

GLOBALISING THE PASSAGES. MÜLLER, MARKUS, ROBERT CHRISTIAN THOMSEN & DAVID PARRIS, eds. *Passages to Canada: Eighteen Essayistic Routes*. Brno: Masaryk UP, 2002.

*Passages to Canada* is part of the spirit that imbricates academic research in international networks supported by several associations whose shared interests may geographically locate on the opposite side of the globe. The book, clearly circumscribed within these *fin-de-siècle* trends, is a cooperative effort that collects contributions delivered at the European Student Seminar on Graduate Work in Canadian Studies held at Queen's University in Belfast in 1998. The congress itself resulted from the collaborative work undertaken by the British Association for Canadian Studies and the Association for Canadian Studies in Ireland, both of them under the auspices of the European Network for Canadian Studies.

As a consequence of the contradictory impulses to academic multidisciplinary and simultaneous specialisation, the book's propelling motor is a mutually nourishing coexistence between literary and cultural studies. The first part, "Canadian Literatures" comprises ten essays that range from analyses of Margaret Atwood's work, Michel Tremblay's and Timothy Findley's to that of Michael Ondaatje, Joy Kogawa, Frederick Philip Grove, Leonard Cohen or the 19th century Irish writer Charles Lever. In turn, "Canadian Social and Cultural Studies", part two, includes eight essays whose approaches are also highly diversified: from immigration in Montreal, to the struggle for Native rights; from marine parks to Halloween, from Quebecois cinema to a comparison between Scotland and Newfoundland in terms of power devolutionism. In this way, the volume travels between Europe and Canada; decentres its linguistic axes in being written in French and English and constructed by the contributions of English, Irish, Spanish, Russian or Polish PhD candidates whose varied *essayistic routes* equally lead to Canada, as the title of the collection advances.

In chapter one, "Emigration and the Anglo-Irish novel: Charles Lever in Canada", Jason King uses the figure of the Victorian writer to

discuss his 1850 novel *The Confession of Con Gregan: The Irish Gil Blas* as a picaresque tale. King firstly contends that the uncertain fictional itinerary described by Lever's protagonist contradicts the Irish novel of emigration and immigration, as determined by a starting point and an end across the Atlantic. Once in Canada, Lever's passion for the Native way of life fosters him to develop a self-conscious interest in *going native*, the literary trope that guides the novel, constitutes a postulate of identity as performance, and eventually, links Jason King's analysis to Christophe Lebold's. "Leonard Cohen: A Lyric Trajectory" delves into Cohen's poetry to argue that his lyricism unveils the materialisation of a private self in the public discourse of writing and singing. His poems, like his songs, are largely dependent on orality, on the expression of mythic contents tainted with religious or erotic overtones. The line of continuation delineated by the transit from his songs to his poetry discovers a self-conscious inter-/intratextuality that, for Lebold in the second essay, survives all the way along Cohen's work. In this way, the initial steps of *Passages* fluctuate between mid-19th century and the late 20th, autobiography and fiction, music and writing being the timeless signifiers of the remarkable multidisciplinary of the book.

A similar emphasis but on the linguistic double identity traditionally attributed to Canada can be perceived when the chapters constituting this collection endlessly criss-cross the distance, cultural and otherwise, between English and French. Thus, in opposition to the distinctly Anglophone figures of Cohen and Lever, Ann-Claire Nash approaches Rabelais' influence on Francine Noël and Michel Tremblay, and Marie-Pierre Andron points out that Gabrielle Roy's writings depict the female body as part of a political agenda that aims at repairing the blank in the fictional archive by resorting to motherhood, mother-daughter bonds and female sexuality. While in Nash's opinion the Rabelaisian verve, an "inspiration et facilité d'expression qui sont le fruit d'une vive imagination" (20), is very present in the writers under analysis and unfolds in a heteroglossic expression supported by linguistic puns on words



and the coexistence of Quebecois and European French, for Andron patriarchal culture is challenged by seeking for an alliance for female subjectivity in the natural world, as it became common in Canadian women's fiction of the 1970s. Chapters three and four, consequently, attempt to define, and come to terms with, a general in-subordination to the dominant discourse, be it that of the master literary tradition or that of a tradition featured by gender exclusions. The fracture caused in the realist narrative by the irruption of folk-tales and myths that coalesce by means of parody or pastiche with everyday realities in Tremblay's and Noël's fictions, and the relevance given to the female body in the novels of the Manitoban writer Roy accomplish a thematic and narrative challenge that parallels the defiance posited by the linguistic code in which they are articulated with respect to the Anglophone dominance within the Canadian literary and critical markets. That circumstance can be ultimately appreciated in the number of English versus French essays in this first part as well as in the great deal of attention paid to Atwood or Ondaatje, to whom chapters five, six and seven are dedicated, as compared to the scarce resonance generally attached to Tremblay, Roy, Noël or the author in chapter eight, Claire Martin. In her essay, Maureen Litherland approaches the conveyance of truth in Martin's writings of childhood to eventually problematise their apparent transparency and reaches the conclusion that her autobiographical works are deeply ingrained in the Quebecois social context, where the alliance of patriarchy and Catholicism results oppressive for women.

In contrast to the analyses of the Francophone writers, deeply involved in the ethnic definition, the three contributions centred on Ondaatje and Atwood, share a common stress on personal definition, either predicated on the writer or the women depicted by Atwood. In agreement with this general frame, the dynamics subjectivity/otherness that, according to María Jesús Llarena-Ascanio, presides over Ondaatje's oeuvre is the centre of "Inescapable Alterities in the Work of Michael Ondaatje." For Llarena-Ascanio, the self presented in his production is always departing from the sphere of its location

to look for its other, this creating an abiding motion that nurtures his creative efforts. All of them are pervaded by process, quasi-climaxes that return the narrative or poetic flow to a stalemate stage, thus attesting to the relevance of the quest deployed and the secondary importance given to an eventual epiphany. In Ondaatje's work, Llarena-Ascanio concludes, "no discovery is final [...]" (43), which, in the end, poses an inimical, questionable nihilism as inherent to the Sri-Lankan Canadian writer's work.

As far as Atwood is concerned, whereas Belinda Scott's "The Cinderella Syndrome: Margaret Atwood's Fairy Tale Imagery and the Implications of its Appeal to Contemporary Woman" reconstructs the genealogy of the Cinderella story through a psychoanalytical exegesis illuminated by Melanie Klein's studies, Kiriaki Massoura's "The Relationship of Food to Body and Language in Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman*" explores the complex relation that the novel's protagonist, Marian McAlpine, maintains with food once she realises that she is being devoured by her profession, men and the conventional lives adopted by her female friends. Therefore, personal crises and the mechanisms whereby they are circumvented are the common ground in these two chapters, which are inflected by a number of generalisations worthy of mention. For Scott, the Cinderella Syndrome refers to a personal depiction as victim of an external entity held responsible for one's fate, but the needed attention to the role played by factors of class or race in the *victimisation* is overlooked. As a result, the author is prey to concepts like *contemporary woman* and the hardly tenable scope that they bring about. Massoura, in turn, elaborates the consideration that all the characters in Atwood's 1969 novel are either consumers or consumed. Yet, and trapped by a paradox, laying the emphasis on nourishment leads the author to the denial of Marian's suffering anorexia nervosa. For Massoura, her refusal of food and the parallel disintegration of her ego are tantamount to a social disappearance, the conflict being more external than internal. Marian's lack of control on either side, I would argue, might trigger the ubiquitous process of self-annihilation.



The hardly shaken prominence of the English sphere in this first part is restored by chapters nine and ten, which, simultaneously, make an incursion into the field of the other, the migrant or the sexually different, and their problematic presence in the historical record. "The Concept of Memory as a Powerful Device to Critique Accepted Versions of History on the Basis of Timothy Findley's *The Wars* and Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*," analyses how memory-based reconstructions can act as counterdiscourses for the official historical narrative and mitigate the evident omissions caused by dissidence in any of its forms. Memory and the reconstruction it engenders is a healing balm for historical injuries like the eviction and segregation of the Japanese Canadians during World War II, or the main line guiding the interest in Robert Ross's life in Findley's novel. In both cases, postmodern reconstructions, aware of their documental contingency and willing to be set against themselves, are the only form to grasp a slippery truth whose presence also contaminates the last chapter. In "Felix Paul Greve alias Frederick Philip Grove: Some Observations on his Personal Process of Palimpsest" Markus Müller sustains that Grove always hides behind some of his characters, while his fictions conceal a number of events that are more or less overtly identified as autobiographical. Much of Müller's hypothesis is supported by the aura of mystery that surrounded Grove's life, especially his feigned suicide in Europe and his reappearance in Canada to escape from his many creditors. Once established in the Canadian prairies, seldom do his novels avoid the games of reality and appearance centred on pseudo-autobiographical figures, which frequently denote a reading of Grove's work to the too-close light of his biography.

In part two, *Passages* definitely goes beyond the literary to tackle as diverse issues as environmental worries, multiculturalism, Native rights or Quebecois separation. This spirit of extreme multiplicity, in consonance with the multicultural zeal of most contributions, is, however, constrained again by the linguistic dominance of English in the majority of the essays. In opposition to this, only chapter thirteen, Philippe Durand's "Le Multiculturalisme et l'enseigne-

ment de langues non officielles au Canada", and seventeen, Christian Porier's "Les représentations du temps au Québec: une étude politique du cinéma québécois", break the linguistic superiority of English in the collection. The former is Durand's analysis of the teaching of languages other than French and English in schools all over the country. The fact that Italian, German, Ukrainian, Chinese or Spanish are spoken by a vast number of Canadians impelled the central government to implant multicultural ideologies at primary and secondary levels of education in the ten Canadian provinces. Each of them, nevertheless, protected its autonomy on education, and, as a consequence, the multilingual education decayed in places where non-English/French speakers were a minority. The fragile implementation of ideal multiculturalism pointed out in this essay is confirmed in Porier's, which gives an insight of time in a number of cinematic texts employing Paul Ricoeur's and Fernand Dumont's theories of hermeneutics as pre-texts to conclude that cinema in Quebec provides a rich mirror for the expectations that govern a society repeatedly subdued by the Anglo. Such a cultural subordination is at odds with the multicultural predicament, a circumstance that also resumes in the federal policies under scrutiny in Ioulia Glouchtchenko's "The Policy of Canadian Federal Government Concerning Natives in the Period 1969-1982", and in Luis Constantino Vaca's "Intergenerational Conflicts among Portuguese Immigrants in Montreal." For Glouchtchenko, paradoxically and optimistically, the WASP attitude has turned more positive after WWII, an assertion inspired by the Ottawa partial acknowledgement of the Natives' rights on their lands in 1982. In turn, Vaca's essay proposes that, although the linguistic one is far from irrelevant, immigrants in Canada are confronted with a number of other obstacles, and sheds some light on the struggle between integration and the preservation of the Portuguese ethnic peculiarities in the Quebecois city. Hence the clash between the attempt to develop and simultaneously counteract patriarchal models of education, the building up of ghettos and the will to cross their borders by means, for instance, of intercultural marriages.

Geography, transculturalism and politics in Quebec and Newfoundland complete the collection's path, which in this form determines an itinerary subjected by the rhythm of two of the most contemporary affairs at the century's turn, environmental policies and sovereignty. "The Insular and Littoral Marine Parks: Reflections on a Model of Management of Large National Spaces in Canada", chapter eleven, analyses the national policy as regards those spaces state-wide. Hélène Marchand argues for the need to accommodate the national policies to the geographical factors defining any of these environments. Affirming that Canada's coastal extension has already served to test a national policy of natural parks, she asserts that there is a pressing necessity to compare it to that in other countries, thus advocating for the national opening to the international. "Halloween in Canada," chapter fifteen, precisely immerses in the transcultural voyage of a British tradition into Canada. Adriene Lherm holds that the festivity crossed the boundaries of the community in which it originated and transplanted into others, recently as a result of the pervasive globalisation. From seventeenth-century Protestant England to the new world Irish collectives, from the rural communities of the Maritimes to urban Ontario; from being a celebration for adults to a festival for children, and more recently, again an adults' pastime since its transgression has been appropriated by gay and lesbian collectives. These two chapters evince how the *passages to Canada* irremediably lead to somewhere else, and in that international, and somehow imprecise, direction resides much of the relevance that the collection may have, in the analysis of culture in an ongoing movement between the national and the global. In this contemporary trend can also be encapsulated Robert Chris-

tian Thomsen's "The Mentality of Devolutionism: Newfoundland and Scotland Compared". Thomsen resorts to one of the maritime territories to articulate a political comparison with another postcolonial territory recurrently marginalised by British power, the comparison relying on two opposite responses to similar social and economic circumstances. Scotland, he contends, has answered to British negligence by means of fiercer demands for autonomy, whereas Newfoundland has favoured a stronger centralisation. In this two-fold response to a similar circumstance, specificity, territorial and cultural, plays an important part that connects identity with issues of place and site. In contrast, Ailsa Henderson's "The Presence of Outliers in Political Culture: Survey Data from Québec," demystifies the common assumption that voting for a given political and ideological option is only mediated by economic factors. In her opinion, identity origin is an issue that should be seriously considered when analysing vote intention in Quebec. Therefore, Henderson underlines a model of analysis that willingly combines cultural identity and socio-economic factors.

The four-year lapse gone between the presentation of the embryonic interests reported here and the present has brought about the happy crystallisation of some of them in PhD dissertations. This constitutes on its own a symptomatic issue confirmed as *Passages to Canada* bears witness, on the one hand, to the vitality of Canadian studies in the European context, and on the other, to the vigorous tendency to embed those studies in an international entanglement whose validity solidifies as we immerse in a twenty-first century critical panorama.

PEDRO CARMONA RODRÍGUEZ

