

CANADA, IDENTITY AND ETHNICITY AT A CROSSROADS. DAVIS, ROCÍO G., and ROSALÍA BAENA, eds. *Tricks with a Glass Writing Ethnicity in Canada*. Amsterdam-Atlanta, GA: Rodopi 2000. 301 pp.

The word 'mosaic' seems particularly apt to define the way in which different ethnic groups coexist in the Canadian literary landscape. The multifaceted reality of the country and its inhabitants is continuously brought to the front through the complex intermingling of different voices —or, rather, one could almost say, of different *accents*, who search for an identity in an ever-hyphenated space. Whether hyphenated and hybrid existences constitute an unescapable source of anxiety or imply a possibility for individual realization —and for an eventual construction of a place to which identity may grasp— is good food for thought for the investigator researching in the field of ethnicity in Canada. This aptly-entitled piece of criticism will certainly help the researcher to look for an answer to such enquiries.

After the editors' introduction, the book opens beautifully with a half-essay, half-fictional account by the Canadian writer of Ukrainian descent Janice Kulyk Keefer. A hybrid text itself, this piece deals with ideas of dislocation, nostalgia and identity from a privileged point of view: that of the 'hyphenated' writer herself. The first part of the text offers us a first-hand account of the experience of otherness and dislocation through family facts and critical thought meeting artistic memoir. To assert the ambivalence of rootlessness is one of Keefer's aims, to attempt to grasp a past recurring, when necessary, to that commonplace of ethnic writing, the imaginary homeland. The inclusion of Keefer's own artistic production enriches the book at large, by succeeding in uniting both the memoir and the critical understanding of that memoir. And it is partly on a genre whose boundaries often blur with those of the memoir that another of the book's highlights stands. We are referring to Rocío G. Davis' comprehensive essay on the short-story cycle, a genre deeply

linked to postcolonial writing and, as she shows, to ethnic writing in Canada. Davis' analysis deals in particular with Rohinton Mistry's *Tales from Firozsha Baag*, but provides an overview of the genre with special interest to its intrinsic relation to the portrayal of (im)migrant identities in Canada. The elusive nature of the genre, both a succession of fragments and a unity as a whole serves, as Davis points out, particularly well to ethnic aims at representation: "The ethnic short-story cycle may be considered the formal materialization of the trope of doubleness as the between-worlds condition is presented via a form that itself oscillates between two genres." (Davis 75)

Rosalía Baena's rendering of Nino Ricci's *Lives of the Saints* is another key reading in the book. Interestingly, the author draws attention to Ricci's handling of morality in the text, and the relation between the native Italian shore and Canada as a destination partly on this light. The symbolic reach of Ricci's novel is craftily decoded by Baena, whose clear conclusions shed light on the understanding of this text in particular, while they illuminate as well more general aspects of the discussion in which the book is set.

As the editors explain in the introduction, the book attempts to offer a critical understanding of particular texts rather than focusing on more general concepts. However, our impression is that both things are achieved, something which is always to be appreciated. Other authors discussed include Michael Ondaatje (Aitor Ibarrola-Armendariz), Neil Bissoondath (Kathleen Firth), Joy Kogawa (Eva Darias Beautell) and Sky Lee (Mary Condé and Eva Darias Beautell), among others. Parejo Vadillo's article "Native Women and Resistance Literature" is noteworthy as well. The book ends beautifully by creating, in some sense, a circular structure with Keefer's opening essay, with two interviews to Wayson Choy and Linda Hutcheon. One could almost say, that *Tricks with a Glass* constitutes an article-cycle. A remarkable achievement.

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