Book Reviews

This Elusive Land: Women and the Canadian Environment. Edited by Melody Hessing, Rebecca Raglon and Catriona Sandilands. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005. 387 pages. $85.00 cloth; $34.95 paper.

Camber: Selected Poems, 1983–2000. By Don McKay. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2004. 211 pages. $19.99 paper.

> The snails have made a garden of green lace:
> broderie anglaise from the cabbages,
> chantilly from the choux-fleurs, tiny veils—
> I see already that I lift the blind
> upon a woman's wardrobe of the mind.
>
> Such female whimsy floats about me like
> a kind of tulle, a flimsy mesh,
> while feet in gum boots pace the rectangles—
> garden abstracted, geometry awash—
> an unknown theorem argued in green ink,
> dropped in the bath.
> Euclid in glorious chlorophyll, half drunk.
>
> —P.K. Page, "After Rain" (*The Hidden Room: Collected Poems*, Volume Two. Erin, ON: the Porcupine's Quill, 1997)

These opening lines remind us of the readiness with which we feminize nature. And yet, "green lace" is such an apt metaphor for a snail-ravaged garden that the poem does not immediately direct us towards a critical scrutiny of its "female whimsy." This happens in stanza two: the preponderance of metaphors draws attention to the abstraction of the garden, underscoring the inevitable failure of all attempts to grasp the organic world in or through language, but the surprising juxtaposition of lacy and mathematical images also invokes and challenges the long-standing opposition between female nature and male culture. As Page's whimsical gumboot-clad female gardener navigates the geometry of her garden, she exposes the failure of that dualism as a tool for apprehending the natural world and affirms, instead, a lyric sensibility that is, as Jan Zwicky argues, "a precondition for sound ecological thought" ("Bringhurst's Presocratics: Lyric and Ecology." *Poetry and Knowing: Speculative Essays and Interviews.* Kingston, ON: Quarry, 1995, 112).

The problems raised by Page's gardener are explicitly addressed by the editors of *This Elusive Land: Women and the Canadian Environment.* "Are women still so strongly associated with domesticity that even environmentalism confines them to the role of cleaning up the mess, while men go out and heroically save (or exploit) the wild?" ask Melody Hessing, Rebecca Raglon, and Catriona Sandilands. In an attempt to engage these and other questions about gender and the experience of the Canadian

environment, they have gathered together a collection of essays that range across literary concerns to investigations of socio-economic issues. Given its wide scope and its multidisciplinarity, the collection coheres surprisingly well, but the essays are uneven. At the risk of revealing my own biases, I would suggest that the most engaging and provocative essays are those grounded in close readings of particular texts or events, and which thus resist making very general assumptions about an innate and animistic reciprocity between women and the land.

Part 1 opens with a strong essay situating Catharine Parr Traill's work within the literary tradition of nature writing, and underscores the extent to which Traill construed the natural world as a source of intellectual inspiration and solace, a sort of backwoods library. Another article does a very nice job of reconciling British imperialism and Canadian nationalism in Agnes Deans Cameron's *The New North*, though I wished that the author devoted more space to Cameron's environmentalism and less to German hermeneuticist Johann Ernesti, whose interpretative schema adds little to the analysis of Cameron's book.

Part 2 explores women's contributions to fishery, forestry, agriculture, and tourism. The most analytically rigorous essay is Catriona Sandilands's "Where the Mountain Men Meet the Lesbian Rangers," which demonstrates that the establishment of Banff National Park required the extension of heterosexualized domestic relations into the wilderness because, "in order for the tourist town to appear safe, settled, and genteel, there had to be a significant white female presence, in contrast to Aboriginal women and to non-British and/or working-class women who were part of the resource communities in the region."

The essays in Part 3 consider how women integrate household, community, and society through their political activities. By way of example, one chapter celebrates feminist cartography as a means of mobilizing and unifying a community while also providing a creative arena in which to investigate one's relationship to place. A second essay reminds readers of the dioxin contamination of breast milk and considers why so little political attention has been paid to this issue despite an abundance of alarming scientific data: author Kathryn Harrison compares a number of explanations for that silence and concludes that the issue has been deemed "too close to home," too disconcertingly personal, by mainstream media and, more surprisingly, perhaps, by most environmental organizations.

In the introduction to Part 4 the editors suggest that the concentration of Canada's relatively sparse population along the border shared with the United States means that Canadians are particularly well poised to re-imagine an equitable relationship to the natural world. The essays in this section tackle the challenge represented by that opportunity. Unfortunately, what should have been the most speculative and intellectually stimulating part of the collection is the weakest. Heather Eaton's argument that "spirituality arising from the deepest impulses of life can be harnessed as a force for political change" fails to identify particular ways in which spirituality might fuel social change. Marian Scholtmeijer's essay is also compromised by its general tone: her central argument that many First Nations women writers engage traditional values to "connect with the personhood of natural entities" is borne out in the texts that she cites, but the essay nevertheless reinscribes the double-edged stereotype of the innately eco-conscious "Green Indian" which, as Diana Relke argues, "grants Native people authoritative

insight into the nature of Nature, even as it functions to keep the civilized/primitive binary firmly in place" (*Greenwor(l)ds: Ecocritical Readings of Canadian Women's Poetry*. Calgary: U of Calgary P, 1999, 259). Perhaps the romantic tone of this essay would have been less troubling had the editors included an essay by a First Nations writer. Indeed, given that the editors have done such a good job of assembling papers that emphasize the differences amongst feminist responses to the Canadian environment, they might have done more to emphasize race as an important source of difference. That said, the collection makes a significant contribution to feminist criticism and environmental studies, and through its wide-ranging cataloguing of female "whimsy," industry, and ingenuity, it also shows us how we might follow in the gum-booted footsteps of Page's poet-gardener, and celebrate the fecundity, the geometry, and the infinite possibility of "this elusive land."

Towards the end of Page's poem the speaker addresses herself to the birds in her garden:

> And choir me too to keep my heart a size
> larger than seeing, unseduced by each
> bright glimpse of beauty striking like a bell,
> so that the whole may toll,
> its meaning shine
> clear of the myriad images that still—
> do what I will, encumber its pure line.

That struggle to record the intricacy and wonder of the nonhuman world so that "the whole may toll" is also a reoccurring theme in Don McKay's poetry, and is very much evident in his wonderful collection *Camber: Selected Poems 1983-2000*. The inevitable gap between representation and the real is, of course, at the heart of much nature poetry, but McKay's treatment of this theme is consistently fresh, erudite, and—somewhat surprisingly—funny. "Alias Rock Dove, Alias Holy Ghost," a poem taken from his 1983 collection *Birding, or Desire* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1983) is a good example. It opens this way:

> How come you don't see more dead pigeons?
> Because when they die their bodies turn to lost gloves
> and get swept up by the city sweepers. Even so
> their soft inconsequence can sabotage a jumbo jet
> the way a flock of empty details
> devastates a marriage.

Here, McKay's language is typically spare and colloquial. As a result, the poem seems to appeal directly to the reader. And, through its use of unconventional and sometimes peculiar metaphors, it demands that we look more carefully at that most familiar, even prosaic of creatures—the pigeon. But McKay doesn't preach. Instead, he surprises us with a pithy punchline and makes us laugh. In an essay collection called *Vis à Vis: Fieldnotes on Poetry and Wilderness* (Wolfville, NS: Gaspereau, 2001) he goes further, encouraging us to laugh at him, the self-styled "Mr. Nature Poet, standing by the roadside, outfitted no doubt by L.L. Bean" (28). In both collections, humour is key. As he suggests in "High Noon on the Pre-Cambrian Shield," a poem published in *Birding* but

not collected in *Camber*, without humour, the nature writer who "steal[s] a penful of permanent blue-black ink / and pivot[s] at the edge" of language and perception "will know nothing / and too well" (110).

Because he is so interested in the ways that language shapes our perception, McKay's metaphors and similes often announce themselves. For example, the birder who is the subject of the poem "Field Marks," is "bursting with sneakiness" as he "tip-toes through our early morning drowse / like the villain in an old cartoon ... / ... / ... letting the fridge lips close behind him with a kiss."

> Later on he'll come back as the well-known bore
> and read his list (Song sparrows: 5
> Brown thrashers: 2
> Black-throated green warblers: 1)

Perhaps he senses that he bores his listeners, or perhaps he is silenced by his respect for the ineffable, but McKay's bird-watcher decides not to share "all the secret data hatching on the far side of his mind." McKay, on the other hand, sings the praises of those birds at length and, in the name of ineffability and wonderment, he gives voice to the secret data that the bird-watcher holds dear:

> that birds have sinuses throughout their bodies,
> and that their bones are flutes
> that soaring turkey vultures can detect
> depression and careless driving
> that every feather is a pen, but living,
>
> flying

In an essay on the comic element in McKay's work, Sophia Forster acknowledges that the above passage can be said to represent "anthropomorphism at its worst (in the sense of ascribing specifically human traits to the nonhuman)," but, she argues, it also represents anthropomorphism at its best, "as an act of both a mediation and meditation, providing a self-reflexive bridge between the human and the non-human" ("Don McKay's Comic Anthropocentrism: Ecocriticism Meets 'Mr. Nature Poet.'" *Essays on Canadian Writing* 77 (Fall 2002) 116). Like Forster, I am constantly impressed with the self-reflexivity and rigour that characterize McKay's nature poetry and his poetry about nature poetry. But for me, what makes the poems resonate, even fly, are the details: "the sturdy fragile woven / scrotum" of the Oriole's nest; the terror-stricken moths "flapping the loose / bandage of themselves" against a screen" (93); and the station-wagon, "delicate with dew" in the early morning. If, as McKay argues, "a flock of empty details / devastates a marriage," it is also true that a "flock" of poignant and trenchant details can carry all the yearning and insight of a poem, and give it wings.

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Every Grain of Sand: Canadian Perspectives on Ecology and Environment. By J.A. Wainwright. Montreal: Wilfred Laurier UP, 2004. ix, 181 pages. $24.95 paper.

Through a series of personal essays, *Every Grain of Sand* offers a glimpse into the sources of social and cultural construction that shape the character of human responses to the natural world. This book reminds us that it's essential to preserve ecosystem biodiversity and to adapt to the ecological realties of the earth—to reacquaint ourselves with nature and its components and how we depend on them.

Following the editors' introduction, in the second chapter Lionel Rubinoff calls for an eco-centred conception of the common good, based on the common ancestry of all life, instead of on the corporate "appetite for exponential growth and the uncritical pursuit of the possible" (12), which often leads to human-human and human-nature domination. In the third chapter, Karen Krug comes to terms with her former idealized conception of farm life by conceding the sometimes exploitive and destructive nature of contemporary agriculture. Krug advocates instead "permaculture"—an approach that seeks to "maximize benefits to humans while maintaining the integrity of the adapted system" (43). Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands explores the environmental politics of human and non-human interaction in chapter four, advocating a view of ourselves as "ecotones": "rich mixtures of cultures, nature, animal, and technology." In that light, "the protection and creation of both cultural diversity and biodiversity" (51) are recognized as conditions for human welfare. In the fifth chapter, Elizabeth May explores the sources of her inspiration and development as an environmental activist.

In chapter six, J.A. Wainwright talks about his human-human and human-nature relationships which have instilled in him a life-long affinity and connection to home that bridges time and space. In chapter seven, Anne Marie Dalton argues that religious teachings—informed by inclusive, cross-cultural conversation—are capable of responding to ecological crisis. Dalton believes that a properly informed religious-ecological perspective places a greater emphasis on "simplicity of lifestyle and more friendly earth-human relationship" (81). Trish Glazebrook's philosophical analysis in chapter eight points to a Western intellectual tradition in science that favours "a priori theorizing over attentive observation of natural process" (90). Glazebrook makes a case for an "Ecofeminist Phenomenology of Nature"—an ethical perspective that values and promotes "listening to and observing ... all natural phenomena" (98). In chapter nine, Onno Oerlemans examines poetry by Wordsworth and Shelly, and talks about Romanticism's effect on our vision of the natural world and the development of contemporary environmentalism. Oerlemans talks about an understanding of nature as "familiar and harmonious ... a projection of our desires" (111). Monte Hummel's analysis of nature as wilderness, in chapter ten, employs the metaphor of ecological envelopes to depict the ecosphere as a mutually dependent entity, a global environment from "which all of life evolved and by which all is sustained" (118). He argues that life is a property not of the individual but of the ecosphere.

In chapter eleven, Leanne Simpson recalls the history of colonial domination and exploitation, arguing that this continues in the form of Globalization and Free Trade. In chapter twelve, Ehor Boyanowsky considers the forces of "public will, corporate will and political will" in environmental conflicts (149), maintaining that intimate experiences are crucial in the protection of natural systems such as creeks, rivers, and streams. In

chapter thirteen, Peter Armitage contrasts representations of the Labrador—as primeval wilderness, Romantic Labrador, the Resource Eldorado— with more genuine Indigenous representations of people and their cultures. The book culminates in an exploration, by Jarmo Jalava, of the friction between a person's desire for solitude and privacy and for becoming one with the natural world.

The central tenet of this book is the romantic notion that what makes humans human is a "need and affinity for nature." Its essays provide varied personal, ethical, and spiritual perspectives on the utilization, conservation, and preservation of the natural environment. It's an informative read for a general audience interested in the personal perspectives, experiences, relationships, and politics of authors uneasy, if not alarmed, about the current state and future of the earth.

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Deconstruction and the Remainders of Phenomenology: Sartre, Derrida, Foucault, Baudrillard. By Tilottama Rajan. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2002. xxi, 363 pages. US $65.00 cloth; US $25.95 paper.

This book is a carefully crafted and extremely erudite study of the forgotten connections between existential phenomenology and French deconstruction. While not for the uninitiated, it represents a major contribution to our understanding of twentieth-century French intellectual history, and holds many rewards for readers possessing a prior knowledge of the subject.

Due to the peculiarities of the Anglo-American reception of French theory since the 1970s, the term "deconstruction" is usually treated as a synonym for "poststructuralism" in English-speaking academia. As Rajan points out, conflating these two strains of theory leaves the false impression that they developed simultaneously; it also reductively frames deconstruction as a critique or overcoming of structuralism when in fact this project marked only one phase in its history. Rajan argues that although poststructuralism did not develop until the late 1960s, a deconstructive style of thought took shape in France as early as the 1940s. In this earlier form, deconstruction emerged through an encounter with existential (as opposed to transcendental) phenomenology, whose "unworking of consciousness and perception" anticipated deconstruction's "unworking of language." The book offers a compelling account of Sartre's importance to this nexus, effectively exposing the unacknowledged kinship between his work—especially *Being and Nothingness* (1943)—and deconstruction.

Rajan traces the permutations of this phenomenologically-inflected, pre-post-structuralist, form of deconstruction in the thought of Maurice Blanchot and Emmanuel Levinas in the 1940s, in the early work of Paul de Man, in Foucault's work up to and including *The Order of Things* (1966), in Derrida's earliest texts, especially his studies of Husserl, and finally, in the work of Baudrillard up to *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976). She demonstrates that far from being concerned primarily with literary criticism, these thinkers (in these texts) made language the focus of an interdisciplinary effort to renew philosophy in the face of the challenge posed to it by the human sciences in

the early 1960s. She also maintains that their accounts of language engaged a number of ontological and ethical issues that had been important to phenomenology but were later elided in poststructuralism.

Poststructuralism receives a sharp rebuke in this study, though the author is mainly concerned with the "negative" or "ascetic" poststructuralism she finds in the later work of Foucault and de Man, as well as in some texts of Baudrillard and Derrida. This form of poststructuralism effected an antihumanist and formalist reorientation of deconstruction that was marked by a pathological refusal to posit anything outside of discourse (Foucault), rhetoric (de Man), or media simulation (Baudrillard). Rajan argues that this refusal was constituted in and through the forgetting or "loss" of deconstruction's earlier engagement with phenomenology—an engagement that created an interface, worth recovering, between ontological and linguistic problems.

As intellectual history, this study is methodologically innovative. It judiciously uses psychoanalytic concepts (such mourning and disavowal) alongside rhetorical ones (like chiasmus and allegory) to frame the relationships between various theories, and the results are original and sophisticated. However, while this approach extends the analysis of ideational shifts to include a fascinating consideration of their unintended or unconscious aspects, it proves less useful for specifying the relationship between ideas and their historical and cultural contexts. References to those contexts, in fact, tend to be couched in psychoanalytic terms: we read of a "cathexis" between poststructuralism and May 1968, of the "trauma" of modern media technology, and so on. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but in this study the psychoanalytic vocabulary sometimes replaces rather than supports a systematic analysis of how, precisely, ideas were constituted in history and culture. But it is perhaps unfair to expect more from a work that is already so wide-ranging and impressive in its scope, and that, after all, never claims to offer a cultural history of theory.

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Conrad and Empire. By Stephen Ross. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 2004. 224 pages. US $39.95.

This book attempts to break from those recent trends in Conrad scholarship that primarily focus on questions of imperialism, colonialism, and race. Ross offers a new perspective on Conrad's novels, arguing that criticism has not yet recognized Conrad's prescient concern with global capitalism and post-imperialist modernity. The chance to measure Ross's success in his endeavour to break from the dominant critical discussion makes the book worth reading.

Ross relies upon theoretical models concerning globalization developed by Appadurai and by Hardt and Negri, which are supplemented by theories that descend from Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche. In his readings of *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim*, *Nostromo*, and *The Secret Agent*, Ross explores how Conrad critiques the process of globalization that undermines national politics. Ross uses a selection of Conrad's major characters to show how their personal and family histories reveal the effects of this major political and ideological shift. Significant parts of each chapter focus on the psychological conflict

characters experience when attempting to escape a slave morality by moving towards a master morality.

The most compelling moments in the book are the passages in which Ross identifies Conrad's criticism of the embryonic origins of the ideas and structures that dominate our culture at the present time. Ross shows how the dangers that modern rational structures and global material interests pose to individuals, families, and communities are a central issue in Conrad's art.

There is one significant question that the book inadvertently raises that deserves careful consideration. Although Ross recognizes Conrad's critique of the dangers inherent in the application of rational methods, his readings are built upon rational interpretive methods. Using language found in Ross's introduction, a "general theoretical framework" with a "toolbox of concepts" is used to create "portable reading strategies" that reveal how Conrad's novels are "early detection devices" recording the changes in modern culture. This is precisely the kind of language that Conrad undermines in his criticism of the Company in *Heart of Darkness* or the partnership between Charles Gould and the American investor Holroyd in *Nostromo*. Ross is not sufficiently aware of this problem. Consider the question in this way. Ross rightly argues that Conrad is a critic of modernity. The godfathers of modern and postmodern thought are Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. Their ideas directly inform many of our contemporary theories. In exposing problems inherent in modernity, Conrad at least implicitly critiques the ideas and structures these three writers popularized. In short, Conrad destabilizes the foundations of the methods enabling Ross's arguments, yet Ross never considers this problem in his book. An important test would be to compare Conrad's style against the language and grammar Ross employs in paragraphs of the book where both appear together. The disjunction is remarkable. So to push Ross's argument further, I would suggest that Conrad's criticism does not begin and end with modernity but extends to our postmodern methods as well.

Michael John DiSanto Dalhousie University

Postscript. By Geoffrey Cook. Montreal: Signal Editions, 2004. 69 pages. $14.95.

Postscript, Geoffrey Cook's first collection of poetry, offers a captivating vision of art and landscape. Its descriptions range from winter-cold artifacts such as *a beer, an axe, a shotgun and snowshoes* to the erotically visual capture of seals off the coast of Green Rock, *deeply sexual in shape and motion*. Cook offers his readers an escape from the concrete world of high functioning city life, a retreat in time, away from our fissured lives towards the smooth unity of background landscapes and foreground bodies. Reading of a simpler time when common folk are concerned with *flea markets and farmers' markets retired to small lots,* I am reminded my own childhood, of Sunday afternoons at the Delta Drive-In with family, examining rows upon rows of swap meet treasures.

A number of Cook's poems are etched with the delicate poignancy of an era gone by, *as if to mourn the cost of living in a time of loss.* We surmise that "In Memoriam Donald Whiteman Cook (1918–1944)" is about the author's grandfather lost in World War II. One of my favorite poems in this collection is "A Portrait of Love in Exile,"

about the unsuspecting remains of a broken relationship. The narrating lover, admitting there are some wounds never to be healed, expects to be "cleaned out" when he returns home. But upon his return, what remains instead is so much more—a deeper understanding about their love found within a framed portrait, *two figures in an abstract landscape.*

I'm not fond of Cook's approach to rhyming. A traditionalist, I find that contemporary rhymed poetry is often forced and contrived. Cook's "Folk Song," for example, is a simplistic lyrical ditty that opens *Little bud, little bud, / listen to my song. / Spring has raised your lovely head, / And now it won't be long.* This poem interrupts the introspective look at nature offered in his deeper and more meaningful poems.

Ironically, in the title poem, "Postscript," while some stanzas are also written with a similarly simplistic sense of meter and rhyme, Cook muses: *The syntax of a life's / deceived as time is cheated by a rhyme / ... the scheme to scan the line / that spans to sublime from ridiculous / is in parenthesis*

Nonetheless, I enjoy the rustic and subjective journey Cook takes his readers on, and his fine brush strokes that illuminate for us the sensuality of everyday landscapes.

Donna M. Hill Vernon, BC

Italian Tales: An Anthology of Italian Fiction. Edited by Massimo Riva. New Haven and London: Yale UP. 260 pages. US $40.50.

A surprising fact about Italy is that before World War Two most Italians didn't speak Italian, let alone write it. One of the ironies of a nation of regional dialects (united politically only in the 1870s) is that at the historical moment when post-war industrialization, comprehensive education and new technologies (read: television) disseminated a common national language, writers of fiction were already firmly in the grip of a post-modern questioning of language's ability to grasp any kind of reality or truth, old or new.

That concern with the synthetic power of language is a dominant strain in this collection. It's the subject of Giorgio Manganelli's Robbe-Grillet-like metafiction "The Self Awareness of the Labyrinth," where language in a sense eats its own tail in a search for (self) definition. But the search for meaning is also implicit in the more traditional storytelling of writers like Fabrizia Ramondino and Erri di Luca, who in "Montedidio" finds sanctity in a young man's apprenticeship in a Neopolitan carpentry shop. Compared to the raucous dialect of his parents, Italian (which they will never learn) is for the boy narrator "a quiet language that sits still inside books."

Raimondo's "The Piazza" deals with a quintessential Italian urban space, and like many other pieces in the book takes memory and its unreliability as its subject. Italians of course have a lot more past to remember than most people (one section is entitled "Ruins with a View"), and Raimondo's excerpt ironically—and happily, for the reader—is an affectionate gallery of village portraits that comes as a relief after the zero degree writing of Mangianelli and of Danielle Del Guidice. The latter's "Reaching Dew Point" exhibits a (stereotypical male?) preoccupation with technological writing, which albeit typically fails to extract its writer-manqué aviator from his existential peril.

The collection, in fact, and despite its frequently expressed doubts on the subject, ironically demonstrates in pieces like Raimondo's the resurgent power of traditional narratives. As such, then, it provides a sort of response to the Quo Vadis? conundrum of post-modernism, and reminds me of Umberto Eco's use of traditional genres like the murder mystery to explore his metaphysical and religio-aesthetic concerns. Not-so-incidentally, both Eco and his fellow fictional preeminence Italo Calvino, are missing from this collection, presumably to allow the other guys some space.

Another strain in the collection (and a very Italian one at that) is the cinematic quality of much of the writing. This often takes a detached point of view, much like an Antonioni wide shot where figures wander through a landscape in parabolas of non-communication. There are no Tuscan hill towns bathed in warm Renaissance light or *Dolce Vita* street scenes here; rather, cemeteries, garbage dumps, and industrial waterfront are the favoured sites.

Interestingly, the Po Valley, the flat industrial plain in Italy's prosperous north that was the setting for one of Antonioni's first films, serves as a governing metaphor in several stories; I suppose its relative featurlessness and its submerging of the past in racketing industrialization is the point here.

Gianni Celati's "Lost Road," for example, records that what surprises here "even more than the pollution of the river, the diseased trees, the industrial stench, the state of neglect blanketing anything that doesn't have to do with profit ... is this new kind of countryside where one breathes an air of urban solitude." Standing on the shoulder of a road in this modern wasteland, the narrator (significantly, a writer on a hike taking notes) is shouted at by a passing motorist "Hey egghead, you walking?" It's as if both writing and walking are relics from a vanished culture. But even Celati's perambulatory minimalism (and almost despite itself) yields up the occasional metaphor or aphorism, and the story even ends in a gentle epiphany. In the end, the writer apologizes for his craft: "Forgive us, forgive us, we are heedless and incompetent, not even smart enough to stay put, not to move, not to talk, to be like the trees." To which one might respond: "What's a tree?"

As Pauline Kael famously wrote about Antonioni, it's a bleak view, but as least it's a view.

Glenn Walton Saint Mary's University

Hitler's Prisons: Legal Terror in Nazi Germany. By Nikolaus Wachsmann. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2004. xvii, 538 pages. US $45.00.

For most contemporaries the predominant image of incarceration during Hitler's Third Reich is likely supplied by concentration camps, the best known of which are Dachau and Buchenwald. Yet, as British historian Nikolaus Wachsmann points out in this well researched and broadly conceived study, until the turn of the year 1942/43 there were substantially more inmates in regular German prisons and penitentiaries than in the numerous extra-legal detention centres controlled by the SS and the Gestapo. The author maintains that, although living conditions for prisoners in the penal system became increasingly inhumane as the war progressed, their chances of survival were usually

better than those sent instead to the camps. The two types of punishment installation nevertheless constituted mutually reinforcing elements in an integrated terror mechanism; thus the police arrested real or alleged criminals (for example, Jews and "Aryans" accused under the 1935 Nuremberg racial laws of having mutual intimate relations) for trial by the judiciary, while in mid 1942 the Ministry of Justice transferred all Jewish and "Gypsy" prisoners under its jurisdiction to the Gestapo for so-called "annihilation through labour" in a concentration camp. In this fashion the 1933 demand of Roland Freisler—then State Secretary in the Ministry and subsequently (as President of the People's Court) Nazi Germany's most notorious hanging judge—that the country's prison network had to become a "house of horror" (76) was amply realized.

Wachsmann plausibly divides his study into three chronological sections of uneven length. The opening chapter provides an excellent overview of the Weimar Republic's legal and penal structure in order to reveal the factors of change and, especially, continuity between German democracy and the would-be totalitarian regime that supplanted it. He identifies the latter elements in the areas of personnel—very few of the mainly nationalist and conservative members of the bench or prison governors had to be purged in 1933—and also ideology. Both these groups preferred strict treatment over the rehabilitation of offenders as well as the application of special measures to deal with dangerous "incorrigible" criminals. Already during the pre-war period, which comprises the book's second part, these desiderata were more than satisfied. The new regulations—as they called for—made imprisonment a "painful evil" (81) for every category of inmate; the number of inmates was doubled and their range was expanded to include political and religious detainees—Communists, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals and, of course, Jews. A striking novelty was the introduction of large-scale prison camps to carry out major outdoor work projects such as reclaiming marsh lands; these institutions were run with hitherto unimaginable brutality. However, the real transformation occurred only after 1939 when foreigners (mainly Czechs and Poles) and relatively petty transgressors of wartime economic decrees all but overwhelmed even the Nazis' organizational capacity. Wachsmann shows in his final and most detailed section how "relief" of sorts was achieved through the mass murder of inmates physically incapable of supporting the war effort or else racially undesirable; thousands upon thousands of death sentences were pronounced and cruelly implemented.

Notwithstanding an occasional stylistic lapse (an improper plural of 'court martial' is sometimes, though not always, used) and the surprising failure to utilize standard sources such as writer Luise Rinser's famous diary of her harrowing 1944 prison experience, this is an impressive work of scholarship that touches on just about very aspect of Nazi "legality" and illegality.

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History of the Book in Canada. Volume One: Beginnings to 1840. Edited by Patricia Lockhart Fleming, Gilles Gallichan and Yvan Lamonde. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2004. 540 pages. $75.00.

At the 2005 conference of the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading, and

Publishing, the History of the Book in Canada/Histoire du livre et de l'imprimé au Canada (HBiC/HLiC) sponsored a panel entitled "Canada: A Crossroads of International Book Culture." The panel was essentially a public hearing for the first of three HBiC/HLiC volumes with an international audience of bibliographers, book historians, textual scholars, editors, literary critics, cultural theorists, and librarians—many of whom contributed to the volume. Presenters on this panel included selected members of the editorial team for the projected three volumes of the HBiC/HLiC, each of whom spoke to the rationale of the project, its methodologies, its scope and its limitations, and, in one case, offered an exemplary case history of Canadian authorship and its relationship to the international scene of book publishing. The panel was at once a celebration of the publication of the first volume in the HBiC/HLiC series, which ambitiously covers the period from pre-contact aboriginal oral cultures to colonial print cultures of the early nineteenth century, a preview of material forthcoming in the second and third volumes, which will address the 1840–1918 and 1918–1980 periods respectively, and a synopsis of the project as a whole.

Among the presenters were Dalhousie professors Fiona Black and Bertram Macdonald, who have worked to develop five online databases "to support the inquiries of authors and editors and to establish an infrastructure for ongoing research: Bibliography of the History of the Book in Canada/Bibliographie d'histoire du livre et de l'imprime au Canada; Canadian Book Trade and Library Index/Index canadien des métiers du livre et des bibliothèques; Catalogues canadiens relatifs à l'imprime/Canadian Book Catalogues; Imprimés canadiens avant 1840/Canadian Imprints to 1840; and Manuels scholaires canadiens/Canadian Textbooks" (HBiC/HLiC xviii). These databases not only complement the findings presented by individual researchers in the first HBiC/HLiC volume but also enable the possibility for supplemental research by emerging scholars. The collaborative relationship between these online databases and the printed volume is indicative of the state of contemporary bibliographic, textual, editorial, and historical scholarship and of the state of contemporary authorship and readership, for the intersection of digital and print cultures is now commonplace in our university classrooms, offices, libraries, and archives. The HBiC/HLiC project is therefore a collaborative venture in at least two ways: it brings together a multidisciplinary group of scholars in the production of histories of authorship, reading, and publishing in Canada and a multimedia support for the presentation and facilitation of their research.

To consider the broader conceptual accomplishments of the HBiC/HLiC project is crucial, for it deserves recognition for both its landmark publication and its successful integration of multiple institutions, scholars, and media. That said, I have some minor reservations concerning the execution of the first volume, namely its frequent redundancies, sometimes awkward cross-referencing, and its editors' evident attraction to exemplary case histories. These are not the fault of the individual contributors, however. Rather, my criticism arises from the editorial decision to interrupt the more comprehensive narratives of the major chapters with brief case histories, many (if not all) of which could have been easily integrated into the body of the chapters. The consequence is a fragmented narrative, one that reads like an awkwardly over-punctuated sentence, or one in which too many distracting parenthetical clauses intervene between the main subject and its predicate. This volume is at once the best of times and the worst of times. Instead of dotting the volume with so many case histories, it would have

been preferable to see these integrated into the main chapters; this might have entailed greater collaboration between the individual authors of the case histories and the authors (who on occasion number two or three) of the main chapters. Given the success of the HBiC/HLiC project on so many other collaborative fronts, it is mildly disappointing that the organization of the first volume does not always (though admirably, in many chapters, does) follow through with the collaborative spirit of the project as a whole.

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Léviathan. Traduit du latin. By Thomas Hobbes. Edited by François Tricaud and Martine Pécharman. Introduction by M. Pécharman. *Ouvres de Thomas Hobbes*, Tome VI-2. Paris: Vrin-Dalloz, 2004. xxxv, 559 pages. €40.00 paper.

Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651) is one of the most famous works in the history of philosophy. However, not many people know that there is also a Latin version of *Leviathan*. It was first published in Hobbes's *Opera omnia*, (Amsterdam, 1668) together with works that had appeared earlier: *De corpore*, *De homine*, *De cive* and other mainly scientific works (i.e., *Dialogus physicus de natura aëris*); and reissued in 1670 as a separate book.

This French translation by Tricaud (Parts I–III) and Pécharman (Part IV) is the first unabridged translation of the Latin *Leviathan* into a modern language. It means that for the first time this work becomes fully available to readers who are not able to understand the Latin language—I say "fully" available because the main variants from the Latin had already been translated by Tricaud himself (Paris: Sirey, 1971) and by Edwin Curley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994). It is important to have access to this text, because it brings to light new aspects of Hobbes's thought. The Latin *Leviathan* is not simply a literal translation, but differs from the English version in many ways. As Pécharman emphasizes in the Introduction, "it presents—in its form itself—some differences of composition from the English *Leviathan*, which make of it something different from an exact reproduction of the doctrine expounded in the latter, which make of it another *Leviathan*" (xxi; my translation).

The main difference is the Appendix, written in dialogue form, that replaces the Review & Conclusion of the English text. "The divergence is significant, since in the English *Leviathan*, the Review & Conclusion assumes a very specific function, decisive for the argument of Hobbes's political philosophy: it is through this addition that the civil doctrine, upheld in the *Leviathan*, can be truly demonstrated .... In fact, after having established, through an argument developed at length, that there is no "conquest" of power that is separate from when the subjects become obliged toward the winner—and not because he is the winner, but because he has the right to sovereignty, *the right of dominion*—it is necessary to reinforce the thesis of interdependence between protection and obedience, that is at the heart of *Leviathan*'s political philosophy and that, in the second part, is concerned with the doctrine of the subjects's freedom" (xxi–xxii). In the Latin *Leviathan*—as in other writings of the same period, above all *An Historical Narration concerning Heresy and the Punishment Thereof*—Hobbes's priority was instead that of defending his doctrine (and himself) from the accusation of heresy. "The theological-political dimension of *Leviathan* is thus amplified in the Latin version"

(xxiv), and not only in the three chapters into which the Appendix is divided ("On the Nicene creed," "On heresy," "On some objections to *Leviathan*"): the fourth part, in particular, presents various changes in this sense, especially in the two final chapters. Following Karl Schuhmann's textual analysis, Pécharman puts forward "the hypothesis that the Latin text was written with the English manuscript as a basis, and that this manuscript was considered in its primitive form—before being revised and achieving its final form, that sent to printer Crooke" (xxix). What is certain, is that Latin *Leviathan* was prepared by Hobbes in the sixties for his *Opera omnia*, as clearly shown by some letters written to him by his friend Samuel Sorbière, the translator of *De cive* into French.

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On Bullshit. By Harry G. Frankfurt. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2005. 68 pages. $12.50.

The striking title indicates that the author is old enough to remember when talking dirty was a liberating act—a minor rebellion against the prudish established order. But it seems nowadays to have lost its charm for the young: it's boringly everywhere in movies, and frowned on as offensive in academia and other sensitive venues. (My daughter keeps correcting my "potty-mouth" lapses in front of my grandchildren.) Ah well, what the fuck.

This book is neither an act of crap-talking rebellion nor a sophomoric parody. It's a straightforward piece of academic philosophical analysis, written in the complex, serious, and slightly pompous style replete with $10 words one expects from such works ("The phenomenon itself is so vast and amorphous that no crisp and perspicuous analysis of its concept can avoid being procrustean" [2–3]). And it's a best-seller, go figure.

Bullshit, Frankfurt argues, is different from lying. When one lies one knows the truth; the bullshitter, however, may not know what the truth is, and doesn't care. Frankfurt finds bullshit more morally alarming than lying: at least liars think that the distinction between truth and falsehood matters.

Frankfurt finds bullshit rife in advertising, public relations, and politics (as the last field becomes more and more a branch of the first two.) In public life, he argues, people are "frequently impelled to speak extensively about matters of which they are some degree ignorant" (63); thus bullshit. But I suspect he's wrong about politics; the pre-eminent mode of expression there may in fact be lying. Another source of the proliferation of bullshit, he suggests, is the "conviction that it is the responsibility of a citizen in a democracy to have opinions about everything" (63–64). There's abundant evidence of this my country's national public radio, which devotes large segments to phoned-in and person-on-the-street pronouncements on matters about which the speakers know next to nothing.

Frankfurt speculates that another source is post-modern antirealist doctrines which "undermine confidence in the value of disinterested efforts to determine what is true and what is false, and even in the intelligibility of the notion of objective inquiry." The result, he thinks, is that the ideal of correctness is replaced by the ideal of sincerity: "convinced that reality has no inherent nature, which he might hope to identify as the

truth about things, [the antirealist] devotes himself to being true to his own nature" (65). He's right about a source of academic bullshit; but in the real world, outside the ivy-covered teapots where post-modern tempests rage, antirealism about truth fortunately has no influence at all.

The book is pocket-sized, 68 pages, large type, wide margins. It looks like those little booklings with titles like *Love Is...*, sold in greeting-card stores. I haven't read a shorter book since *The Little Engine That Could.* The price—$12.50—is low for a book, but too high per word.

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