Dialog, Midrasz, TEKA, ER(R)GO*) jouent un rôle important dans la diffusion de la littérature québécoise en Pologne et dans l'explication du contexte culturel et social québécois au lecteur polonais. En proposant des approches variées et des analyses minutieuses et pertinentes, l'ouvrage de Joanna Warmuzińska-Rogóż offre une première réflexion d'ensemble sur les traductions de la littérature québécoise en Pologne.

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***LITERATURA NA ŚWIECIE* NR 3-4/2016 [536-537].  
405 PAGES. PL ISSN 0324-8305. NR INDEKSU 364088.**

*Literatura na Świecie* est un mensuel littéraire polonais fondé en 1971<sup>1</sup>. Chaque numéro a le caractère d'une monographie qui se propose d'épuiser un sujet précis : soit l'œuvre d'un écrivain (ex. Céline, Blixen, Kundera), soit la littérature d'un cercle culturel particulier (ex. Maghreb, Sicile), soit un phénomène ou un thème littéraire (ex. la mort, l'érotisme, l'hérésie). La revue présente aussi les traductions des textes qui n'avaient pas été jusqu'à nos jours publiés en polonais ou de nouvelles traductions d'extraits d'ouvrages classiques (ex. Proust, Flaubert).

Le numéro 3-4/2016 [536-537] de *Literatura na Świecie* est quasiment en entier<sup>2</sup> consacré à la littérature du Québec et constitue une anthologie de textes de romanciers québécois mais aussi d'écrivains dits migrants. En fait, c'est déjà le deuxième numéro de cette revue où la littérature du Québec joue le rôle central, le premier étant sorti en 1984<sup>3</sup>, donc une trentaine d'années plus tôt. Les choix des textes et écrivains pour le numéro de 2016 prennent en compte

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<sup>1</sup> Waław Kubacki a été son premier rédacteur en chef.

<sup>2</sup> À part le compte rendu d'Agata Bielik-Robson sur la première traduction en polonais de *Spectres de Marx* (pl. *Widma Marksa*, 2016) de Jacques Derrida, celui de Marcin Szuster, de même sur la traduction du roman *Loving* (pl. *Kochając*) d'Henry Green parue en 2015 et de Jerzy Jarniewicz sur l'ouvrage d'Aleksandra Kramer, *Przypadki poezji konkretnej. Studium pięciu książek* (2015).

<sup>3</sup> *Literatura na Świecie* nr 7/1984 [156]. De plus, un numéro de la revue de 1998 s'est proposé de présenter les exemples choisis de la littérature canadienne (ex. Robert Kroetsch, Michael Ondaatje), pourtant on n'y fait aucune référence aux écrivains québécois (*Literatura na Świecie* nr 4-5/1998 [321-322]). Le récent numéro de ce mensuel reprend la même thématique dans le tome *Nowa Kanada (Literatura na Świecie* nr 3-4/2017 [548-549]). Sur la présence de la littérature québécoise dans les revues polonaises voir aussi l'article de Joanna Warmuzińska-Rogó , « Rola czasopism literackich w kształtowaniu obrazu literatury obcej. Przypadek literatury quebeckiej w Polsce », *Rocznik przekładoznawczy* 9, 2014, p. 233-246.



les changements qui sont advenus entre ces deux éditions de la revue<sup>4</sup>. La situation sur la scène littéraire du Québec est, en effet, bien différente par rapport à la période d'avant les années 1980. Comme raison de la popularité bien restreinte de la littérature québécoise (en Pologne, mais non seulement), Józef Kwaterko (dans le numéro de 1984) a, entre autres, énuméré la vision stéréotypée du Canada en Pologne (due au roman *Kanada pachnąca żywicą* de Fiedler) et la puissance décisive du marché d'édition en France<sup>5</sup> qui n'appréciait pas suffisamment la production littéraire de ses *cousins québécois* et, par conséquent, ne contribuait pas à sa propagation. Pourtant, d'un côté, le renoncement, de la part des écrivains québécois, à la littérature « pour la nation » (dû, entre autres, à l'échec du premier référendum en 1980), leurs recherches à caractère plus universel, leur individualisme croissant ainsi que l'émergence des écritures migrantes ont légèrement influé sur l'attitude de France, ce dont peut aussi témoigner le choix de Dany Laferrière à l'Académie française (en 2013)<sup>6</sup>. D'un autre côté, l'essor du marché d'édition au Québec et tous les programmes mis en place pour encourager les écrivains québécois font que la littérature québécoise devient plus autonome (au moins au niveau éditorial) et moins déterminée par la critique française. Quoi qu'il en soit, en Pologne, les textes québécois ont toujours un public assez restreint<sup>7</sup>, donc le numéro *québécois* de *Literatura na Świecie* peut combler, au moins en partie, des lacunes dans ce domaine et donner accès aux textes des dernières trente années encore jamais publiés en Pologne.

Si dans le numéro de 1984 dominent les artistes « de souche », aussi bien romanciers que poètes (ex. Jacques Ferron, Gaston Miron, Claude Jasmin), dans *Literatura na Świecie* de 2016 la pléiade des écrivains est plus variée s'il s'agit de leurs origines (ce qui reflète le multiculturalisme de ce pays et ainsi de sa littérature), par contre au niveau du choix des genres, ce volume est bien

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<sup>4</sup> Le plus ancien texte du numéro date de 1973 (Réjean Ducharme, *L'Hiver de force*) et le plus récent de 2015 (Isabelle Daunais, *Roman sans aventure*).

<sup>5</sup> Józef Kwaterko, « Literatura quebecka w poszukiwaniu tożsamości », *Literatura na Świecie* nr 7/1984 [156], p. 135-152.

<sup>6</sup> Voir aussi les émissions de France Culture sur l'œuvre de Régine Robin (<https://www.franceculture.fr/personne/regine-robin>).

<sup>7</sup> Reste pourtant à apprécier la publication des traductions de quelques textes québécois contemporains (cf. Krzysztof Jarosz, Joanna Warmuzińska-Rogóż (dir.), *Antologia współczesnej noweli quebeckiej*, 2011 – *Literatura na Świecie* Nr 3-4/2016 [536-537] contient le compte rendu de cet ouvrage écrit par Michał Obszyński) ainsi que l'entreprise critique des chercheurs polonais sur la littérature du Québec et/ou du Canada (cf. Józef Kwaterko, *Dialogi z Ameryką. O frankofońskiej literaturze w Québecu i Karaibach*, 2003 ; Agnieszka Rzepa, Alicja Żuchelkowska (dir.), *Kanada z bliska. Historia – Literatura – Przekład*, 2012 ; Anna Branach-Kallas (dir.), *Niuanse wyobcowania. Diaspora i tematyka polska w Kanadzie*, 2014).

plus homogène parce qu'il n'y a que des textes représentatifs de la prose (l'anthologie n'inclut aucun poème ni pièce de théâtre).

Toutefois, le volume propose des échantillons de l'écriture de quelques écrivains de souche parmi lesquels Réjean Ducharme, Jacques Poulin, Samuel Archibald ou Maxime Raymond Bock. Le premier est considéré comme le plus mystérieux des écrivains québécois (comparé souvent à Thomas Pynchon) parce qu'il n'existe sur la scène littéraire du Québec qu'à travers ses romans (jamais n'accordant d'interview ni ne se présentant en public). Le roman *L'Hiver de force* (pl. *Pleśń zimowa*) de 1973, dont le fragment a été traduit par Mateusz Kwaterko, est le texte le plus ancien de tout le numéro de la revue, mais la décision de l'inclure dans cette anthologie semble juste d'abord à cause de l'influence que l'auteur avait eue sur la jeune génération des écrivains, puis, parce qu'il est l'« emblème d'une modernité » appréciée aussi en France, enfin, à cause de la spécificité du langage et du style (les calambours, la syntaxe propre à l'oral, etc.), de laquelle la traduction a tenu compte.

Samuel Archibald et Maxime Raymond Bock sont les écrivains de la jeune génération. Le premier est essentiellement l'auteur des nouvelles dont l'une, « Chaque maison double et duelle » (pl. « Dom jeden, dom drugi ») du recueil *Arvida* (2011), a été traduite par Hanna Igalson-Tygielska. Ce récit inquiétant qui raconte l'histoire, apparemment innocente, de l'achat d'une vieille maison par le narrateur dont la famille se désintègre par la suite, semble dépasser le contexte strictement québécois (on y ressent l'atmosphère noire des textes d'Anna Hébert, mais en même temps quelque chose d'inquiétant, d'inexplicable propre aux nouvelles de Maupassant ou aux romans de Stephen King) quoique le recueil fasse référence à la tradition québécoise des veillées des contes. De plus, vu l'essor de la nouvelle au Québec, le choix de ce texte semble pertinent tout comme la décision de publier dans *Literatura na Świecie* la nouvelle « Le voyageur immobile » (pl. « Nieruchomy podróżnik ») du recueil *Atavismes* de Maxime Raymond Bock, traduite par Tomasz Swoboda. Le point commun des deux nouvelles est l'espace, notamment une vieille maison avec son mystère qui déclenche les deux histoires et les aventures des héros. Les écrivains ont réussi, semble-t-il, à ancrer leurs récits dans les traditions de leur pays (y compris la tradition amérindienne chez Bock) sans nuire à l'universalité du message.

Le volume *Literatura na Świecie* s'ouvre pourtant avec l'extrait de l'un des plus connus romans de Jacques Poulin, *Volkswagen Blues* (1984), traduit avec adresse par Beata Geppert. Le fragment choisi initie tout de suite le lecteur à l'histoire métissée et équivoque du Québec (et du Canada). *La Québécoise* (1983) de Régine Robin, qui suit dans le volume, continue la thématique du multiculturalisme (introduisant la perspective juive ou celle d'un « montréalais du Shtetl ») et de la mémoire tant collective

qu'individuelle sans pour autant respecter la linéarité de la narration ni l'homogénéité de l'espace (quoique le titre de cette partie du roman limite les frontières de l'espace au quartier montréalais Snowdon). Le texte de Robin est un réel défi pour traducteur, relevé dans *Literatura na Świecie* par Magdalena Kamińska-Maurugeon, à cause de la présence de plusieurs idiomes (d'ailleurs adroitement intégrés dans la version polonaise du texte) et de multiples jeux de mots qui se manifestent déjà au niveau du titre traduit *Zaquebeczona* (qui fait penser en polonais aux adjectifs « québécois », mais aussi « contaminée » ou bien – s'il s'agit de la similitude des phonèmes – à « bâillonnée » ce qui rend, au moins en partie, l'idée du titre original). Le choix de ce texte de Régine Robin, fondamental pour la récente histoire de la littérature du Québec, semble en même temps particulièrement pertinent dans le contexte polonais à cause des origines de l'écrivaine et des références aux Juifs de l'Europe centrale, y compris ceux de la Pologne, l'autel de l'Holocauste<sup>8</sup>.

Mais ce texte est en même temps représentatif d'une nouvelle esthétique littéraire apparue au Québec sur une grande échelle dans les années 1980, c'est-à-dire les écritures migrantes (dont Régine Robin est aussi théoricienne). Il s'agit de l'œuvre (souvent à caractère autofictif) des écrivains d'origines étrangères (juive, haïtienne, brésilienne, chinoise, etc.), mais qui vivent au Québec et choisissent le français comme la langue de leur expression artistique. Ces textes se caractérisent par le recours à la thématique de l'exil, du retour, du choc des cultures, du questionnement identitaire et par la présence de plusieurs langues à l'intérieur du texte. *Literatura na Świecie* tient compte de ce phénomène qui y est illustré non seulement par le roman de Robin, mais aussi par les textes d'Émile Ollivier, Dany Laferrière et Sergio Kokis. De plus, la nature de ce courant est expliquée par Józef Kwaterko, dans son article « Przybysze, czyli o pożytkach z migracji » qui fait également partie de ce numéro de la revue. Kwaterko, qui prend en compte les subtilités du statut changeant de ces écritures, évoque le potentiel transculturel de ce genre de littérature et la possibilité, qu'elle crée, de l'ouverture à l'Autre, mais en même temps, il présente la complexité de ce phénomène et l'impossibilité d'une nette catégorisation de ces écrivains, celle-ci étant d'ailleurs contestée par eux-mêmes.

Ainsi, Émile Ollivier et Dany Laferrière, qui viennent d'Haïti, ont quitté leur pays natal pour fuir la dictature et se sont finalement installés à Montréal. Le deuil des origines fait par Émile Ollivier dans ses textes constitue aussi le

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<sup>8</sup> Une partie de l'œuvre de Robin a été déjà traduite en polonais par Piotr Sadkowski (« Nieznany dybuk », *Kwartalnik Literacki TEKA*, 2005/2006, nr 5–6) et Bella Szwarzman-Czarnota (« Gratok. Język życia i język śmierci », *Midrasz* 2000, nr 9/41 et un fragment du livre *Le cheval blanc de Lénine* : « Biały koń Lenina », *Midrasz* 2001, nr 3/47).

thème du roman *Passages* (pl. *Przejścia*), traduit en polonais par Beata Geppert, où il célèbre également la mémoire. Il ne s'agit peut-être pas du texte le plus connu d'Ollivier (par rapport à *Mère Solitude* ou aux *Urnes scellées*), mais il est bien représentatif de sa prose et Geppert a réussi, dans sa traduction, à rendre l'atmosphère (dans ce cas-là lourde et angoissante) d'un conte créole caractéristique de son écriture.

Le lecteur polonais a déjà eu la possibilité de connaître Dany Laferrière grâce à la traduction de ses trois romans, le premier au titre provocateur *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer* (pl. *Jak bez wysiłku kochać się z Murzynem*, trad. Jacek Giszczak, PIW, 2004) avec lequel il a fait ses débuts dans le monde littéraire, le second *Le goût des jeunes filles* paru en 1992 (pl. *Smak młodych dziewcząt*, trad. Jacek Giszczak, Świat Książki, 2009), et le troisième, publié en 1996, *Pays sans chapeau* (*Kraj bez kapelusza*, trad. Tomasz Surdykowski, Karakter, 2011). Le passage du roman *Le cri des oiseaux fous* (2000) (pl. *Krzyk oszalałych ptaków*) traduit, pour *Literatura na Świecie*, de même par Jacek Giszczak, appartient au cycle dit haïtien. La récréation de la situation d'Haïti lors de la dictature de Jean-Claude Duvalier y alterne avec la réflexion à caractère métalittéraire.

Le dernier représentant des écritures migrantes, Sergio Kokis, a eu aussi l'occasion de se faire connaître au public polonais grâce à la traduction de son roman *Maître de jeu* (1999) faite par Krzysztof Jarosz (*Mistrz gry*, trad. Krzysztof Jarosz, Książnica, 2007). Néanmoins, il faut saluer l'idée de traduire les premiers chapitres du *Pavillon des miroirs* (1994). Heureusement que les rédacteurs de la revue n'aient pas pris comme critère de choix la date de parution (qui est bien antérieure par rapport au *Maître de jeu*, sans parler de ses livres les plus récents, dont le dernier, *L'âme des marionnettes*, est sorti en 2017), mais l'importance que joue ce roman d'abord dans l'œuvre de Sergio Kokis lui-même (c'est son premier roman qui l'a rendu tout de suite célèbre), puis dans l'histoire des écritures migrantes. Brésilien d'origine lettone, mais installé à Montréal, Sergio Kokis y met en scène le narrateur qui présente les souvenirs de son enfance passée au Brésil. Ceux-ci alternent avec la description du paysage montréalais observé à travers la fenêtre de l'atelier du narrateur adulte qui doit se confronter avec la vie dans le pays d'adoption. *Le Pavillon des miroirs* est d'ailleurs le roman de Kokis le plus souvent traduit dans d'autres langues et dont la version polonaise (au moins d'un fragment) a enfin vu le jour grâce à la traduction de Krzysztof Jarosz.

Régine Robin est pourtant représentante non seulement des écritures migrantes, mais aussi du groupe de femmes-écrivaines bien présentes dans le volume *Literatura na Świecie* de 2016. L'introduction à la problématique de l'écriture féminine y a été présentée par Joanna Warmuzińska-Rogóż dans son article « Trzy ciekawe pióra, trzy ważne nurty ». Elle esquisse le contexte et la situation de la littérature féminine après l'année 1980, présente les assises

idéologiques (l'autoréflexion, l'engagement politique, l'authenticité), les critères thématiques (l'intimité, le corps féminin, le quotidien) et narratologiques (le changement de personne qui assume la narration, l'effacement des frontières génériques) de la littérature créée par les femmes et montre sa diversité, d'une part, et le sentiment de communauté des écrivaines, de l'autre. Joanna Warmuzińska-Rogóż se concentre surtout sur les trois écrivaines dont les textes ont été traduits dans le volume (Régine Robin, Yolande Villemaire et Nelly Arcan). Elle est de plus l'auteure de la traduction d'un fragment du roman *La vie en prose* (1980) de Yolande Villemaire, poète, romancière et auteure de polars. *La vie en prose*, l'un des plus connus romans de Villemaire, représentatif de l'écriture expérimentale et féministe, est, selon les propos de Suzanne Lamy, « l'éloge du bavardage » en tant que « contre-discours, lieu de plaisir, refus du sérieux, affirmation d'une solidarité en marge des discours légitimes »<sup>9</sup> et la traduction de Joanna Warmuzińska-Rogóż prend en compte cet aspect de l'écriture de Villemaire.

L'exemple de la littérature féminine, mais à caractère très intime, constitue, dans le volume en question, la traduction faite par Magdalena Kamińska-Maurugeon du passage du fameux roman *Putain* (pl. *Dziwka*) de Nelly Arcan, représentante de la jeune génération des écrivains québécois (elle est née en 1973). Récompensé par plusieurs prix littéraires (ex. Prix Fémina, Prix Médicis) et apprécié par un large cercle de lecteurs, ce roman controversé qui est, en fait, une autofiction, présente l'histoire d'une fille, étudiante en lettres, qui se prostitue pour gagner sa vie. Dans l'écriture d'Arcan, le corps féminin (un des thèmes majeurs de son écriture à côté du sexe, de la mort, des relations avec les parents) est réifié, réduit à la physiologie. Le lecteur polonais trouvera un échantillon de son écriture avec toutes les caractéristiques énumérées ci-dessus dans le fragment traduit.

Quant aux femmes, la revue propose encore l'introduction qu'Isabelle Daunais a écrite pour son roman *Un roman sans aventure* publié en 2015 (pl. *Powieść bez przygody*). Critique littéraire québécoise et professeure de littérature française à l'Université McGill, Daunais essaie dans son texte (qui a d'ailleurs suscité des controverses aussi parmi les littéraires polonais : Krzysztof Jarosz, Józef Kwaterko) de répondre à la question pourquoi le roman québécois n'a pas réussi à s'inscrire dans le « grand contexte ». Ce texte essayistique, traduit par Mateusz Kwaterko, constitue peut-être l'écho des polémiques contemporaines autour de la littérature québécoise (ce dont témoignent aussi d'autres articles critiques de ce numéro de la revue). Son texte entre apparemment en discussion avec l'article qui le précède dans le volume (et dans le temps puisqu'il est paru vingt-sept ans plus tôt), notamment

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<sup>9</sup> Cité d'après Michel Biron, François Dumont, Élisabeth Nardout-Lafarge, *Histoire de la littérature québécoise*, Boréal, Montréal, 2010, p. 553.

« Uwagi o normalizacji literatury ». Cet essai écrit par François Ricard, chercheur et critique littéraire reconnu sur la scène internationale pour ses publications sur les œuvres de Milan Kundera et Gabrielle Roy, a été traduit par Marek Bieńczyk (lui-même traducteur de Kundera en polonais). Le texte prône la « normalisation » de la littérature québécoise qui abandonnerait les particularismes en s'approchant du modèle de la littérature mondiale (ce que pourraient illustrer les deux nouvelles d'Archibald et de Bock, déjà mentionnées, qui précèdent l'essai de Ricard). La juxtaposition des textes de ces deux chercheurs (Daunais et Ricard), tellement décalés dans le temps, est une intéressante opération qui fait voir d'un côté, la dynamique des changements dans la littérature québécoise et dans sa perception à travers des années, de l'autre, des dilemmes concernant sa définition et sa place dans le contexte mondial (les deux chercheurs ont d'ailleurs coopéré à l'édition du livre *La Pratique du roman*, Boréal, 2012).

La partie *québécoise* du volume s'achève avec l'interview avec Dominique Garand, lui aussi critique littéraire et professeur à l'Université du Québec à Montréal, sur le roman en tant que genre dominant dans la production littéraire du Québec (« Powieść jest gatunkiem dominującym »). L'entretien, mené par Anna Wasilewska entre septembre 2015 et février 2016, propose encore une autre perspective sur le roman québécois (quoique Garand admette que le roman québécois n'a pas eu jusqu'à maintenant de grande influence sur la littérature mondiale, la raison indiquée par ce chercheur – la situation géopolitique du Québec – est différente de celle défendue par Daunais). L'interview donne la possibilité de réflexion sur les questions concernant la présence de l'histoire dans le roman québécois, le questionnement identitaire, le rôle de la nouvelle, l'évolution des genres, etc., mais elle constitue également une très bonne conclusion de tout le volume, résumant et complétant les informations relatives à la définition du roman québécois et à son influence possible sur la littérature mondiale.

La composition de ce numéro de *Literatura na Świecie* semble appropriée et réfléchie parce qu'elle prend comme critère les changements majeurs dans l'histoire de la littérature québécoise durant les trente dernières années et favorise les grandes figures des écrivains de cette période. En partant (chronologiquement) de Ducharme et de Poulin, en passant par le multiculturalisme des écritures migrantes jusqu'à la nouvelle contemporaine et l'écriture des femmes de la jeune génération, la revue montre la transformation et la dynamique de cette littérature où, au niveau thématique, l'expérience individuelle – aussi bien celle de l'exil (dans le cas des écrivains migrants) que le vécu plus intime (ex. Arcan) – est plus présente que la problématique nationale et si le thème de la mémoire revient dans ces textes (ex. Poulin, Robin, Ollivier), c'est une mémoire qui est au pluriel et qui admet la présence de l'Autre. De plus, le côté formel (ex. le langage de Ducharme, l'écriture

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plurilingue de Robin, l'aspect oral des textes de Villemaire et de Laferrière) est tout aussi intéressant et mérite une attention particulière de la part du lecteur qui devrait apprécier aussi la qualité des traductions. Certes, reste toujours le problème du choix d'ouvrages : pourquoi un tel autre écrivain de la renommée pareille n'a pas été inclus dans le volume (par exemple Monique LaRue, Catherine Mavrikakis), mais le choix de textes qui, potentiellement, auraient pu faire partie du volume sans risque d'incohérence est tellement grand qu'il est difficile de le reprocher aux rédacteurs. De plus, les articles des critiques littéraires (Ricard, Daunais, Warmuzińska-Rogóż, Kwaterko) et l'entretien avec Garand complètent les informations manquantes et remplissent ces espaces vides en proposant un large rapport de la situation littéraire du Québec.

Agnieszka Salska

State University of Applied Sciences in Konin

**DAGMARA DREWNIAK. *FORGETFUL  
RECOLLECTIONS: IMAGES OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN  
EUROPE IN CANADIAN LITERATURE. POZNAŃ:  
WYDAWNICTWO NAUKOWE UAM, 2014. 221 PAGES.  
ISBN 978-83-232-2777-9***

Dagmara Drewniak's book discusses selected works of recognized Canadian authors of Central European, that is Ukrainian, Polish, Jewish, Russian, and German family roots variously intertwined. The study includes works of non-fiction – life writing and memoirs – as well as novels with distinctive autobiographical background. The authors considered are Janice Kulyk Keefer, Lisa Appignanesi, Irena F. Karafilly, Norman Ravvin and Ewa Stachniak. Drewniak's introductory chapter explains her understanding of the commonly used though not so often specified term "Eastern and Central Europe" and presents methodological assumptions behind her project.

The first chapter outlines history of Eastern European emigration to Canada, its reflection in immigrant writings and the scholarly attention those writings have attracted. In the chapter Drewniak offers, among others, also brief remarks on "Czech and Hungarian Voices" though they do not come under discussion in the main body of the book because, for the purposes of her project, the author conceives of "Central and Eastern Europe" as a multi-ethnic mosaic of peoples inhabiting territories that at one time or another remained under Polish authority. Many times, in course of history, those lands changed their political affiliation and borders, witnessed massive migrations, expulsions and extermination of whole populations, not to mention repeated devastation by wars. Thus, for generations tangled ethnic interrelations and displacements have been an important part of the experience of the inhabitants.

Since the books under discussion were written by children and grandchildren of the original emigrants, "the main methodological axis" of Drewniak's study draws on "Marianne Hirsch's conceptualization of post



memory and on Pierre Nora's idea of *lieux de memoire*" (199), concepts developed in relation to the Holocaust studies but, as Drewniak argues, applicable more generally to the trauma of emigration. Nevertheless, with different texts discussed in each chapter, "a slightly different methodological stance concerning memory and forgetting and selected aspects of Holocaust theories" (199) is adopted.

Chapter two "Post/Memory of the 'Old Place' brings together Janice Kulyk Keefer's *Honey and Ashes. A Story of Family* (1998) and Lisa Appignanesi's *Losing the Dead. A Memoir* (1999). As if on behalf of their ancestors, both writers travelled to the countries of their origin (the Ukraine and Poland respectively) after the "Iron Curtain" was lifted. The focus of Drewniak's analysis is on the interplay between "loss of memory and its regain" (107). The places where the writers search for material connections to their parents' and grandparents' memories have radically changed or simply are no longer there. There is really no way of anchoring the emotional landscape of inherited post/memories in the present reality of the "Old Place." Thus, the seekers are left thorn between desire to recover the factual truth and the necessity to accept the unavailability of the desired knowledge. Yet the message is not only intimately personal; Canada, as the writers' home country "serves as a huge audience for the stories of the Holocaust, trauma, and immigration" (109) which reaffirm Canada's own multi-ethnic and multicultural identity.

The two books discussed in chapter three "Memory Lost/Memory Retrieved: Irena F. Karafilly's *The Stranger in the Plumed Hat* and Lisa Appignanesi's *The Memory Man* are connected in Drewniak's analysis by "striking similarities in their treatment of memory" (127). In the center of the first one, a memoir of Karafilly's journey across Poland, is the attempt of the daughter "to recreate the life of her parents, from their meeting in Russia, through her own birth in the Urals, their stay in Israel to their life in Canada..." (127). Appignanesi's novel *The Memory Man*, on the other hand, features fictional Bruno Lind, a professor of neuroscience, for whom an accidental, professional stay in Vienna initiates the process of recovering suppressed childhood memories of the Holocaust trauma. "Both texts underline the value of personal memory and the necessity of excavating personal memory against communal one or history for the main protagonists or their children. [...] This is especially vital in the Canadian context where immigrants or children of immigrants already born in Canada seek their roots in order to fulfil the process of identity formation" (156).

Chapter four presents books in which three younger generation authors find that their life in Canada, their Canadian multicultural experience, helps them to rediscover and acknowledge (even against historical divisions and inherited prejudice) the multicultural character of places of their origins. This

chapter of Drewniak's study discusses Norman Ravvin's *Café des Westens*, Eva Stachniak's *Necessary Lies* and Anne Michaels's *The Winter Vault*. The conclusion of the chapter, however, does not foreground the role of their Canadian, transcultural experience in helping the protagonists to go back to their past and to view their cultural inheritance from a wider perspective. Rather, Drewniak again returns to the issue of memory as "in all these cases an important stimulus in the characters' formation of their identity" (195). Such a conclusion strengthens the impression of somewhat repetitive insistence on the importance of retrieving memories against forgetfulness of time, age, disease or self-defensive suppression as vital for one's self-knowledge and identity.

The insistence may feel disappointing to the reader who in the initial chapter finds suggestions of a line of analogy between the multi-ethnic character of "Central and Eastern Europe" and the multi-ethnic/transnational Canada as possibly significant in the immigrants' choice of the Canadian destination. The motif, however, is not pursued in further parts of the book. Neither does Drewniak reflect more extensively on the relationship between the younger generation's Canadian upbringing and education and their ability to appreciate the ethnically and culturally tangled life stories of their ancestors. Nevertheless, while the author concentrates on bringing out a unifying structural pattern that links immigrant experience through generations, the reader is likely to ask questions about generational/historical and educational differences among the protagonists; questions prompted by the recognition that Olena's (Kulyk Keefer's grandmother's) desperate clinging to the documents of land ownership in the "old place" symbolic of her inability to open herself to the new home is historically and culturally determined and so is Stachniak's heroine's ability to embrace "the Breslau truth" about Wrocław.

The event that emerges as dominant in the immigrants' memory (with exception of Kulyk Keefer's grandmother) is, understandably enough, not so much the trauma of leaving home as that of World War Two. The War put an end to the material and spiritual world of their youth, burdened the survivors with guilt and has continued to haunt their descendants with post memories. The impression may, to some extent, result from the fact that almost all the selected authors are of Jewish or mixed Jewish descent. Still, basing on the material presented in Drewniak's book one could (must?) say that in the case immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe the trauma of emigration and resettlement is significantly complicated, or even overshadowed by the trauma of European genocide, even if it was not experienced at first hand. The fact, however, is not emphasized in the concluding chapter.

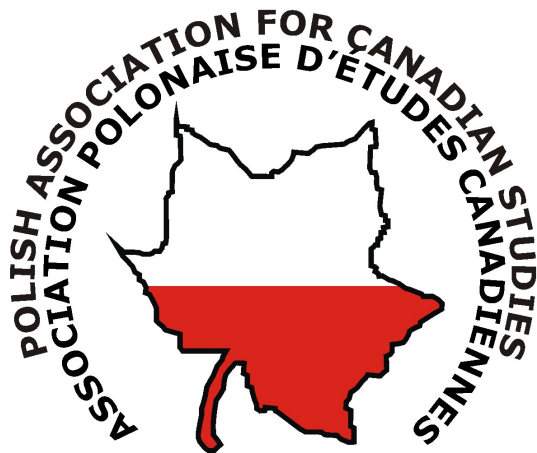
A large proportion of the material constituting discussion and analysis of the books included in the study has been earlier published as articles in

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different periodicals and collections of essays. Notes and bibliography duly acknowledge the fact but readers professionally following scholarship on Canadian immigrant writing may find considerable parts of the book familiar. Extensive bibliography section evidences the author's familiarity with the work of other, also Polish, scholars of Canadian literature and her wide theoretical readings. Students of the Holocaust and, especially, of memory/identity issues will find Drewniak's bibliography helpful.

Regretfully, the book "does not read well". It would greatly profit from more conscientious editorial work. And it is not only typos; insufficient attention has been given to precision of vocabulary and to fluency and clarity of syntax. It seems that absorbed with her argument, the author did not remember to keep the comfort of prospective readers in mind. The fact detracts from the value of her study.





# **POLISH ASSOCIATION FOR CANADIAN STUDIES**

**NEWSLETTER/BULLETIN DE L'APEC**

**14. 2016**

**TransCanadiana**



## GENERAL NEWS

### **New formula for the newsletter**

To improve the process of distributing information, PACS decided to slightly change the newsletter formula. Since the 2012 edition the newsletter covers information from the last calendar year (2016 in the case of the present newsletter) or the information relating to the year 2015, which was not published in the previous newsletter.



### **New PACS Executive**

In May 2016 a new PACS Executive was elected:

President – Prof. Anna Branach-Kallas

Deputy President – Prof. Dagmara Drewniak

Treasurer – Dr. Ewelina Berek

Secretary – Dr. Małgorzata Czubińska



## PACS GRANTS

Until May 2012 PACS offered programs allowing support for research trips within Poland and abroad, and for conference participation. The programs (incl. conference, international travel, library research, and lecture tours grants), however, were suspended due to Canadian government's decision to cease financial support of Understanding Canada Program (incl. financial contribution to PACS budget).



### **NANCY BURKE BEST M.A. THESIS AWARD**

Objective: to foster a new generation of Canadianists by rewarding high-quality research at

M.A. level. The award is given every year to the author of the best M.A. thesis in Canadian Studies in Poland (written in Polish, English or French). Details: [http://www.ptbk.org.pl/nagroda\\_ptbk.18.html](http://www.ptbk.org.pl/nagroda_ptbk.18.html)

### **2016 Nancy Burke Best M.A. Thesis Award:**

**Marcin Markowicz** (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań):  
“Unlayering the multilayered: an intertextual study of selected prose by George Bowering”





## NON-PACS GRANTS



**Research stay:** Department of English, University of Vancouver, 8-25 August 2016

**Awardee:** Anna Branach-Kallas, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń

**Research Grant,** John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies, Berlin 2016.

**Awardee:** Kalina Kukielko-Rogozińska, The School of Higher Education in Humanities of the Association for Adult Education in Szczecin

**Canada Council grant for the translation** of Patrick deWitt's novel *Undermajordomo Minor*, published as *Podmajordomus Minor* by Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2016, 376 s.

**Awardee:** Krzysztof Majer, University of Łódź, Łódź.

**Grant podoktorski FUGA** finansowany przez Narodowe Centrum Nauki. Początek realizacji stażu 1 listopada 2015. Planowana data zakończenia 31 października 2018. Realizacja projektu badawczego pt.: "Status literatury frankofońskiej we współczesnych strategiach wydawniczych oraz dyskursie metaliterackim we Francji i w pozaeuropejskich krajach francuskojęzycznych".

**Laureat:** Michał Obszyński, Université de Gdansk, Gdańsk

**Grant Senatu RP** (Dokumentacja aktywności Polonii w Toronto na rzecz Polski i polskich imigrantów w latach 80. i 90. XX wieku) realizowany we współpracy z Kanadyjsko-Polskim Instytutem Badawczym w Toronto

**Awardee:** Anna Reczyńska, Jagiellonian University, Kraków





**Travel grant,** Wirth Institute for  
Austrian and Central European  
Studies, University of Alberta  
(January 2016)

**Awardee:** Michał Wiącek,  
University of Wrocław, Wrocław



## PUBLICATIONS



**Marcin Gabryś, Magdalena Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek, red.**  
***Pani Anna w Kanadzie. Księga pamiątkowa dedykowana Pani Profesor Annie Reczyńskiej.*** Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka 2016. ISBN 978-83-7638-784-0



<http://www.akademicka.pl/index.php?detale=1&a=1&id=33325>

Księga pamiątkowa to zbiór tekstów, których Autorzy są osobami blisko związanymi z prof. Anną Reczyńską. Są wśród nich jej doktoranci, współpracownicy z Instytutu Amerykanistyki i Studiów Polonijnych UJ, Polskiego Towarzystwa Badań Kanadyjskich, osoby o podobnych zainteresowaniach naukowych. Publikacja, którą oddajemy w Państwa ręce składa się z dwóch części, stanowiących odbicie zainteresowań naukowych i badawczych Jubilatki: pierwszej, poświęconej badaniom nad diasporą polską oraz drugiej, obejmującej szeroko rozumiane badania kanadyjskie.  
<http://ruj.uj.edu.pl/xmlui/handle/item/34622>



**Marcin Gabryś, Elżbieta Janik, red.**  
***Kanadyjskie przestrzenie. Zbiór referatów z konferencji naukowych w ramach Festiwalu Kultury***



***Kanadyjskiej z lat 2012-2014.***

Kraków: AT Wydawnictwo, ISBN 978-83-63910-65-5

Zebrane w tomie 11 artykułów naukowych powstało na bazie referatów wygłoszonych w czasie trzech pierwszych Festiwali Kultury Kanadyjskiej z lat 2012-14 : I Festiwalu Kultury Kanadyjskiej : o Western Canada, 12-17 listopada 2012; II Festiwalu Kultury Kanadyjskiej : Arktyka, 18-22 listopada 2013; III Festiwalu Kultury Kanadyjskiej : ludy rdzenne Kanady, 17-21 listopada 2014. Teksty zostały podzielone stosownie do tematów kolejnych edycji i są powiązane z trzema głównymi tematami badawczymi: problematyką zachodniej części Kanady, Arktyką oraz zagadnieniami związanymi z Ludnością Rdzenną Kraju Klonowego Liścia.



***Sławomir Moćkun, Bezpieczna przystań. Kanada i Polonia kanadyjska wobec Polski i Polaków w latach 1939-1945,***

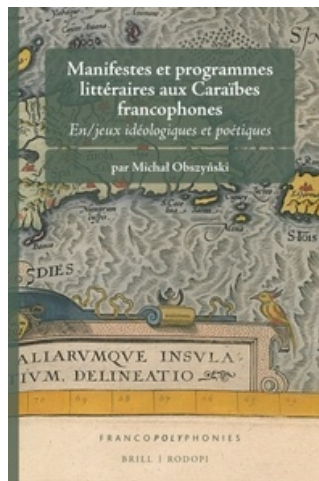
Warszawa: PTH/ Neriton, pp. 523, ISBN 978-83-7543-380-7



Autor publikacji opisał szczegółowo stanowisko Kanady wobec działalności rządu RP i udziału Polskich Sił Zbrojnych w operacjach wojennych. Szeroko omówił opinię władz Kanady o wydarzeniach w okupowanej przez Niemców i Sowieców Polsce. Cenne fragmenty pracy dotyczą również werbunku Polaków z Kanady do formacji wojskowych walczących w Europie. Oddzielne rozważania Autor poświęcił takim zagadnieniom, jak przyjęcie uchodźców, pomoc humanitarna, ewakuacja polskiego złota i skarbów wawelskich do Kanady.



***Michał Obszyński, Manifestes et programmes littéraires aux Caraïbes francophones. En/jeux idéologiques et poétiques.*** Leyde : Brill/Rodopi, 2016. 271 pp. ISBN13: 9789004309128.

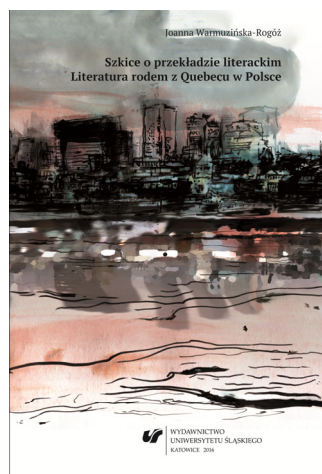


*Manifestes et programmes littéraires aux Caraïbes francophones* étudie les textes manifestaires et programmatiques publiés aux Caraïbes francophones durant le XXe siècle. Il fait apparaître les enjeux esthétiques et idéologiques qui sous-tendent les débats littéraires en Haïti et aux Antilles françaises. Il montre également l'évolution de ces manifestes au gré des mutations socio-politiques et intellectuelles de cette période. De la génération de *La Ronde* à la littérature-monde, en passant par, entre autres, l'indigénisme, la négritude, le réalisme merveilleux et la créolité, Michał Obszyński dresse un large panorama des principaux projets littéraires de la Caraïbe francophone. Son ouvrage permet de mieux comprendre l'émergence de ces courants littéraires et montre le rôle vital du manifeste dans leur formation et leur diffusion.

<http://www.brill.com/products/book/manifestes-et-programmes-litteraires-aux-caraibes-francophones>



**Joanna Warmuzińska-Rogóż.**  
***Szkice o przekładzie literackim. Literatura rodem z Quebecu w Polsce.*** Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2016 ISBN 978-83-8012-773-9



La monographie *Szkice o przekładzie literackim. Literatura rodem z Quebecu w Polsce* [Essais sur la traduction littéraire. La littérature québécoise en Pologne] est la première publication ayant pour but de répertorier les traductions de la littérature québécoise vers le polonais et de les promouvoir parmi des lecteurs



polonais. L'auteure, chercheuse dans la Chaire des Études canadiennes et de Traduction littéraire à l'Université de Silésie, relie une perspective littéraire, en informant le lecteur polonais du contexte et de la problématique des œuvres analysées, avec une perspective traductologique, en les présentant par le prisme des outils théoriques appropriés à la description des problèmes traductologiques les plus représentatifs. L'auteure réfléchit tout d'abord sur la question de choix des œuvres à traduire et sur les décisions éditoriales pour passer ensuite aux paratextes propres aux romans québécois traduits vers le polonais qui conditionnent sans aucun doute leur réception. Toujours dans le contexte des romans traduits, la chercheuse met en valeur l'existence de la seule retraduction, à savoir deux versions de *Maria Chapdelaine* de Louis Hémon, parus dans le décalage d'un siècle presque. Puis, à la base de quatre romans importants pour le développement du genre au Québec et de leur traductions polonaises, à savoir : *Agaguk* d'Yves Thériault, *Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel* de Marie-Claire Blais, *Kamouraska* d'Anne Hébert et *La fille qui aimait trop les allumettes* de Gaétan Soucy, elle décrit le rôle du traducteur ainsi que celui d'une créativité indispensable dans son travail. L'auteure familiarise aussi le lecteur polonais avec le phénomène d'écritures migrantes, en étudiant

les possibilités de traduction des œuvres de Dany Laferrière et de Régine Robin, imprégnées d'une multitude de codes culturels. Le chapitre suivant traite de la spécificité de l'œuvre dramatique de Michel Tremblay, dans laquelle le joual joue le rôle d'un vrai personnage et rend la tâche du traducteur particulièrement difficile. En s'appuyant sur l'analyse de deux anthologies, l'une consacrée à la poésie (*Antologia poezji Quebeku*, 1985), et l'autre à la nouvelle (*Antologia współczesnej noweli quebeckiej*, 2011), faisant partie de la liste des traductions polonaises de la littérature québécoise, l'auteure entreprend aussi une tentative de décrire le rôle de ce type de publication, qui est caractéristique du marché éditorial de traductions. Finalement, dans le dernier chapitre, la chercheuse examine des images possibles de la littérature québécoise construites à la base des traductions et textes critiques publiés dans des revues littéraires qui jouent un rôle important dans la propagation d'une culture étrangère. A la fin de la monographie, le lecteur trouvera la liste complète des œuvres québécoises traduites vers le polonais.

<http://wydawnictwo.us.edu.pl/node/11903>



## ARTICLES / BOOK CHAPTERS / CONFERENCE PAPERS / INTERVIEWS



The list of articles and book chapters, conference papers recently published or presented by Polish Canadianists.

**Berek Ewelina**, Université de Silésie, Sosnowiec

Colloque : *Canada and War/Le Canada et les guerres*, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń 2016. Communication : Entre francité et américanité – tensions dues à la Seconde Guerre mondiale dans *Le ciel de Bay City* de Catherine Mavrikakis.

Colloque : POE, GRABIŃSKI, RAY, LOVECRAFT. Correspondances, Parallèles, Passages, Université de Silésie, Sosnowiec 20-21 juin 2016. Communication : Une histoire de zombies modernes québécois. *La nuit des morts-vivants* de François Blais

Colloque : *Texte – Fragmentation – Créativité*, Université de Marie Curie-Skłodowska, Lublin 21-22 octobre 2016. Communication : Fragments de vie dans le roman choral de François Blais. *La classe de madame Valérie* comme le reflet des enjeux de la société québécoise.



**Branach-Kallas Anna**, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń

“Portret wroga w kanadyjskiej literaturze pięknej o pierwszej wojnie światowej.” *Pani Anna w Kanadzie. Księga pamiątkowa dedykowana Profesor Annie Reczyńskiej*. Ed. Marcin Gabrys and Magdalena Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Księgarnia Akademicka, 2016. 141-156



Conference: The First World War: Commemoration and Memory, University of Leeds, Manchester 2016. Paper title: *Comparing Homefronts: Women's Wartime Identities in French, English and Canadian Contemporary Great War Fiction*

Conference: Postcolonial Theory and Practice In The Twenty-First Century: Crossing Boundaries, Breaking Ties, Bridging Worlds, University of Rzeszów, Rzeszów 2016.

Paper title: *Sharing Space with Others: Re-Thinking Identity in the Context of Multiculturalism* (plenary)

Conference: Canada and War/Le Canada et les guerres, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń 2016.

Paper title: *Survivor Guilt, Cultural Trauma and Canadian Literature: Reflections on the Culture of Commemoration*

Conference: War Memories: Commemoration, Re-enactment, Writings of War in the English-speaking World (18<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries), Université Diderot Paris 7, Paris, 2016. Paper title: *Allies or Enemies? The Representation of "Black" Soldiers in Recent First World War Fiction in English and French.*



**Czubińska** Adam  
Université Adam Mickiewicz,  
Poznań

**Małgorzata,**

Adam Mickiewicz,

« La vie du traducteur douce comme le sirop d'érable – les techniques du transfert des termes propres à la culture québécoise en polonais. » *Komunikacja międzykulturowa w świetle współczesnej translatoologii. Tom IV. Przekład jako dialog kultur – konteksty, bariery, wyzwania.* Ed. Beata Jeglińska, Anna Krawczyk – Łaskarzewska. Olsztyn: Instytut Słowiańszczyzny Wschodniej UWM w Olsztynie, 2016. 33-42.

Colloque: *Dzień Kanady*, Université Adama Mickiewicza de Poznań, le 25 avril 2016. Communication: „Kanadyjscy Metysi – legenda wiecznie żywa. Od historii i języka do popkultury”

Colloque: *Canada and War/Le Canada et les guerres – 7th Congress of Polish Canadianists / Le 7ème Congrès des Canadianistes Polonais*, Université Nicolas Copernic, Toruń, 2016.

Communication: « La renaissance de la légende métisse? Les enjeux de la traduction de la bande dessinée historique à l'exemple de la version polonaise et française de *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography* de Chester Brown. »

Colloque : „ *The 11th Conference on Translation, Interpreting and Comparative Legilinguistics*”, Université Adam Mickiewicz de Poznań. Communication : « Le statut légal et la formation du traducteur juridique dans un pays officiellement bilingue sur l'exemple du Canada »





**Drewniak Dagmara**, Adam  
Mickiewicz University, Poznań

“Changing Traditions in Non-fictional Jewish-Canadian Writing – the Study of Selected Texts by Eva Hoffman, Elaine Kalman Naves and Bernice Eisenstein.” *Archiwum Emigracji. Studia – Szkice – Dokumenty*. 1-2 (20-21), (2014 published 2016): 154-167.

Review of: Mirosława Buchholtz, Eugenia Sojka (eds.), *Alice Munro: Reminiscence, Interpretation, Adaptation and Comparison*. In: *TransCanadiana. Polish Journal of Canadian Studies / Revue Polonaise d'Etudes Canadienne* 8 (2016): 315-318.

Conference: 7th Congress of Polish Canadianists “Canada and war / Le Canada et les guerres”, UMK Toruń, 19-21.05.2016, Paper title: *Between the Global and Private – the Second World War and the Cold War in Lithuanian-Canadian Literature*.

Conference: 10<sup>th</sup> IABA World Conference “Excavating Lives”, University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus, 26-29.05.2016, Paper title: *‘This has been a painful story to tell.’ Excavating stories of motherhood, alcohol abuse and writing in two North American memoirs: Lit by Mary Karr and Drunk Mom by Jowita Bydlowska*

Conference: Crossroads I  
Conference: Memory / Forgetting, Uniwersytet w Białymstoku, 1-2.12.2016, Paper title: *‘And yet, what would we be without memory?’ Visualizing memory in two Canadian graphic texts*



**Gabryś Marcin**, Jagiellonian University

“Gedania” i Przejście Północno-Zachodnie.” *Pani Anna w Kanadzie. Księga pamiątkowa dedykowana Pani Profesor Annie Reczyńskiej*. Ed. Marcin Gabryś, Magdalena Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek. Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka 2016. 157-186.

Conference: VI Konwencja Polskiego Towarzystwa Stosunków Międzynarodowych, Łódź, 2016. Paper title: *Doktryna Stephena Harpera w polityce zagranicznej Kanady 2006-2015*

Conference: Aboriginal North America and Europe: Strengthening Connections, Poznań, 2016. Paper title: *Inuit Self-Governments in Nunavut, Nunavik, Inuvialuit and Nunatsiavut*

Wywiady dla Radia Tok Fm i Polskiego Radia:

15.01 – Justin Trudeau superstar

19.02 – Zaginięcia rdzennych mieszkanki Kanady



12.04 – Próby samobójcze w Kanadzie – co dzieje się z lokalnymi społecznościami Indian?

8.05 – Polska i Świat – O Kanadzie i Polonii oraz o tym dlaczego wieloetniczne i wielokulturowe społeczeństwo jest wartością

9.11 – Donald Trump prezydentem USA. Dobra wiadomość dla Kanady?

25.11 – Trudeaumentr zatrzymał się na 37.

19.10 – Rok Justina Trudeau

26.08 – Zmiany w kanadyjskim Senacie?

1.07 – Wszystkiego najlepszego Kanado!

30.05 – Eutanazja, polityka i sport, czyli czym żyje Kanada?

Public lecture: "Polish Adventures in the Northwest Passage in the 20th Century," Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies, York University, Toronto, 21.03.2016



**Kukielko-Rogosińska Kalina**, School of Humanities of the Polish Association for the Adult Education in Szczecin

„Poprzez obraz. iSondy Rity Leistner”. *Widzialność/wizualność obrazu cyfrowego. Pomiedzy fenomenologią a kulturą wizualną*. Ed. Aleksandra Łukaszewicz

Alcaraz. Szczecin: Akademia Sztuki w Szczecinie, 2016. 136-147.

„Słowa – obrazy – emocje. Wielowymiarowa analiza narracji materiałów tekstowych i wizualnych publikowanych na blogu” (with Krzysztof Tomanek). *Badania biograficzne i narracyjne w perspektywie interdyscyplinarnej*. Ed. Magdalena Piorunek. Poznań: Wydawnictwo UAM, 2016. 259-275.

“Rita Leistner. Looking for Marshall McLuhan in Afghanistan.” [Book review]. *TransCanadiana* 8 (2016): 319-322.

„Fotografie wojenne Rity Leistner. Transnarodowe medium w transnarodowym konflikcie” (with Krzysztof Tomanek). *Lokalne, narodowe, transnarodowe. Rola mediów w kształtowaniu wspólnot*. Ed. Katarzyna Kopecka-Piech, Krzysztof Wasilewski, Gorzów Wielkopolski: Wydawnictwo „Polska w Świecie”, 2016. 173-187.

Conference: The Toronto School. Then, now, next, University of Toronto, Toronto 2016. Paper title: *McLuhan in Poland. Polish interpretations: then, now, next*

Conference: Canada and War. 7th Congress of Polish Canadianists, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Toruń 2016. Paper title: *Technological Face of War. Afghanistan in the Eyes of Rita Leistner*



Conference: Sztuka poza instytucjami? – artyści w przestrzeni publicznej, University of Szczecin, Szczecin 2016. Paper title: *The Edward Curtis Project: prawda o ginącej rasie*

Open lecture with Rita Leistner: *War, media and Story Telling*, Univeristy of Lodz, Łódź 2016.



**Kwaterko Józef**, Université de Varsovie

« Violence et altérité dans Éthel et le terroriste de Claude Jasmin », dans *Interfrancophonies*, n° 7, *Regards Nouvelles formes de l'engagement dans les littératures francophones*, (Alessandro Constatnini, ed.), 2016, pp. 1-11.

« La Pologne », *L'Année francophone internationale 2016-2017*, Paris-Lille-Québec, L'Agora francophone Internationale, 2016; en ligne: [http://www.agora-francophone.org/afi/afi-no25-2016-2017/article/pologne-par-jozef-kwaterko?id\\_mot=27](http://www.agora-francophone.org/afi/afi-no25-2016-2017/article/pologne-par-jozef-kwaterko?id_mot=27)

„Przybysze, czyli o pożytkach z migracji” („ les survenants ou des bienfaits de la migration”), vol. 3-4/2016, *Literatura na świecie/ Littérature dans le monde*, pp. 331-344 (dossier « Littérature du Québec »/„ Literatura Quebeku”).

„Pochwała emigracji/imigracji. Przypadek Dany'ego Laferrière'a” (« Éloge de l'émigration/immigration. Le cas de dany

Laferrière ») in *Panna Anna w Kanadzie. Księga pamiątkowa dedykowana Pani Profesor Annie Reczyńskiej (Mademoiselle Anna au Canada. Misscelana offerts en honneur à Madame le Professeur Anna Reczynska)*, Marcin Gabrys i Magdalena Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek (eds.), Krakow, Księgarnia Akademicka, 2016, pp. 209-2012.



**Madeja Rafał**, University of Silesia in Katowice

“A Floating Homeland: (De) Constructing Canadianness from the Insider-Outsider Perspective of Japanese-Canadians.” *Romanica Silesiana 2015, No 10: Insularia*. Ed. Krzysztof Jarosz. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2015. 128-137.

“Looking Back, Thinking Forward.” *Canadian Literature No 226: Emerging Scholars*. Ed. Laura Moss. Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2016. 160-162.

Conference: Day of Canadian Culture 2016, University of Silesia, Sosnowiec, 2016. Paper title: *Transcultural Dialogues between Canada and Poland. Educating for Ethic of Diversity – Student Research Trip to Canada*.

Conference: Day of Canadian Culture 2016, University of Silesia, Sosnowiec, 2016. Paper title: *Ancestral Knowledge, Ancient*



*Pathways. String Figure  
Storytelling as a Transmission  
Mechanism of Traditional  
Ecological Knowledge.*

Conference: BACS 2016 Annual Conference, British Association for Canadian Studies, British Library, 2016. Paper title: *Ancestral Knowledge, Ancient Pathways. String Figure Storytelling as a Transmission Mechanism of Traditional Ecological Knowledge.*

Współorganizacja konferencji *Indigenous Expressions of Culture in Storytelling, Drama, Theatre and Performance – Traditional and Contemporary Canadian and Polish Upper Silesian Perspectives* organizowanej przez Uniwersytet Śląski oraz University of the Fraser Valley. Uniwersytet Śląski, 26-28 kwietnia, 2017.

Współorganizacja i nadzór *IV edycji Ogólnopolskiego Konkursu Wiedzy o Kanadzie – Discover Canada 2017* zorganizowanego przez I Liceum Ogólnokształcące w ZSO w Żorach oraz Instytut Kultur i Literatur Anglojęzycznych Uniwersytetu Śląskiego. Członek komisji egzaminacyjnej.

Współorganizacja i nadzór *III edycji Ogólnopolskiego Konkursu Wiedzy o Kanadzie – Discover Canada 2016* zorganizowanego przez I Liceum Ogólnokształcące w ZSO w Żorach oraz Instytut Kultur i Literatur Anglojęzycznych Uniwersytetu Śląskiego. Członek komisji egzaminacyjnej.



**Majer Krzysztof**, University of Łódź

“Gould / Bernhard / Girard: A Theme and Two Variations”. *TransCanadiana: Polish Journal of Canadian Studies 7: Canadian Sites of Resistance: Solidarity—Struggle—Change (?)*, Eds. Hartmut Lutz, Weronika Suchacka and Anna Kricka, 219-244.

“Miód i popiół. Figury pamięci”. *Archiwum emigracji: Studia – szkice – dokumenty 1-2*: 249-255.

“Jack et Jean: wokół franko-kanadyjskiej tożsamości Kerouaca”. Ed. Marek Paryż. *Bitnicy* (part of the *Mistrzowie literatury amerykańskiej* series). Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2016. 61-76.

“Artful Exaggeration: Krzysztof Majer Interviews Bill Gaston”, *Text Matters 6*: 305-313.

“Western Vistas” (Omnibus review of *Made in British Columbia: Eight Ways of Making a Culture* by Maria Tippett and *Naked in Academe: Celebrating Fifty Years of Creative Writing at UBC* by Rhea Tregebov, ed.). *Canadian Literature 227* (Winter 2015): 179-181.

“Zbrodnie miłości, niedole ironii. O trzeciej powieści Patricka deWitta”. Patrick deWitt, *Podmajordomus Minor* (translated



from English by Krzysztof Majer).  
Wydawnictwo Czarne. 363-370.

Conference: the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Polish Association for Canadian Studies, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, 2016. Paper title: *My Paper Worlds': The Ineffectuality of Art as a Theme in Chava Rosenfarb's Short Fiction.*

Conference: ExRe(y): Spaces of Expression and Repression in Post-Millennial North-American Literature and Visual Culture, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, 2016. Paper title: *Songs From Under the Floorboards: the Musicalized Fictions of M. A. Jarman.*

5th conference of the United Students Society: *Unum? Individualism and Community*, University of Łódź, May 14 (conference secretary)



**Marczuk-Karbownik  
Magdalena**, University of Łódź

„Stosunki polsko-kanadyjskie – problemy i wyzwania w XXI wieku”. *Polityka zagraniczna Polski. 25 lat doświadczeń*. Ed. M. Pietrasiak, M. Stelmach, K. Żakowski, Łódź: Polskie Towarzystwo Studiów Międzynarodowych, Oddział Łódzki, 2016. 161-181.

[http://dspace.uni.lodz.pl:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11089/19008/8-161\\_180-Marczuk-](http://dspace.uni.lodz.pl:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11089/19008/8-161_180-Marczuk-)

[Karbownik.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](#)

Conference: “Stany Zjednoczone-Chiny: w stronę dwubiegunowości?”, organized by Polskie Towarzystwo Studiów Międzynarodowych, Oddział w Łodzi, University of Łódź, 11 March 2016. Paper title: *Wielki sąsiad czy azjatycki partner? – Kanada wobec rywalizacji między Stanami Zjednoczonymi a Chinami.*

Conference: 7th Congress of Polish Canadianists, “Canada nad War”, Toruń, 19-21 May 2016. Paper title: *‘Shoulder to Shoulder’ – Canada’s Cooperation with Poland in the Face of the Crisis in Ukraine.*

Conference: Transatlantic Studies Association Annual Conference, Plymouth, UK, 4-6 July 2016. Paper title: *Canada and Europe – Current Problems in the Transatlantic Relations.*

Conference: Migracje i polityka migracyjna dla początkujących i średniozaawansowanych (panel dyskusyjny), Festiwal Nauki, Techniki i Sztuki w Łodzi, 20 April 2016. Paper title: *Polityka imigracyjna Kanady.*

Conference: Seminar „Doing Business with Canada”, organized by Departament ds. Przedsiębiorczości, Urząd Marszałkowski, Łódź, 22 June 2016. Paper title: *Polityczny, gospodarczy i społeczny wymiar relacji polsko-kanadyjskich.*



Conference: V Ogólnopolska Konwencja Polskiego Towarzystwa Studiów Międzynarodowych, „Badanie polityki zagranicznej państwa”, Łódź, 9-10 November 2016. Paper title: *Stanowisko Kanady wobec kryzysu na Ukrainie jako przykład sposobu realizacji polityki zagranicznej przez rząd Stephena Harpera w latach 2014-2015.*

Participation in:

Jubileusz Fundacji Polish Orphans Charity in Radom, 24-25 October 2016.

TV program „Koniunktura” TV Toya, on „Doing Business with Canada” Seminar, 15 June 2016.



### Moćkun Sławomir

„Kultywowanie tradycji polskich w Kanadzie przez Polonię i emigrację wojenną w latach 1939-1945, Paryż-Londyn-Monachium-Nowy Jork.” *Powrześniowa emigracja niepodległościowa na mapie kultury nie tylko polskiej t. 2*, Ed. V. Wejs-Mileska, E. Rogalewska, Białystok 2016. ISBN 978-83-62357-93-2. 77-104.



**Obszyński Michał**, Université de Gdansk

« Opowiadania z Quebecu », *Literatura na świecie*, 3-4 (2016) : 401-409.

« Dépasser les frontières entre les cultures, les genres & les théories littéraires », *Acta Fabula*, vol. 17, 4 (2016). En ligne : <http://www.fabula.org/lodel/acta/index.php?id=9883>

« Au-delà de la résistance: la littérature franco-antillaise face au passé colonial et à la mondialisation », *Cahiers ERTA*, 9 (2016) : 53-70. En ligne : <http://www.ejournals.eu/CahiersERTA/2016/Numero-9%20Actes-de-resistance/art/6974/>

« Entre l'indifférence et la « littérature-monde en français » : la place des écrivains québécois sur le marché du livre en France au début du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle. », *Études canadiennes/Canadian studies. Revue interdisciplinaires des études canadiennes en France*, 81 (2016), pp. 71-84.

Colloque : Congrès 2016 de l'AFEC (Association Française des Études Canadiennes) : « Identité(s) canadienne(s) et changement global », Université de Grenoble Alpes, Grenoble, 2016.

Communication : « Entre l'indifférence et la littérature-monde en français : la place des écrivains québécois dans les



stratégies des éditeurs français au début du 21<sup>e</sup> siècle ».

Colloque : Congrès des Francoromanistes 2016 : « Liaisons frontalières », Université de la Saar, Sarrebruck, 2016. Communication : « Aux frontières des champs littéraires français et francophone : le festival Étonnants voyageurs et les foires du livre québécois en Haïti comme instances de promotion des littératures de langue française ».

Colloque : « Beyond Commemorations and Boundaries », Université de Chicago, Chicago, 2016. Communication : « Renouveler la littérature haïtienne et redéfinir les éditeurs haïtiens au Québec des années 1960 à nos jours »

Colloque : Le Colloque des jeunes chercheurs en études québécoises organisé par l'AIEQ « Le Québec dans les Amériques », Georgetown University, Washington, 2016. Communication : « Vers une communauté littéraire francophone dans les Amériques : autour des Rencontres québécoises en Haïti ».



**Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek Magdalena,** Jagiellonian University

“Formacja Canadian Rangers – historia i współczesne wyzwania.” *Pani Anna w Kanadzie. Księga pamiątkowa dedykowana Pani Profesor Annie Reczyńskiej.* Ed.

Marcin Gabryś, Magdalena Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek. Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2016. 251-272.

Conference: „Canada and War/ Le Canada et les guerres”.VII Kongres Polskiego Towarzystwa Badań Kanadyjskich, Toruń 2016. Paper title: *Sixty Years' War – Efforts of Canadian First Nations Veterans, Merchant Navy Seamen, and Chemical Tests Volunteers to Gain Full Range of Services and Benefits After WWII.*

Pogadanki: Inuici w Kanadzie oraz Kanadyjska Arktyka – dla klas 1-3 oraz 4-6 Szkoły Podstawowej



**Reczyńska Anna,** Jagiellonian University

"Znaczenie Kościoła rzymskokatolickiego w dziejach Kanady." *Polacy i świat, kultura i zmiana: studia historyczne i antropologiczne ofiarowane profesor Halinie Florkowskiej-Frančić.* Ed. Jan Lemcznarowicz, Janusz Pezda, Andrzej Zięba. Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka 2016. 433-446.

"Osiągnięcia i problemy Kongresu Polonii Kanadyjskiej". *Polonia kanadyjska przeszłość i terażniejszość.* Ed. Waldemar Gliński. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UKSW 2016. 35-65.





Conference: Canada and War / Le Canada and les guerres, Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu, Toruń 2016. Paper title: *Ations for Independence of Poland taken in Canada during World War I.*



**Soroka Tomasz**, Jagiellonian University

"Polityka językowa Kanady a prawa językowe ludności rdzennej", w: *Pani Anna w Kanadzie. Księga pamiątkowa dedykowana Pani Profesor Annie Reczyńskiej*, red. Marcin Gabryś, Magdalena Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek, Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2016 (ISBN: 978-83-7638-784-0), s. 287-324.

Conference: VI Ogólnopolska Konwencja Polskiego Towarzystwa Studiów Międzynarodowych, University of Łódź, 9-10 November 2016. Paper title: *Kanada na arenie międzynarodowej za rządów Justina Trudeau. Powrót do tradycji czy nowa era w kanadyjskiej polityce zagranicznej?*

Conference: 7th PACS Congress, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, 19-21 May 2016. Paper title: *How and why did Canada drop its UN peacekeeping role?*

Conference: Dzień Kanady, Adam Mickiewicz University, 15 June 2016. Paper title: *Kondycja i status języków rdzennych w Kanadzie.*

Wywiady:

13 października 2016 – udział w transmitowanej na żywo debacie „CETA: kto zyska, kto straci?” (Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Interia) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5Spau6ngZk>

13 października 2016 – wywiad dla portalu Interia nt. umowy CETA.



**Suchacka Weronika**, Szczecin University

Editor: *Canadian Sites of Resistance: Solidarity—Struggle—Change (?)*. Thematic Issue of *TransCanadiana: Polish Journal of Canadian Studies / Revue Polonaise d'Études Canadiennes* 8 (2016): 1-376. ISSN 2392-2990. Web. 23 Feb. 2017. [http://www.ptbk.org.pl/userfiles/file/TransCanadiana/transcanadiana\\_8\\_2016.pdf](http://www.ptbk.org.pl/userfiles/file/TransCanadiana/transcanadiana_8_2016.pdf)

Suchacka, Weronika, and Hartmut Lutz. Introduction. *Canadian Sites of Resistance: Solidarity—Struggle—Change (?)*. Thematic Issue of *TransCanadiana: Polish Journal of Canadian Studies / Revue Polonaise d'Études Canadiennes* 8 (2016): 9-18. Web. 23 Feb. 2017.

Suchacka, Weronika. “Foreword: ‘Write Your Stories Down; Make Your Voices Heard.’” *Unbound: Ukrainian Canadians Writing Home*. Ed. Lisa Grekul and Lindy Ledohowski. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2016. vii-xii.





Conference: Cultural Palimpsests: Ethnic Watermarks, Surfacing Histories: 10th Biennial MESEA Conference, University of Warsaw, Warsaw, 2016. Paper title: “[R]ecalling the absent spaces”: *Ethnic Heritage and Memory in Marusya Bociurkiw’s Works*.

Conference: Canada and War / Le Canada et les guerres: 7th Congress of Polish Canadianists / Le 7ème Congrès des Canadianistes Polonais, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Toruń, 2016. Paper title: *Fighting for Queer and Political Freedom: Acts of Defiance in Marusya Bociurkiw’s Works*.

Lecture series at the Alfried Krupp Wissenschaftskolleg Greifswald, Germany, 2016. Fellowlecture title: *Queering and Politicizing Culture: Intersectionality in Canadian Lesbian Writing*.



**Urbaniak-Rybicka Ewa**, State University of Applied Sciences in Konin.

Conference: IV Anglosaskie Spotkania z Kulturą, Department of Philology, State University of Applied Sciences, Konin, 6<sup>th</sup> April 2016: *A country built on dead animals? Animals in Canadian literature*.

Conference: 7th Congress of the Polish Association for Canadian Studies „Canada and war/Le Canada et les guerres 19 – 21 mai

2016 Toruń”: Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, 2016: *A War of Worlds – Timothy Findley’s The Wars*.

Conference: The Culture of Safety II: The Immigrant Other, The Faculty of Humanities Koszalin University of Technology, Poland September 26-27<sup>th</sup> 2016: *Dimensions of insecthood in Rawi Hage’s Cockroach (2008)*

Organization of a conference for students: IVth Festival of English Speaking Countries Culture and Literature (IV Anglosaskie Spotkania z Kulturą), State University of Applied Sciences, 6th April, Konin, Poland.



**Wamuzińska-Rogóż Joanna**, Université de Silésie

Colloque : VII Congrès des Canadianistes polonais, Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń 2016. Communication: „La traduction littéraire au Canada : domination, coexistence paisible ou source de ferment intellectuel ?”.

Colloque : IV Ogólnopolska Konferencja Przekładoznawcza *Typowe i nietypowe role tłumacza: wczoraj, dziś, jutro*, Akademia Techniczno-Humanistyczna, Bielsko-Biała 2016. Communication: „Od przekładu do twórczości, czyli o quebeckich feministkach, anglokanadyjskich tłumaczkach i przekładowym continuum”.



Colloque: „Przestrzenie przekładu 2”, Uniwersytet Śląski, Sosnowiec 2016. Communication : „Wokół przekładowej dominanty. *La vie en prose* Yolande Villemaire w *Literaturze na Świecie*”.



**Wiacek Michał**, University of Wrocław  
Guest lecturer, University of Alberta: "WWI Internment in the Memory of Polish Canadians", University of Alberta, Edmonton

Conference organiser: Traces of Multiculturalism in Central Europe International Conference, June 21st – June 24<sup>th</sup> – University of Wrocław (liaison between University of Wrocław and University of Alberta)



**Vignoli Alessia**, Université de Varsovie

« Je bouge: donc je suis? (du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Laferrière). ». *Interculturel Francophonies* 30 (2016) : 147-164.

« Louis-Philippe Dalembert, "vagabond jusqu'au bout de la fatigue" », *Il Tolomeo* 18 (2016) : 29-40,  
<http://edizionicafoscari.unive.it/it/edizioni/riviste/il-tolomeo/2016/18/>.

Comptes-rendu : « *Ponti/Ponts*, "Bars, cafés, buvettes" 15 (2015), p.

246 », *Il Tolomeo* 18 (2016) : 249-251,  
<http://edizionicafoscari.unive.it/it/edizioni/riviste/il-tolomeo/2016/18/>.

Comptes-rendu : « Yves Chemla, *Littérature haïtienne 1980 – 2015*, Delmas, C3 Editions, 2015, p. 314 », *Il Tolomeo* 18 (2016) : 253-255,  
<http://edizionicafoscari.unive.it/it/edizioni/riviste/il-tolomeo/2016/18/>.

Colloque : « Ethos et identités de l'écrivain francophone. », colloque international organisé par l'IRFFLE et le laboratoire CODIRE – EA 4643 de l'Université de Nantes, Nantes, 2016.

Communication : « *Le pathos et l'engagement. La violence du discours dans la fiction des écrivains haïtiens exilés au Québec* »

Colloque : « Espaces: paysages – espaces mentaux – espaces de la ville », 20e École doctorale francophone, Universités de Brno, Halle et Szeged et par les associations Gallica et Pleiada, Telč, République tchèque, 15-17 septembre 2016. Communication : « *Port-au-Prince comme espace mental dans le roman post-séismique haïtien* »





**Zajac Paweł**, Adam Mickiewicz University

„Misjonarze Oblaci Maryi Niepokalanej w Kanadzie w świetle sprawozdań na Kapituły Generalne z lat 1926 i 1966.” *Pani Anna w Kanadzie. Księga pamiątkowa dedykowana Pani Profesor Annie Reczyńskiej*. Ed. Marcin Gabryś and Magda Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek. Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2016. 341-358.

Guest lecture: „*Między szamanizmem a chrześcijaństwem i współczesnością – refleksje o najnowszej historii Inuitów w Arktyce kanadyjskiej*”. Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, 13.01.2016.

Conference: Misje ad gentes Zgromadzenia Misjonarzy Oblatów Maryi Niepokalanej. Warsaw, Card. Stefan Wyszyński University, 25.02.2016. Guest lecture: „*Misje Oblatów Maryi Niepokalanej w Ameryce Północnej*”.

Conference: IV Anglosaskie Spotkania z Kulturą. Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Zawodowa w Koninie, 6.04.2016. Guest lecture: „*Inuici w Arktyce kanadyjskiej – tradycje, kultura, religijność*”.

Conference: Canada Day, Wydział Anglistyki i Neofilologii UAM w Poznaniu, 25.04.2016. Guest lecture: „*Inuici w Arktyce kanadyjskiej – tradycje, kultura, religijność*”.



**Żurawska Anna**, Université Nicolas Copernic à Toruń

« Une spiritualité profane ou Sergio Kokis sur le Chemin de Saint-Jacques-de-Compostelle ». *Homo Spiritualis of the XXth and XXIst centuries / Homo Spiritualis aux XXe et XXIe siècles*, Joanna Bielska-Krawczyk et Anna Żurawska (dir.). Kraków : Wydawnictwo Libron – Filip Lohner, 2016. 223-237.

Colloque: Canada and war/Le Canada et les guerres

7th Congress of Polish Canadianists / Le 7ème Congrès des Canadianistes Polonais, Université Nicolas Copernic, Toruń, 2016.

Communication : « La guerre dans *Lignes de faille* de Nancy Huston »



## HABILITATION, PH.D, M.A. AND B.A. THESIS



**Warmuzińska-Rogóż Joanna,**  
Habilitation na podstawie  
monografii: *Szkice o przekładzie  
literackim. Literatura rodem z  
Quebecu w Polsce.* Katowice:  
Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu  
Śląskiego, 2016. ISBN 978-83-  
8012-773-9 oraz na podstawie  
dorobku naukowego. Uchwała Rady  
Wydziału Filologicznego z dnia  
20.09.2016.



**Jarzynka Natasza, M.A. thesis :**  
Between the Past and the Present:  
Individual and Collective Trauma of  
the Japanese Canadians in  
"Obasan" by Joy Kogawa and "The  
Electrical Field" by Kerri Sakamoto.  
Supervisor: prof. Anna Branach-  
Kallas, Nicolaus Copernicus  
University, Toruń.



**Cieślak Julia, BA thesis:**  
A woman growing up in Canadian  
literature: selected examples of  
female Bildungsroman and  
Künstlerroman in the second half of  
the 20th century. Supervisor: prof.  
Dagmara Drewniak, Adam  
Mickiewicz University, Poznań.

**Karpińska Monika, BA thesis:**  
Women in Alice Munros's short  
stories. Supervisor: prof. Dagmara  
Drewniak, Adam Mickiewicz  
University, Poznań.

**Klimczak Radosław, BA thesis:**  
A search for identity in the selected  
texts of Canadian Literature.  
Supervisor: prof. Dagmara  
Drewniak, Adam Mickiewicz  
University, Poznań.

**Maciejewska Anna, BA thesis:**  
The Affinity for Nature in Margaret  
Atwood's *Surfacing* (1972) and Lee  
Maracle's *Ravensong* (1993).



Supervisor: prof. Dagmara  
Drewniak, Adam Mickiewicz  
University, Poznań.

**Maciejewska Joanna, BA thesis:** Immigrant as "the other" in selected texts of Canadian literature. Supervisor: prof. Dagmara Drewniak, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań.

**Piasek Aleksandra, BA thesis:** Not Knowing: Doubt and Uncertainty in Alice Munro's Stories / Wątpliwości i niedopowiedzenia w opowiadaniach Alice Munro. Supervisor: Krzysztof Majer, University of Łódź .

**Roman Marta, BA thesis:** Madness and the northern landscape in Margaret Atwood's

short stories. Supervisor: prof. Dagmara Drewniak, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań.

**Zwolenkiewicz Magdalena, BA thesis:** The elements of Bildungsroman in Canadian children's literature. Supervisor: prof. Dagmara Drewniak, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań.

**Żuczkowski Maciej, BA thesis:** It is all about survival. The phenomenon of failure in Canadian literature: death, unfulfillment and mystery unresolved. Supervisor: prof. Dagmara Drewniak, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań.



## CONFERENCES / SEMINARS / EVENTS / GUEST LECTURE



**Wykład JE Ambasadora Kanady w Polsce pana Stephena de Boer, 28 January 2016**, tytuł prelekcji: *Canada as a post national state*, Zakład Kanady Instytutu Amerykanistyki i Studiów Polonijnych Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego ,

**Katedra Literaturoznawstwa i Translatologii**  
Na Wydziale Filologicznym PWSZ w Koninie  
oraz **Studenckie Koło Naukowe „Cooltura”**  
zapraszają na



**IV Anglosaskie Spotkania z Kulturą**  
6 kwietnia 2016, sala 3B, ul. Przyjaźni 1

9.15-9.30 Rozpoczęcie dr Ewa Urbaniak-Rybicka  
9.30-10.15 o. dr hab. Paweł Zając OMI (UAM Poznań): *Inuici w Arktyce kanadyjskiej - tradycje, kultura, religijność* (wykład w języku polskim)  
10.15-11.00 dr hab. Dagmara Drewniak: *Les Lieux de Mémoire and Postmemory: After/Images of Polish Towns in Canadian Literature* (UAM Poznań) (wykład w języku angielskim)  
11.00-11.30 Przerwa  
11.30 -12.15 dr Ewa Urbaniak-Rybicka (PWSZ Konin): *A country built on dead animals? – Animals in Canadian literature* (wykład w języku angielskim)

**IV Anglosaskie Spotkania z Kulturą (4th Festival of Anglo-Saxon Culture), 06 April 2016**, wholly dedicated to Canadian literature and culture, Faculty of Philology, State University of Applied Sciences in Konin

### **Program:**

Paweł Zając OMI (UAM Poznań):  
*Inuici w Arktyce kanadyjskiej – tradycje, kultura, religijność*

Dagmara Drewniak: *Les Lieux de Mémoire and Postmemory: After/Images of Polish Towns in Canadian Literature* (UAM Poznań)

Ewa Urbaniak-Rybicka (PWSZ Konin): *A country built on dead animals? – Animals in Canadian literature*



## VI Dzień Kanady na Uniwersytecie im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, 25 kwietnia 2016

Wydział Anglistyki (Pracownia Literatury Kanadyjskiej) oraz Wydział Neofilologii (Instytut Filologii Romańskiej) zorganizowały szóstą edycję **Dnia Kanady**, która odbyła się 25.04.2016 w Collegium Novum UAM.

### Program:

Piotr Sadkowski (*UMK w Toruniu*):  
Trzy samotności w Montrealu.  
O dylematach tożsamościowych literatury „białych murzynów ameryki”.

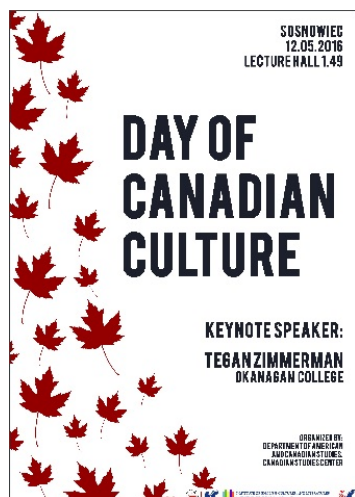
Anna Żurawska (*UMK w Toruniu*)—między dwoma brzegami... Spotkanie ze sztuką Sergia Kokisa.

Paweł Zajęc *OMI (UAM w Poznaniu)*: Inuici w Arktyce kanadyjskiej – tradycje, kultura, religijność.

Tomasz Soroka (*UJ w Krakowie*): Kondycja i status języków rdzennych w Kanadzie.

Małgorzata Czubińska (*UAM w Poznaniu*): Kanadyjscy Metysi – legenda wiecznie żywa. Od historii i języka do popkultury.





**Dzień Kultury Kanadyjskiej / Day of Canadian Culture, 12 maja 2016**

W dniu 12 maja 2016 roku Zakład Studiów Amerykańskich i Kanadyjskich oraz Centrum Studiów Kanadyjskich zorganizowało kolejną edycję Dnia Kultury Kanadyjskiej na Uniwersytecie Śląskim, w ramach którego zostały wygłoszone wykłady i prezentacje oraz przeprowadzone warsztaty poświęcone analizie literatury kanadyjskiej. Dr Tegan Zimmerman z Okanagan College w Brytyjskiej Kolumbii była głównym gościem tego wydarzenia.

**Program:**

Tegan Zimmerman, Okanagan College, Canada : “The Fear of

Equality: Postfeminism and Canadian Popular Culture.”

Sabina Sweta Sen, University of Silesia: “Dance performance as a crucial socio-cultural practice expressing and legitimizing the identity of the Tsimshian First Nation.”

Rafał Madeja, University of Silesia: “Ancestral Knowledge, Ancient Pathways: String Figure Storytelling as a Transmission Mechanism of Traditional Ecological Knowledge.”

Internationalization at the Institute of English Cultures and Literatures, University of Silesia – Destination Canada!

Transcultural Dialogues between Canada and Poland. Educating for Ethic of Diversity – Student research trip to Canada” – Sabina Sweta Sen, Alina Grygierczyk-Deja, Rafał Madeja

“The Lure of British Columbia: Unique studying opportunities for Polish and Canadian students at the University of the Fraser Valley” – Eugenia Sojka

Tegan Zimmerman, Okanagan College, Canada, Workshop: “Critical and Creative Analysis of Canadian Literature.”





**Guest lecture by Prof. Norman Ravvin from Concordia University in Montreal.** Guest lecture: *Hidden Canada: An Intimate Travelogue*, Canadian Studies Centre, Nicolaus Copernicus University, 18 May 2016

**7<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS OF POLISH CANADIANISTS**  
**LE 7<sup>ÈME</sup> CONGRÈS DES CANADIANISTES POLONAIS**  
 19 - 21 May 2016 / 19 - 21 mai 2016 Toruń, Poland / Pologne  
 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE / COLLOQUE INTERNATIONAL:  
**CANADA AND WAR / LE CANADA ET LES GUERRES**

**PLENARY LECTURES / CONFÉRENCES PLÉNIÈRES:**  
 Collegium Maximum, pl. Rapackiego 1  
 19 V : OPENING / OUVERTURE  
 9.15-11.00  
 20 V : 9.00-10.30

**SESSIONS / SESSIONS:**  
 Collegium Maius, Fosa Staromiejska 3  
 19 V: 11.45-13.15 - 206 311 307  
 14.30-16.00 - 206 311 307  
 16.30-18.00 - 206 311 307  
 20 V: 11.00-12.30 - 206 311 307  
 14.30-16.00 - 206 311 307  
 16.30-18.00 - 206 311  
 21 V: 9.00-10.30 - 206 307 311  
 11.00-12.30 - 206 311  
 12.45 CONFERENCE CONCLUDES / CLÔTURE DU COLLOQUE 307

Wydział Filologiczny UMK Canada

Russia attended in order to reflect on war as an abstract concept and in reference to real historical conflicts in various Canadian contexts, in the past and today. The conference was opened by Prof. Przemysław Nehring, Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Languages as well as Pamela Isfeld, chargé d'affaires a.i., Canadian Embassy in Warsaw. We were also privileged by the presence of four eminent key-note speakers: Donna Coates (University of Calgary), Robert Dion (Université du Québec à Montréal), Petr Kyloušek (Masaryk University in Brno), and Martin Löschnigg (University of Graz). A major gathering of Canadianists from the region and beyond, the conference provided an opportunity to consider how the tension between Canada as a *peacekeeping nation* and Canada as a *warrior nation* is reflected in history, politics, literature, film, visual arts, and other cultural discourses.



**The 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of Polish Canadianists, “Canada and War/ Canada et les guerres”, 19-21 May 2016**

The 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of Polish Canadianists, “Canada and War/ Canada et les guerres”, took place between May 19 and May 21, 2016, at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland. Almost seventy scholars from Poland, Canada, Austria, Germany, Italy, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Ukraine and

**Konkurs Discover Canada 2016, 2-3 czerwca 2016**

Po raz kolejny odbył się Ogólnopolski Konkurs Wiedzy o Kanadzie – Discover Canada 2015, którego organizatorami byli I Liceum Ogólnokształcące w ZSO w Żorach oraz Instytut Kultur i Literatur Anglojęzycznych UŚ.



W 2016 roku miała miejsce już trzecia edycja konkursu. Finał odbył się w dniach 2 i 3 czerwca 2016 roku w Instytucie Kultur i Literatur Anglojęzycznych Uniwersytetu Śląskiego.



Guest lectures by dr. Jeremy Wallace, Counsellor Political Canadian Embassy in Warsaw, 14 October 2016

Guest lectures in English and French:

– *Canada Today*

– *Le multiculturalisme au Canada*

Canadian Studies Centre, Nicolaus Copernicus University



## V Festiwal Kultury Kanadyjskiej, 16-18 listopada 2016

Tematem piątej edycji Festiwalu Kultury Kanadyjskiej, organizowanej przez Koło Naukowe Amerykanistyki Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego we współpracy z Instytutem Amerykanistyki i Studiów Polonijnych UJ, były ***Ikony i symbole Kanady*** – nie tylko te rozpoznawalne na całym świecie, ale także i mniej popularne, lecz bliskie samym Kanadyjczykom.

Wydarzenie uświetnił wykład radcy politycznego Ambasady Kanady w Polsce, Pana Jeremy'ego Vallance'a zatytułowany: Hokey in Canada

<http://festiwalkulturykanadyjskiej.blogspot.com/>





**Uroczyste wręczenie  
pamiątkowej książki  
dedykowanej prof. Annie  
Reczyńskiej, 14 grudnia 2016**

W dniu 14 grudnia 2016 r. w Audytorium Maximum UJ dr Marcin Gabryś oraz dr Magdalena Paluszkiwicz-Misiaczek uroczą wręczyli książkę pamiątkową dedykowaną prof. dr hab. Annie Reczyńskiej pt.: „Pani Anna w Kanadzie”. Jest to zbiór artykułów polskich badaczy z różnych ośrodków podsumowujący ogromny wkład Jubilatki w rozwój badań kanadyjskich w Polsce. Jak napisano we Wstępie: „Jako członkini-założycielka i pierwsza Prezes Polskiego Towarzystwa Badań Kanadyjskich profesor Reczyńska zawsze reprezentowała podejście interdyscyplinarne, otwarte na różnorodne spojrzenie i metody badawcze. Dzięki temu od roku 1998 środowisko polskich kanadyistów jest jednym z najprężniej rozwijających się w Europie.”

**Journée québécoise** 2016  
le 15.12

09:45-11:15, salle 01  
Dawid Dryżałowski, *Gdy hokej staje na głowie*

09:45-11:15, salle 117  
dr Aleksandra Chrupała (Politechnika Śląska), *Opowieści fantazy (nie) dla dzieci*

11:20-12:00, salle 01  
prof. dr hab. Krzysztof Jarosz, *Pour une poétique du métissage. Le Petit Aigle à Tête blanche de Robert Lalonde*  
dr Ewelina Berek, *François Blais - écrivain québécois du XXIe siècle*  
dr Michał Krzykawski, *Autochtonie, autochtonité, authenticité. De la littérature amérindienne au Québec*

11:20-13:00, salle 117  
dr Aleksandra Chrupała, dr Ewa Figas (Politechnika Śląska), *Jak i dlaczego przeklinamy (nie tylko) w Quebecu*  
dr Joanna Warmuzińska-Rogóż, *Thumacz-detektyw. W płataninie kodów kulturowych albo jak przetłumaczyć La vie en prose Yolande Villemaire*  
La vie en prose Yolande Villemaire

13:15-14:45, salle 01  
Biar québécois qué, film, prezentacja, nagrywanie konkursu

Chaire d'études canadiennes et de traduction littéraires à l'Institut des langues romanes et de traduction

**Dzień Kultury Quebeckiej w  
Instytucie Języków  
Romańskich i Translatoryki  
Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 15  
grudnia 2016**

**Program:**

Dawid Dryżałowski: *Gdy hokej staje na głowie*

Aleksandra Chrupała (Politechnika Śląska): *Opowieści fantazy (nie) dla dzieci*

Krzysztof Jarosz: *Pour une poétique du métissage. Le Petit Aigle à Tête blanche de Robert Lalonde*

Ewelina Berek: François Blais – *écrivain québécois du XXIe siècle*

Michał Krzykawski: *Autochtonie, autochtonité, authenticité. De la littérature amérindienne au Québec*

Aleksandra Chrupała, dr Ewa Figas (Politechnika Śląska): *Jak i dlaczego przeklinamy (nie tylko) w Quebecu, czyli sacrés sacrés*

Joanna Warmuzińska-Rogóż: *Thumacz-detektyw. W płataninie*

*kodek kulturowych albo jak przetłumaczyć La vie en prose Yolande Villemaire*

Konkurs językowy: “Dites-le en français: mais quel français?”

## ICCS PROGRAMS



### **Graduate Scholarships**

The scholarship is aimed to facilitate the renewal of the community of Canadianists by supporting the work of young scholars, by enabling successful candidates to spend 4-6 weeks at a Canadian university or research site other than their own doing research related to their thesis or dissertation in the field of Canadian Studies.

More information on ICCS website:  
<http://www.iccs-ciec.ca/graduate-student-scholarships.php>

**All applications must be submitted to PACS by October 24th.**



### **Canadian Studies Postdoctoral Fellowships**

The fellowships are aimed to enable young Canadian and foreign academics who have completed a doctoral thesis on a topic primarily related to Canada and are not employed in a full-time, university teaching position to visit a Canadian or foreign university with a Canadian Studies program for a teaching or research fellowship.

More information on ICCS website:  
<http://www.iccs-ciec.ca/canadian-studies-postdoctoral-fellowships.php>

**All applications must be submitted to PACS by October 24th.**





## **Publishing Fund**

The International Council for Canadian Studies (ICCS) has established the ICCS Publishing Fund to assist with the publication and distribution in Canada of scholarly monographs on Canada written by foreign Canadianists who are members of a Canadian Studies Association or Associate Member belonging to the International Council for Canadian Studies. This fund assists foreign Canadianists by granting financial aid to a recognized scholarly press once the work is published.

The Fund may also grant financial assistance for the translation from English or French into a third language and from a third language into French or English. In this case, conditions and procedures remain the same, but instead of a manuscript the press will submit a published monograph that it would like to see translated. The Publishing Fund does not fund translations from English to French or from French into English.

More information on ICCS website:

<http://www.iccs-ciec.ca/publishing-fund.php>

**Deadline for applications: 24 November**



## **Pierre Savard Awards**

The Pierre Savard Awards are designed to recognize and promote each year outstanding scholarly monographs on a Canadian topic. The awards form part of a strategy that is aimed at promoting, especially throughout the Canadian academic community, works that have been written by members of the Canadian Studies international network. The awards are intended to designate exceptional books, which, being based on a Canadian topic, contribute to a better understanding of Canada. There are two categories:

- 1) Book written in French or English;
- 2) Book written in a language other than French or English

More information on ICCS website:

<http://www.iccs-ciec.ca/pierre-savard-awards.php>

**All applications must be submitted to PACS by October 24th.**



## **Best Doctoral Thesis in Canadian Studies**

This ICCS Award is designed to recognize and promote each year an outstanding PhD thesis on a Canadian topic, written by a



member (or one of his/her students) of a Canadian Studies Association or Associate Member, and which contributes to a better understanding of Canada.

More information on ICCS website:  
<http://www.iccs-ciec.ca/best->

[doctoral-thesis-canadian-studies.php](#)

**All applications must be submitted to PACS by October 24th.**



## CANADIAN STUDIES CENTERS IN POLAND



### KRAKÓW

**Chair of Canada, Institute of  
American Studies and Polish  
Diaspora, Jagiellonian  
University**

**Director:** Prof. Anna Reczyńska

**Address:** Rynek Główny 34, room  
38

31-010 Kraków

**Tel.:** +48 12 429 61 57

**Fax:** +48 12 422 03 64

**E-mail:** [anna.reczynska@uj.edu.pl](mailto:anna.reczynska@uj.edu.pl)

**Website:**

[http://www.iaispl.uj.edu.pl/  
zaklad-kanady/](http://www.iaispl.uj.edu.pl/zaklad-kanady/)

Chair of Canada is a part of the Institute of American Studies and Polish Diaspora. The head of Canadian Studies Centre, Prof. Anna Reczyńska, is one of the most prominent experts in Canadian history and diaspora studies in the region. Today the Institute of American Studies and Polish Diaspora

offers a wide variety of regular and often inter-disciplinary courses on Canadian topics. Among many courses taught there one can find: Introduction to Canada, Canadian History, Society of Canada, Quebec Issues, Canadian Political System, Canadian Higher Education System, Canadian Film, and courses on Canadian Suffrage Movement, Native Peoples and literature, Contemporary Canadian Political Issues. The institute library has an extensive collection of Canadian books. Academics and doctoral students do their research in Canadian history, women's rights, multiculturalism, Canadian-American and Canadian-British relations. The Institute of American Studies and Polish Diaspora at Jagiellonian University also serves as a statutory office of the Polish Association for Canadian Studies. There are 5 academics (Prof. A. Reczyńska, Dr. hab. M. Kijewska-Trembecka, Dr. M. Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek, Dr. M. Gabryś) and 2 doctoral students doing research in topics related to Canada.



## ŁÓDŹ

**Canadian Studies Resource Center, Department of American Studies and Mass Media, Faculty of International and Political Studies, University of Łódź**

**Director:** Dr. Magdalena Marczuk-Karbownik

**Address:** ul. Lindleya 5A, 90-131 Łódź

**Tel:** +48 42 635 42 50, 635 42 54

fax: 42 635 42 60

**E-mail:** marczuk@uni.lodz.pl

The students of the Faculty of International and Political Studies attend a number of courses with the Canadian component such as *U.S. and Its Neighbors – Political, Economic and Social Relations*, *Political and Sociological Aspects of Multiculturalism in North America*, *Dilemmas of Selected Multicultural Countries: Americas, Africa, and Australia*, *International Political Relations*.

The Canadian component is mainly on politics, history and society of Canada. These courses are taught (or co-instructed) by dr. Magdalena Marczuk-Karbownik.



## POZNAŃ

**Centre for Canadian Literature, Faculty of English, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań**

**Contact person:** Prof. Agnieszka Rzepa

**Address:** al. Niepodległości 4  
61-874 Poznań

**Tel:** +48 61 829 3506

**E-mail:** arzepa@amu.edu.pl

**Website:**

[http://wa.amu.edu.pl/wa/Center for Canadian Literature](http://wa.amu.edu.pl/wa/Center%20for%20Canadian%20Literature)

Canadian literature and culture courses have been taught in the Faculty of English of Adam Mickiewicz University since the late 1980s. Classes on selected Canadian literature topics are offered every academic year and include proseminars and seminars at the undergraduate (B.A.) and graduate (M.A.) level. We also offer specialist courses to students of the Canadian MA specialization “English-speaking Canada: literature, culture, language.”

## POZNAŃ

**Centre de recherche sur le Canada francophone, Institut de Philologie Romane, Université Adam Mickiewicz**

**Director:** Dr. Małgorzata Czubińska

**Address:** al. Niepodległości 4  
61-874 Poznań





**Tel:** +48 618 29 35 66

**E-mail:** malgorp@amu.edu.pl



## SOSNOWIEC

### **Canadian Studies Centre, Institute of British and American Culture and Literature, University of Silesia**

**Director:** Dr. Eugenia Sojka

**Address:** Grota-Roweckiego 5, 41-200 Sosnowiec

**Tel:** +48 32 364 08 92,

**Website:**

<http://www.csc.us.edu.pl/>

<http://english.us.edu.pl/>

**E-mail:** eugenia.sojka@us.edu.pl

L'activité du Centre de recherche sur le Canada francophone s'inscrit dans le courant multiculturel dominant présentement dans l'enseignement des langues étrangères; face à un développement dynamique des recherches portant sur les pays francophones, notamment dans le domaine de la traduction littéraire, il est d'autant plus nécessaire d'intégrer ladite recherche au sein des projets plus globaux, d'où la création de notre Centre. Ses objectifs se concentrent avant tout autour de l'élaboration des programmes d'enseignement en traduction littéraire prenant en considération la spécificité de la traduction minoritaire, la popularisation du savoir sur la civilisation et la culture du Canada francophone, avec l'accent sur les minorités francophones de l'exiguïté, la coordination de la recherche dans le domaine de la traduction des textes littéraires provenant des communautés francophones du Canada, ainsi qu'autour de la promotion d'une approche traductologique novatrice, présentant la traduction des littératures minoritaires en tant que processus culturel et ethnique qui prend en compte le discours identitaire dans les œuvres littéraires.

Canadian Studies Centre at the University of Silesia, chaired by dr. Eugenia Sojka, was founded in 2000. The Centre functions within institutional structures of the Institute of English Cultures and Literatures. It is involved in the promotion of Canadian Studies via research, cultural activities, conferences, workshops and teaching of Canadian Studies courses.

It hosts specialists in Canadian Studies and Canadian writers, critics and artists who give lectures, readings and participate in cultural events and conferences.

#### RESEARCH PROFILE:

Indigenous and diasporic Canadian fiction, poetry and life writing, Indigenous, diasporic and



intercultural drama/theatre/  
performance;  
Transcultural, diasporic,  
postcolonial/ decolonial/gender  
theories and methodologies;  
Canadian film and visual arts;  
Verbal and visual rhetoric  
(interarts).

Two agreements of co-operation with Canadian universities: Vancouver Island University and Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, ON., have been signed and developed (e.g. a student research trip to Vancouver Island University – a project entitled: "Transcultural dialogues between Canada and Poland. Educating for ethics of diversity" was completed in 2010). An earlier co-operation agreement of the University of Silesia with the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, has been still active.

The Institute library boast a growing collection of Canadiana thanks to grants from the Canadian Embassy and donations from various Canadian publishing houses.

Canadian Studies Student Circle affiliated with the Centre was founded in 2009. Regular meetings of students are devoted to selected Canadian topics.

<http://www.facebook.com/canadiastudiessstudentcircle>



## SOSNOWIEC

### **Chaire d'études canadiennes à l'Institut des Langues Romanes et de Traduction, Université de Silésie Director:**

Prof. Krzysztof Jarosz

**Address:** Grota-Roweckiego 5,  
41-200 Sosnowiec  
bureau 1.6

**Tel:** +48 32 3640 899

**E-mail:** jarosz.kanada@gmail.com

En 2003, la Chaire d'études canadiennes a été mise sur pied à l'Institut des Langues Romanes et de Traduction de Université de Silésie par le Professeur Krzysztof Jarosz. Elle dédie ses activités en enseignement supérieur, en recherche, en publication et en animation à son aire de prédilection, la littérature canadienne postmoderne.

À présent, la plupart des chercheurs de la chaire ont orienté leurs intérêts vers d'autres aires, mais il y a toujours des chercheurs francophones et anglophones qui travaillent sur la littérature et la culture canadiennes, notamment la littérature contemporaine québécoise. Récemment une monographie sur la traduction en polonais de la littérature québécoise a été rédigée par une des chercheuses.



Chaque année, des étudiants de français peuvent participer aux cours de littérature canadienne d'expression française. Des mémoires de licence et de maîtrise, notamment sur la traduction de la littérature québécoise sont élaborés annuellement.

Depuis 2005, les journées québécoises sont organisées et permettent à un grand nombre d'étudiants de se familiariser avec divers aspects de la culture du Québec.



### SZCZECIN

**Szczecin Canadian Studies Group (SCSG), Katedra Filologii Angielskiej, Uniwersytet Szczeciński**  
al. Piastów 40B, 71-065 Szczecin  
[scsg@univ.szczecin.pl](mailto:scsg@univ.szczecin.pl)

29 listopada 2011 roku w Katedrze Filologii Angielskiej Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego została utworzona nowa grupa naukowa *Szczecin Canadian Studies Group* (SCSG). Inicjatorami SCSG są pracownicy Katedry: prof. dr hab. Hartmut Lutz, dr Uwe Zagratzki i dr Weronika Suchacka. Głównym celem SCSG jest utworzenie prężnego ośrodka studiów kanadyjskich w Katedrze Filologii

Angielskiej Uniwersytetu  
Szczecińskiego.  
(informacja ze [strony SCSG](#))



### TORUŃ

**Canadian Studies Centre,  
Nicolaus Copernicus  
University**

**Director:** Prof. Anna Branach-Kallas

**Address:** Centrum Badań  
Kanadyjskich Uniwersytet Mikołaja  
Kopernika Toruń

Collegium Humanisticum C 3.30  
ul. W. Bojarskiego 1, 87-100 Toruń

**Tel.:** +48 56 611 35 51

**Fax:** +48 56 654 06 85

**E-mail:**

Centrum.Badan.Kanadyjskich@  
maius.uni.torun.pl

**Website:**

<http://www.fil.umk.pl/cbk/>

The Canadian Resource Centre was established at the Faculty of Languages in 1999 as a joint venture of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń and the Canadian Embassy in Warsaw, with the generous support of the International Council for Canadian Studies in Ottawa. The Centre performs a threefold task: teaching, scholarly research, and promotion of Canadian Studies (hosts guest lectures and screenings of



documentary films on Canada which are addressed not only to the faculty and students of the English Department and the French Department but also to the community of Toruń and the region). Thanks to generous grants from the Nicolaus Copernicus University, the Canadian Embassy, and the Polish Association for Canadian Studies, the Centre has been conducting research, as well as organising book displays and the annual Days of Francophone Culture. The Centre library holdings, approximately 3,500 volumes, are available at the Collegium Humanisticum library.



## WARSAW

**Centre d'études en civilisation  
canadienne-française et  
littérature québécoise, Institut  
d'études romanes, Université  
de Varsovie**

**Director:** Prof. Józef Kwaterko

**Address:** rue Dobra 55, 00-312  
Varsovie

**Tel.:** +48 22 552 04 32

**Fax:** +48 22 552 03 83

**E-mail:** romanistyka@uw.edu.pl et  
kwaterko@uw.edu.pl

Depuis 1997, le Centre est dirigé par le professeur Józef Kwaterko. A partir de 1994, le Centre se consacre à la recherche et à l'enseignement de la littérature québécoise au niveau de BA, MA et PhD. De 1994 à 2007, y ont été élaborés et soutenus environ 25 mémoires de maîtrise et 3 travaux de licence portant sur le roman, le théâtre et la poésie du Québec. Actuellement, 4 thèses de doctorats et 4 mémoires de maîtrise y sont en cours de rédaction. Certains travaux de recherche portent sur un aspect comparé (littérature québécoise et franco-caribéenne). Le Centre possède un riche fonds documentaire pouvant être consulté par étudiant(e)s et chercheur(e)s intéressé(e)s: autour de 2.000 textes et ouvrages de référence, 15 revues universitaires et périodiques d'actualité littéraire et culturelle, environ 20 films documentaires et longs métrages. Le Centre collabore régulièrement avec des centres d'études québécoises et canadiennes en Europe, au Canada, aux États-Unis et au Brésil.



## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Polskie Towarzystwo Badań Kanadyjskich  
Centrum Badań Kanadyjskich  
Gabinet 3.30  
Katedra Filologii Angielskiej  
Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika  
ul Bojarskiego 1  
87-100 Toruń  
Polska  
tel. +48 56 611 35 51  
E-mail: [ptbk@umk.pl](mailto:ptbk@umk.pl)  
Website: <http://www.ptbk.org.pl>





## SUBMISSIONS

All submissions to *TransCanadiana* must be original, unpublished work. Articles and book reviews should be double-spaced in 12-point font, and available in Rich Text Format (.rtf), or Microsoft Word (.doc, .docx).

Articles should follow MLA bibliographic format (*MLA Handbook*, 8th ed). Maximum word length for articles is 7 000 words, which includes endnotes and works cited. Submissions must include brief (max. 200 words) abstracts in English and French, a biographical note of approximately 90 words, and 5 keywords in English and French. Reviews should not exceed 3 000 words.

**Peer-review:** *TransCanadiana* uses a double-blind refereeing process (both the referee and author remain anonymous throughout the process), based on initial editor screening. Referees are matched to the paper according to their expertise, and are never affiliated with the institution with which the author is affiliated. The editor might seek further expert opinion in justified cases.

Referees are asked to evaluate whether the manuscript :

- is closely related to the theme of the issue
- is original
- is methodologically sound
- has sound structure
- has results which are clearly and logically presented and support the conclusions
- correctly references previous relevant work
- should be published as submitted, published after revision or rejected

Language correction is not part of the peer review process.

After receiving reviews of the article, the author is obliged to revise the text in accordance with the reviewers' suggestions (changes should be marked in red) and email it as an attachment to the editor within two weeks. The body of the message must include the author's response to the reviews and it should list all the changes that have been made in the final version of the article.

Referees read the revised version and advise the editor, who is responsible for the final decision to accept or reject the article.

### **Ghostwriting, Guest Authorship and Plagiarism Policy**

All cases of

- **ghostwriting**: the intentional failing to identify an individual in a publication who has substantively contributed to the underlying research or the writing of the publication
- **guest authorship**: including an individual in a research publication who has not made a substantive contribution to the underlying research or the content of the publication
- **plagiarism**: using the ideas, data, or language of another without specific or proper acknowledgment

will be documented, reported to the authorities and revealed to the academic community (i.e. the institutions with which the authors are affiliated, academic societies, etc.)

To prevent any cases of such academic misconduct the authors are required to:

- sign a Publishing Agreement with the editor (see below)
- reveal the names and affiliations of all individuals who have made substantial contribution to the submitted Work, as well as the nature of their contribution (concept, methodology, etc.)
- include a financial disclosure statement with their submissions (i.e. report all institutions, societies or other parties that have financially supported research that has resulted in the submitted publication)

### **Obtaining External Permission on Copyright Materials**

It is the author's responsibility to obtain written permission to use any previously copyrighted material, photographs, or artwork that may be included in the Work. The author is responsible for paying permission fees and costs of reproduction.



### **Publishing Agreements**

The PA for scholarly articles signs the copyright over to the journal. In order to **prevent cases of academic misconduct (ghost writing, guest authorship, plagiarism)** the PA includes the author's declaration that she is the sole Author of the Work; that she is the owner of all the rights granted to the Publisher; that the Work is original and does not contain fragments from previously published texts, which could cause the Publisher to infringe upon any previous copyright.

## SOUSSION D'ARTICLES

La revue *TransCanadiana* n'accepte que les contributions originales n'ayant pas fait l'objet d'une publication antérieure. Les articles et les compte-rendus sont à transmettre en format électronique : taille 12 points, interligne double, en formats Rich Text Format (.rtf) ou Microsoft Word (.doc, .docx)

Les articles doivent être conformes au MLA Handbook, 8<sup>e</sup> édition. La taille des articles ne dépassera pas 7 000 mots, y compris les notes d'auteur et les références bibliographiques. Les articles en français doivent être précédés d'un résumé en anglais et en français d'un maximum de 200 mots, d'une notice bibliographique d'environ 90 mots et de cinq mots-clés en anglais et en français. Les compte-rendus ne dépasseront pas 3 000 mots.

**L'évaluation en double aveugle par les pairs :** *TransCanadiana* fait appel à des experts selon la procédure du double anonymat (les rapporteurs ignorent qui ils évaluent, et les auteurs ignorent par qui ils sont évalués) et après une première sélection faite par les rédacteurs. Les articles sont envoyés à des lecteurs choisis par la rédaction en fonction de leur domaine de compétence, ceux-ci n'étant pourtant pas affiliés au même établissement que les auteurs. Les articles pourraient être soumis à une nouvelle évaluation dans des cas justifiés.

On demande aux lecteurs anonymes d'évaluer :

- la correspondance étroite de l'article à la thématique du volume
- l'originalité de l'article
- sa qualité méthodologique
- la solidité de la structure de l'article
- la logique et la clarté des résultats présentés et la pertinence de la conclusion
- l'exactitude des références aux ouvrages antérieurs en matière
- si l'article est à retenir pour publication tel quel, avec modifications ou s'il est à ne pas retenir

Les auteurs sont priés d'assurer la révision linguistique de leur texte.

Le rapport du lecteur reçu, l'auteur est tenu de revoir le texte suivant les suggestions faites par le rapporteur (les changements apportés mis en rouge) et de l'envoyer en pièce jointe à l'éditeur dans un délai de deux semaines. Le message doit inclure la réponse de l'auteur au rapport du lecteur et toutes les modifications apportées doivent être énumérées dans la version finale du texte.

Après la relecture du rapporteur, la décision finale de retenir ou de ne pas retenir l'article est à l'éditeur.

Il est à noter que

- toute pratique de « ghostwriting » (« écriture en sous-main ») : qui consiste à ne pas désigner une personne ayant apporté une contribution substantielle à la recherche ou à la rédaction de l'article publié
- toute pratique de signature scientifique (« qualité d'auteur honorifique ») : qui consiste à inclure dans un article scientifique le nom d'une personne n'ayant pas apporté de réelle contribution à la recherche principale ou au contenu de l'article publié
- tout acte de plagiat : qui consiste à s'attribuer les idées, les données ou le langage d'une autre personne sans permission ou avec une reconnaissance insuffisante

sera sanctionné(e), communiqué(e) aux autorités responsables et signalé(e) à la communauté scientifique (soit aux institutions auxquelles les auteurs sont affiliés et aux corps universitaires pertinents).

En vue d'éviter tout cas de fraude scientifique, les auteurs s'engagent à :

- signer un contrat de publication avec les éditeurs (voir ci-dessous)
- indiquer les noms et les affiliations de l'ensemble des personnes ayant contribué de manière significative au travail ainsi que leur apport (concept, méthodologie, etc.)
- indiquer la source de financement (signaler toutes les institutions, sociétés ou autres ayant aidé la recherche qui a abouti à la publication présentée).

### **Obtenir au préalable l'autorisation pour les documents protégés par le droit d'auteur**

L'auteur est tenu d'obtenir l'autorisation écrite des détenteurs de droit d'auteur pour reproduire n'importe quelle photographie, illustration, tableau précédemment publiés ailleurs et comprises dans l'article. L'auteur doit payer tous les frais impliqués par la reproduction.

### **Contrat de publication**

Le contrat de publication exige la cessation de la totalité du droit d'auteur à la revue. Afin **d'éviter les cas de fraude scientifique (pratique de « ghostwritig », pratique de signature scientifique, plagiat)**, le contrat de publication contient la déclaration de l'auteur qu'il est l'auteur exclusif du texte, qu'il détient l'intégralité des droits d'auteur sur son texte, que son texte est entièrement original et qu'il ne contient aucun emprunt aux textes précédemment publiés, ce qui porterait atteinte aux droits d'auteur antérieurs.

## CALL FOR ARTICLES

*TransCanadiana: Polish Journal of Canadian Studies*

**Volume 10**

### ***The last twenty years of Canadian and Quebec studies: developments and challenges***

Canadian Studies and Quebec Studies are relatively new, but diverse and vibrant areas of research. The beginnings of both are most often located in the turbulent 1960s and 1970s, though some scholars trace them back to earlier decades—for example, Dirk Hoerder in his *To Know Our Many Selves. From the Study of Canada to Canadian Studies* (2010) argues that the first stage of the evolution of the area of Canadian Studies can be traced as far back as the 1840s. The development of both areas in Canada and abroad can be linked directly to the institutional support framework created by federal and provincial governments in the post-WWII period and governmental funding, which means that, while maintaining intellectual independence, the fields have been sensitive to policy changes and political decisions.

We are calling on the community of Canadian and Quebec Studies scholars in Canada, Quebec and beyond to share their perspectives on the developments of the fields in general or within their area of expertise within the last twenty years; and to comment on the challenges the fields face in the immediate future. The articles can focus on, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- new research areas that have emerged within Canadian and Quebec studies;
- relationship between Canadian and Quebec studies and other areas of research (for example, Indigenous studies, ecology, bioethics, life writing studies, diasporic studies, etc.);
- declining and emerging methodologies in the two fields;
- cutting-edge research and trends in Canadian and Quebec studies;

- emergent pedagogies of Canadian and Quebec studies;
- institutional development of Canadian and Quebec studies in different countries/areas;
- the future of Canadian and Quebec studies.

Reviews of relevant academic publications related to the two fields are also welcome.

Brief article **abstracts** of c. 350-400 words should be emailed to the editors by **December 20th 2017**. After the selection process is completed, and not later than **January 10th 2018**, the editors will invite authors to submit completed articles of max. 7000 words by **April 20th 2018**. Reviews are also due by April 20<sup>th</sup> 2018. **Abstracts, articles and reviews should be written in English or French**. All submissions to *TransCanadiana* must be original, unpublished work.

Submissions in English should be emailed to Agnieszka Rzepa at [arzepa@amu.edu.pl](mailto:arzepa@amu.edu.pl)

Submissions in French should be emailed to Krzysztof Jarosz at [jarosz.km@gmail.com](mailto:jarosz.km@gmail.com)

## APPEL À CONTRIBUTIONS

*TransCanadiana : Journal polonais d'études canadiennes*

**Volume 10**

### ***Les vingt dernières années des études canadiennes et québécoises : accomplissements et défis***

Pour un domaine de recherche qui s'est constitué il n'y a pas trop longtemps, les études canadiennes et québécoises sont diversifiées et dynamiques. On s'accorde d'habitude que leurs débuts se situent dans les turbulentes années 1960 et 1970, encore qu'il y ait certains universitaires qui en reportent les origines aux décades antérieures. C'est le cas par exemple de Dirk Hoerder qui, dans son *To Know Our Many Selves. From the Study of Canada to Canadian Studies* (2010) soutient que les premières traces des études canadiennes remonteraient aux années 1840. Le développement des études canadiennes et québécoises tant au Canada qu'à l'étranger est directement lié au système de soutien institutionnel créé par les gouvernements fédéral et provinciaux après la Seconde Guerre mondiale, ainsi qu'à leur financement de la recherche. Il en résulte que, tout en sauvegardant toujours leur autonomie intellectuelle, les canadianistes et les québécoisistes résidant au Canada ou ailleurs n'étaient pas insensibles aux changements de la politique des gouvernements fédéral et provinciaux envers ce domaine de recherche.

Dans le numéro 10 de notre revue *TransCanadiana*, nous invitons les membres de la communauté des chercheurs en études canadiennes et québécoises à présenter leur vision du développement de ces champs d'investigation intellectuelle dans leur ensemble, ou bien de dresser un bilan des vingt dernières années au sein du domaine de savoir dont ils sont experts. Nous aimerions également connaître leur avis sur les défis auxquels devront faire face les canadianistes et les québécoisistes dans le futur immédiat. Sans exclure a

*priori* d'autres interventions, on acceptera de préférence des contributions portant sur :

- des nouveaux domaines de recherche qui ont émergé au sein des études canadiennes et québécoises ;
- les relations entre les études canadiennes ou québécoises et d'autres disciplines scientifiques, comme p. ex. les études sur les Premières Nations, l'écologie, la bioéthique, les études sur l'autofiction, sur les diasporas, etc. ;
- des méthodologies révolues et émergentes dans les études canadiennes et québécoises ;
- les récentes recherches et tendances dans les deux domaines ;
- les nouvelles pédagogies dans les études canadiennes et québécoises ;
- le développement institutionnel des études canadiennes et québécoises dans différents pays / domaines ;
- l'avenir des études canadiennes et québécoises.

Le numéro à venir se composera essentiellement d'articles scientifiques consacrés aux sujets énumérés ci-dessus. Or, conformément à notre habitude, nous accueillerons aussi volontiers des comptes rendus des publications relatives aux deux études canadiennes et québécoises.

On acceptera des **résumés d'articles d'environ 350-400 mots** envoyés par courrier électronique aux éditeurs jusqu'au **20 décembre 2017**. Les auteurs des articles retenus seront informés de la décision positive des éditeurs jusqu'au **10 janvier 2018**. On a établi le **20 avril 2018** comme date de tombée pour la soumission des articles (de longueur maximale de 7000 mots) et de comptes rendus. **Tous les textes (résumés, articles et comptes rendus) doivent être rédigés soit en anglais, soit en français.** Nous n'acceptons pour TransCanadiana que des travaux originaux qui n'ont pas encore été publiés.

Envoyer s'il vous plaît vos contributions en anglais à l'adresse d'Agnieszka Rzepa [arzepa@amu.edu.pl](mailto:arzepa@amu.edu.pl)  
et celles en français à Krzysztof Jarosz [jarosz.km@gmail.com](mailto:jarosz.km@gmail.com)