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Writing History about Literatures amidst "the Limitations, Challenges, and Successes of a Multicultural Country"

The Cambridge History of Canadian Literature. Ed. Coral Ann Howells and Eva-Marie Kröller. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. xlvii+753 pp.

Thirty-one chapters by thirty authors, including one by each of the editors, constitute this latest literary history of Canada, the first from Cambridge University Press. (CUP has published three editions plus revisions of its history of USAmerican literature, and one for Australian literature also appeared in 2009.) The aim of the book seems to be to provide both a conventional literary history and a variation on the norm in order to represent *inter alia* the peculiarities of two official languages and the different traditions of their literatures. Having participated in and edited multi-authored volumes in the past decade, I was curious to see how two editors would handle literary history in an age when it has not been a leading approach to literary studies (though it may be making a comeback), and when developments in Canada have accentuated the sorts of variegated and centrifugal impulses and diversified literary expressions that stand at odds with comprehensive projects such as a single history in a single volume from a foreign publisher (and thus, presumably, for both Canadian and foreign readers).

The paramount challenge of inviting many authors to contribute supply-side writing to one subject is the one of fragmentation. Although of course this can be and often is parlayed into a celebration of the subject matter's pluralism, polyvocality, and the like, it amounts to a weakness in the structure of a work that, both in its title and on its first page, promises one history. *The Cambridge History of Canadian Literature* (*CHCL*) identifies aspects of a literary history but not a shape, and while the diversity of those aspects issues from many comprehensive and some insightful discussions, the similarities among and between them (what the editors in their Introduction call the "continuities and interconnections" [5]) are insufficiently identified and analyzed, the result being that the volume's chosen emphasis on recently produced literature overlooks the opportunity

to identify coincidences and possibly traditions over all the literature. So, the book produces a literary history that accentuates fragmentation and difference over continuity and resemblance. Another possible structure than the one adopted by the editors will be suggested at the end of this review, but for now let me suggest that perhaps a so-what-have-we-learned-from-this-project? conclusion would have helped bring together the aspects identified in the chapters. With Northrop Frye's notorious conclusion to the *Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English* (1965, 1976) that Carl Klinck edited four decades ago as a discouragement from this option, one imagines that the task should fall to the editors themselves, not a thirty-first contributor. As long as the chapters are independently written and not given a chance to correspond with one another, something more is needed to bring them together than a "Chronology" (xiv-xlv),which, in any case, includes historical, literary, and cultural events not mentioned in the chapters.

One cannot simply claim that a literary history is both unified and diversified. In their first sentence, the editors tout the *CHCL* as a "complete English-language history of Canadian writing in English and French from its beginnings" [i]. Complete? How so? What did they think needed covering in order for the project to be complete? Why did they think it complete with no discussion of the long poem, a quintessential Canadian genre, or without a discussion of the writing of history in the twentieth century, popular or academic? In any case, without explaining what they mean, they proceed in their next sentence to contradict that claim: "The multi-authored volume pays special attention to works from the 1960s and after, to multicultural and Indigenous writing, popular literature, and the interaction of anglophone and francophone cultures throughout Canadian history" [i]. Thus, this first effort at a *CHCL* immediately challenges its reader to sort out which of these two identities better describes the content, for, obviously, no single volume, even one with 640 pages of text, can pay special attention to some topics without paying scant attention to others and thereby opt for a selective rather than complete history. I emphasize this point because the editors' opinion diverges from it. They have sought "to maintain a balance between the conventional chronological design and canonical genre treatment characteristic of traditional literary histories, and a revisionist approach which interrogates and blurs those category divisions" (4-5). I don't know about the interrogating and blurring; I don't think any of the contributors thought they were interrogating or blurring, so apparently this aim was to have been realized in the bringing together of the various contributions. If these two activities resulted, I missed them.

Meanwhile, "Popular literature" is discussed in some decades (Michael Peterman's chapter ably condenses much information on the popularity attained by Margaret Marshall Saunders, Lucie Maude Montgomery, Ralph Connor/Charles Gordon, Gilbert Parker, and Arthur Stringer before the First World War), not in others; Pierre Berton isn't discussed; Farley Mowat isn't mentioned. "Indigenous writing" is discussed if it was written lately, but the books by George Copway/Kah-ge-ga-gah-bowh, George Henry/Maungwudaus, Peter Jacobs/Pahtahsega, Peter Jones/Kahkewāquonāby, and the like are nowhere to be found. *Certain* Indigenous writing, *some* popular literature, but not all, not even the most popular. The claim to be complete begins to ring hollow.

As to what the *CHCL does* contain, for no clear reason it accords genres priority but within a somewhat awkward structure that divides thirty-one chapters into four chronological periods followed by a three-chapter, exclusively genre-based fifth section about literature in French, which begins the chronology again but only as far as poetry, drama, and fiction are concerned; that is, one must go back to the first two chapters and retrieve Barbara Belyea's and E.D. Blodgett's fine discussions of "Native societies and French colonization" and "Reports from la Nouvelle France: the Jesuit *Relations*, Marie de l'Incarnation, and Élisabeth Bégon" and connect them to the last three chapters. Also moreover, this fifth section is problematically entitled "Writing in French" and thereby indicates that only in that section will one find discussed literature in French. But a number of other earlier chapters, including co-editor Eva-Marie Kröller's "The Centennial," Susan Fisher's "Canada and the Great War," and, the best of these, "History in English and French, 1832-1898," also by Blodgett, discuss both French- and English-language works. Although one of the editors suggests some reasons in a post-publication interview (Constantino), the book itself contains no explanation for this fifth section's emphasis on genres, only that the section recognizes "the distinctive history of francophone writing" (3). Distinctive in what ways? Surely not in generical ways. Three chapters, devoted to poetry, drama, and fiction, do not stake a claim for distinctiveness. Why would they? How could they?

After genres, the other emphases are ethnicity, movements, and periods. Although adequately covered in the post 1960s decades, Aboriginal literature is mainly kept to itself (some would argue that the *mélange* of Aboriginal and Métis in the two chapters, by Lally Grauer and Armand Garnet Ruffo on poetry and prose, and by Helen Gilbert on theatre, is improper, but then so is the neglect of Inuit writers), and Aboriginal literature seems even more isolated when one reads that there apparently is not yet any of

it written in French, as Réjean Beaudoin and André Lamontagne suggest in their chapter: "After the portrayal of the Métis identity, will we witness the emergence of a Native voice in French? Only time will tell" (651). Literature in other languages is simply kept out, a wee bit about Yiddish being an exception. Solitudes if not apartheid still reign in this literary history's structure.

Similarly problematic are the lacunae in discussions of one or another genre. Although Blodgett contributes a discussion of the writing of history in both fiction and histories during the second half of the nineteenth century, history is not the subject of any other chapter; no reason is given why nothing similar appears for the next century in the French, English, or Native spheres. Such is not the fate meted out to the short story: Gerald Lynch contributes a chapter about the genre before 1920 and W.H. New for it after 1960, so there is something approaching continuity, and that is enhanced slightly by Robert Thacker's assertion that Munro "redefined" the short story form (375). But readers of Coral Ann Howells's chapter covering the 1940s and 1950s would gain the mistaken impression from her almost exclusive concentration on novels (a mention of Mavis Gallant's short stories marking the exception) that the short story lay dormant for several decades. In addition, the chapter about literature in French, although it is entitled "Fiction," does not mention short stories except to state that Jacques Ferron was well known for his in the 1970s (640). Is it an all but abandoned art form in French?

The historical novel before 1900 receives high-profile treatment as part of Blodgett's chapter on history and fiction, but one does not hear much about it again until chapter twenty-four, "'Ghost stories': fictions of history and myth," Teresa Gibert's discussion of postmodernist novels' handling of history. And poetry's treatment of history appears for discussion only occasionally. Thus, it is unthinkable that the orientations to history of, say, John Richardson, E.J. Pratt, Margaret Atwood, and Michel Tremblay (treated thoroughly, given the constraints of space, by Jane Moss in her chapter on French-Canadian drama), would ever come under discussion together. Indeed, some remarks suggest to me that literary histories do as much as any other discourse to ensure that they would not, written as many of them are in discrete chapters by different authors who are not collaborating with each other. Consider Gibert's statement: "revisions of history became a particularly prominent subject from the 1980s onwards" (486). What about before the 1980s? What about Blodgett's chapter? Without mentioning Atwood's *Journals of Susanna Moodie* (1970) or Marlatt's *Steveston* (1974) (perhaps because they are poetry?), Gibert *does* note that

Wiebe, Kroetsch, Laurence, Richler, and Findley were forerunners in the previous decade, but the statement is preposterous in the context of the entire literary history.

Generally, poetry is not treated in depth very often, and the work of the likes of Al Purdy is mainly just mentioned in passing, yet there is room for much lesser lights, Anne Carson, for example, in "Poetry, drama, and the postmodern novel," a peculiar chapter by Ian Rae, who, enthusing about genre transgression, treats writers who produce works that evince qualities of more than one genre, which he considers a postmodern development. Because he does so, he fails to look for the roots of this trait in earlier works. The McGill Group and Pratt are accorded an entire chapter, but Adrian Fowler spends too much of it telling readers about the poets, not the poems. No history is offered of theatre in English Canada before the 1930s; a short discussion of it in French Canada claims it as an important art form (605-08). Is it accurate to infer that nothing home-grown occurred in English Canada? *The Literary Garland* (1838-51) is mentioned in two chapters but not the reasons for its notable if not unique success and longevity. Literary periodicals are mentioned in several chapters, but the subject of them receives no separate discussion (although Peterman discusses USAmerican ones as venues for Canadian artists, Howells offers some discussion of the undeniably "crucial" role that she claims Canadian ones played in the 1940s and 1950s [304-05], New states that in the 1970s they "became agents of change" [385], and Robert Yergeau notes their significance for poetry in Québec [603]). It appears that, like its woeful bibliography (of which more below), *CHCL* gives the impression that books represent the zenith of literary production and that from them alone an accurate literary history can be assembled.

Left undiscussed is the place of regionalism in literary history. It receives mention from time to time, and the usual authors are identified as regional in their orientation: Ernest Buckler, James Reaney, Louis Hémon, Ethel Wilson, Alistair Macleod, and, whether they like it or not (493), Guy Vanderhage and David Adams Richards. Regionalism's significant voice in early twentieth-century Québec literature is duly noted (589-91, 634), but altogether a subject (and a reading strategy) that was prominent recently receives no focused discussion. Themes missing from discussion include the representation of labour in French- and English-Canadian literature, and the strong (at times it seems almost suffocatingly intimate) relationship between literary production and the teaching of Canadian literature. Has any country a closer such link? Not just John Metcalfe wants to know.

Similarly lacking are sustained discussions of the role in literary history played by not only the long poem, but also sermons, missionaries' journals, anthologies (there is one intriguing reference to a few [558]), biographies, autobiographies before 1980, critical theory, eco-criticism (mentions occur, but no sustained discussion does), twentieth-century magazine journalism (no Allan Fotheringham, June Callwood, Robert Fulford, Mark Steyn, Christie Blatchford, Lorne Gunter, or Mark Kingwell), screenwriting for television (Gilles Carle and Jacques Vigoureux [their adaptation of Roger Lemelin's novel *Les Plouffe*], Mark and Lynn Susan Strange [*Beachcombers*], Eugene Levy, John Candy, and Martin Shore [in a variety of collaborations], Ken Finkleman [*The Newsroom*; *At the Hotel*], David Shore [*House*], Michael Hirst [*The Tudors*]); yet there's room for an entire chapter, by Jean-Paul Gabilliet, about comics and *bandes dessinées*), crime/detective fiction (none discussed, Howard Engel's Benny Cooperman series and others of his sixteen novels being some of the best known), popular history (no Berton, no Peter C. Newman, no Charlotte Gray, no James G. MacGregor, not to mention slightly lesser lights: Heather Robertson, Basil Johnston, Maggie Siggins, for example), the essay both popular and academic, reference works, publishers, most travel writing including books about travel to, settlement of, and gold rushes in Vancouver Island, British Columbia and the Klondike, Inuit autobiographies, such as Peter Pitseolak's *People from our Side* (1975), Anthony Apakark Thrasher's *Thrasher: Skid Row Eskimo* (1976), Minnie Freeman's *Life among the Qallunaat* (1978), and Alootook Ipellie's *Arctic Dreams and Nightmares* (1993, a gross oversight in a book that accords a chapter to comics), and writing about the North, generally.

Individual authors and works that surprised me by their absence include Thomas James's *Strange and Dangerous Voyage* (1633), Thomas Cary's *Abram's Plains* (1789), J. Mackay's *Quebec Hill* (1797), Cornwall Bayley's *Canada: A Descriptive Poem* (1805), George Longmore's *The Chariviari* (1824), Levi Adams's *Jean Baptiste* (1825), any of Samuel Hull Wilcocke's journalism, John Richardson's *Tecumseh* (1828), Adam Kidd's *The Huron Chief and other Poems* (1830), Hudson's Bay Company inland governor Sir George Simpson's *Character Book* (1832, 1975) or *Narrative of a Journey round the World* (1847), George Monro Grant's *Ocean to Ocean* (1873) and *Picturesque Canada* (1882), Francis Sherman's *Matins* (1896), Francis William Grey's *Curé of St.* Philippe (1899), Robert Service's *Songs of a Sourdough/Spell of the Yukon* (1907) (including no discussion of either "The Cremation of Sam McGee" or "The Shooting of Dan McGrew"), Mina Hubbard's *Woman's Way through Labrador* (1908),

Agnes Deans Cameron's *New North: Being Some Account of a Woman's Journey through Canada to the Arctic* (1909), Mary Schaëffer's *Old Indian Trails* (1911), George Douglas's *Lands Forlorn* (1914), the war poetry of Helena Coleman (especially "Convocation Hall," which Carole Gerson and Gwendolyn Davies's anthology first brought to my attention), Douglas Durkin's *Magpie* (1923), Marjorie Pickthall's prose and *Complete Poems* (1927), the sub-Arctic and Arctic poems in Floris Clark McLaren's *Frozen Fire* (1937, although McLaren herself is mentioned in two chapters), Edgar Christian's *Unflinching* (1937), Gontran de Poncins's *Kabloona* (1941), Andrew J. Elliott's comic war novel, *The Aging Nymph* (1946), Fred Bodsworth's *Last of the Curlews* (1954), Wallace Stegner's *Wolf Willow* (1962), Hugh MacLennan's essays (markedly superior to his fiction, in my view), any of Mowat's many books (only *People of the Deer* is mentioned, and, in a passing remark, only for its being "close in feeling" to Howard O'Hagan's *Tay John*), Berton's *National Dream* (1970) or any other book by him, Richard Rohmer's *Exxoneration* (1974) or any other book by him, Thomas Berger's *Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland* (1977, though Grauer and Ruffo mention the Indigenous storytelling component of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry that gave rise to it [509]), Hugh Brody's *Maps and Dreams* (1981), Henry Kreisel's "The Broken Globe" (1981), Mel Dagg's *Same Truck, Different Driver* (1982), Sharon Butala's *Queen of the Headaches* (1985) and *The Perfection of the Morning* (1994), Stephen Scobie's *Ballad of Isobel Gunn* (1987), John Steffler's *Afterlife of George Cartwright* (1992), Rachel Leclerc's *Rabbateurs d'étoiles* (1994, 2003) and *Ruelle Océan* (2001), poet John Terpstra's *The Church not Made with Hands* (1997) or any of his seven volumes, journalist Stephen Hume's *Ghost Camps: Memory and Myth on Canada's Frontiers* (1989), Kit Pearson's *Guests of War* trilogy (1998) and much other children's literature, which thrives in Canada, any of Tim Bowling's poetry or prose, as well as (this one ought to have been in the bibliography's "Poetry: English" subsection) his *Where the Words Come From: Canadian Poets in Conversation* (2002), Richard John Neuhaus's *As I Lay Dying: Meditations upon Returning* (2002), and Kristjana Gunnars's *Silence of the Country* (2003) or any other volume of her poems.

Works by all these authors have found space on syllabi for Canadian literature and Canadian Studies courses over the years, mine and others'. Yet, co-editor Howells has remarked that the editors "made every effort to be inclusive" (Constantino). Including chapters treating Indigenous voices and the literature of French Canada (both Québec and beyond) certainly shores up this claim, yet "every effort" has fallen well short. Perhaps

because my interests lie principally in the nineteenth century, I think that space ought to be made for the likes of Christoph Irmscher's chapter about "Writing by Victorian naturalists," but not if it means excluding discussions of the contribution to literary history made by the works of Service, Berton, Mowat, Rohmer, Howard Engel, and many writers of children's literature, all read by so many Canadians. Ralph Connor's novels are treated in two chapters, presumably because they enjoyed a wide readership. Ought "every effort to be inclusive" to overlook popularity in some periods but not others? Do today's literary historians think of themselves as stooping to popular literature? Do we now, or did we until recently constitute a too "literary and fastidious audience," like, Peterman asserts, the audience "sought and reached" by Sara Jeannette Duncan (196)?

Methodologies vary. Some chapters contextualize their literary criticism by treating works as expressions of their times and explaining what those times comprised. This approach seems to me to be what literary history ought to be, and, even when they adopt a metonymical practice of making one work represent many, these authors create the greatest confidence that they know their subject thoroughly. Chapters by New (short story), Janice Fiamengo (experiments in women's genres), Howells (the 1940s and 50s), Blodgett, and D.M.R. Bentley (on the Confederation poets) both range widely and focus periodically even as they conduct sustained arguments. So does Bruce Greenfield's chapter on writing in the North-west.[1] Others treat in literary-critical and bio-literary-critical fashion the works published during the assigned period, but the context of their period's history is lacking, or no argument is mounted to explain why the works discussed reflect their times. In parts, these less grounded chapters are based in details about authors' lives; in parts, they rely on developments in genres, generally, around the world. When reading David Staines' chapter about Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan, Northrop Frye, and George Grant, or the next one, on Margaret Atwood, Mavis Gallant, Alice Munro, and Carol Shields by Thacker, one finds the strength of analysis in treatments of individual authors as individuals, not as part of a literary history.[2] The same holds for Carole Gerson's excellent discussions of Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill, which digest the mountain of attention these writers have received. Indeed, the best part of most chapters is their detailed if brief discussions of particular works. (Gerson treats Anna Brownell Jameson's *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles* well, too, but a chapter entitled "Literature of settlement" seems an odd location for the discussion, good though it is, of a travel book.[3]) Staines' chapter rather introduces, describes, and explains four "devoted academics" than analy-

ses their writing in the context of literary history (353). His discussion is exemplary for its clarity and it displays considerable breadth, but it makes a better essay than it does a chapter. Moreover, the volume inadvertently maroons it by bringing under discussion the work of no other academic writers than these "pillars of prose non-fiction" (353). One of the volume's most innovative chapters, Neil Ten Kortenaar's remarkably clear "Multiculturalism and globalization" exemplifies how historical events, authors, and works can be brought under discussion together. (This chapter's neglect of almost all poetry qualifies its success, however; one gains the impression that migrant writing is resolutely narrative.)

Belyea's chapter—the volume's first—is one of the gems of the *CHCL*. Based in original research, "Native societies and French colonization" creatively but also carefully maps the northern part of the continent in the first centuries of French-Native contact. Belyea takes care to listen for and analyze the expression of Indigenous and French interests in a variety of forms, including masques, maps, treaties, and narratives told in body decorations, family totems, the written word, the calumet, and wampum. Highly suggestive work issuing out of well-referenced and widely dispersed sources, it begins the volume impressively as it contributes genuine insight into literary aspects of the contact zone. Like too many of the chapters, however, its fate is to be ignored by its neighbours, and Grauer and Ruffo's and Gilbert's chapters about Indigenous poetry, prose, and theatre do not exploit its findings, its delineations of Native North America's "human geography" (71), as Greenfield terms the peoples whom explorer Alexander Mackenzie encountered and whose narrative of crossing the Cordillera in 1793 records. Consider Grauer and Ruffo's bald claim that "*all* Indigenous literature can be thought of as counteracting the erasure of identities and stories" (514; emphasis added)—nothing nuanced in that—or any number of Gilbert's brief discussions of the works of First Nations playwrights, perhaps especially Drew Hayden Taylor's setting and emplotment of the modern contact zone in *alterNatives* (1999; 2000)—"part dinner-party farce, part serious dissection of cross-cultural relations" (529). Moreover, Belyea's fine chapter deserves to be followed by a similar chapter or chapters in the same vein describing Spanish and British contact with Salish peoples, and British contact with Dene and Inuit.

Regrettably, the editors have chosen (or the press required them) to provide a selective and categorized bibliography, so few of the titles referred to by the contributors in their notes are included, and not all entries appear in the category in which a reader might expect to find them. In fact, the bibliography is a mistake. Works ought to have been listed continuously in

alphabetical order. At the end of each of them could have been applied parenthetically a code and even writers' surnames identifying the category/categories to which a listing could be assigned. The reader would then have had the benefit of categories without the nuisance (a considerable one) of having to hunt down a reference, unsure if it is absent when not found. After all, the apparatus (including chronology, notes, bibliography, and index) must be unimpeachable if the history is to make a dependable reference resource for scholars.

Worse still and almost comically, the bibliography includes only the titles of books. No explanation appears for this editorial decision, which in some cases leaves the impression that no critical study has occurred on some authors in more than a decade or on others at all. Some titles listed date from the 1960s and earlier (James Cappon's and E.M. Pomeroy's biographies of Charles G.D. Roberts [1923 and 1943] are included, for example [694]). Consider that there is no entry for Don McKay in the "Individual authors (selected): anglophone" subsection (perhaps it's just as well: the bibliography elsewhere misspells his surname in listing *Vis à Vis: Fieldnotes on Poetry and Wilderness* [664]), while the entry for Roberts contains no item more recent than Laurel Boone's edition of *The Collected Letters*, now a quarter-century old. By contrast, the entry for Gabrielle Roy is very up to date just because work on her has taken the form of books or a special issue of *Canadian Literature* in 2007 (it seems only special issues of that particular journal merit inclusion; as far as I can tell, no special issues of *Canadian Poetry*, *Studies in Canadian Literature*, *Journal of Canadian Studies*, *Essays on Canadian Writing*, or any French-language journals garner mention). Bliss Carman is as unlucky as McKay: with no book on him recently, the individual authors section has no listing for him, though it remains a question why Gerald Lynch's 1990 edition of revised conference papers in the University of Ottawa's Reappraisals series did not prompt one.

Understandably, given the editorial policy, the bibliography excludes work on most contemporary writers, Gérard Bessette, Nicole Brossard, Louise Dupré, Tomson Highway, Anne Michaels, and Anne Simpson, for example. A similar fate befalls the writing of Di Brandt: her name makes no appearance in the bibliography after, according to the index, appearing in the chapters only once, in a list of Mennonites who formed part of what Kortenaar carefully and persuasively labels "the *first wave* of ethnic writing" (561; emphasis in original). But the bibliography generally seems even structurally ill-suited to the literary history. With chapters about "E.J. Pratt and the McGill poets," "Forms of Non-fiction: Innis, McLuhan, Frye,

and Grant," and "Quartet: Atwood, Gallant, Munro, Shields" being the only obvious exceptions to the volume's concerns with genres, ethnicity, movements, themes, periods, or events, why does the bibliography spend twenty-five of its forty-eight pages of literary criticism on books that treat of single authors? Were the chapters to align with it, they would all resemble Irene Gammel's "Staging personalities in modernism and realism," which spends a *comparatively* inordinate amount of space on an engaging discussion of Felix Paul Greve/Frederick Philip Grove (248-55). A notable absence in the bibliography is an entry for Sherrill Grace's *Canada and the Idea of North* (2001), but then, as observed earlier, the volume as a whole is woefully silent about most literary activity in and about the North. Indeed, the *CHCL* presents literary Canada in a shape that reminds one of the shape of Chile, laid on its side along the forty-ninth parallel.

Generally, the index is pretty good and quite clean ("Tom" Lilburn is a mistake but the text gets Tim Lilburn right [432]; the same happens to "Thomson" Highway—wrong in the index, right in the text [521]). The strength is the names of writers and their books, of course, but genres and some concepts gain entries. Orality, narrative, humour/comedy, theory, poetry of any sort or description, and memoir, are not indexed, but postcolonialism, religion (by denomination, chiefly), and publishing are. Cross-referencing is not a strength. An example is the extensive list of sub-entries for comics. Although comparatively more thorough than entries for any other genre, they lack a reference to a remark that Staines quotes by McLuhan about *The Mechanical Bride* as "'a new form of science fiction, with ads and comics cast as characters'" (341), which seems to me very significant for the discussion of comics themselves in a Canadian context.

The most serious absence are entries in the index for United States and American, despite the chapters' many references in significant contexts to Canada's only neighbour. For example, Blodgett mentions the writings of Francis Parkman as influential on Canadian historians (118); Bentley, William Dean Howells's notice of Canadian poetry (136); Peterman, the flood of USAmerican publications that could attract the work of Canadian authors (191-92); New, a number of USAmerican writers who influenced the development of the short story form in the second half of the twentieth century (399); Kortenaar, migrant writers coming to Canada only to find themselves "'in America,'" as Dionne Brand remarks in recalling her arrival (563), as well as Richler's publication in USAmerican magazines of his essays decrying the anti-Semitism of Québec Roman Catholicism (568-69), and so on. Surprisingly, William Faulkner's works are not mentioned as an influence on Munro, but Gibert finds David Adams Richards's

writing reminiscent of them (493). Somewhat surprisingly, the final three chapters, on the poetry, drama, and fiction of French Canada, contain no mention of USAmerican influences or connections. Otherwise, it is apparent that, as far as the "continuities and interconnections" are concerned, the editors have left undone those things they ought to have done in order to shape the parts into a greater whole. (By the way, could we please start using only USA or United States as the nominal form and USAmerican as the adjectival form for the nation to the south? American and America are offensive: that nation does not occupy even half the continent.)

For their parts, editors Howells and Kröller have not expressed a sense of how most effectively one could read their book. They imply that they have no agenda beyond accurate representation, and there is no particular reason to doubt this implication. Their very brief five-page Introduction leaves one wondering, however, who the volume's ideal reader is. If it is, say, a USAmerican, a Singaporean, or a Brazilian wanting to be introduced to the literatures of a nation, would 700-plus pages, containing excellent discrete essays by some of the best critics, be suitable? Most of those essays understandably assume at least a wide, and some a deep, knowledge of Canada and Canadian culture, so that such a reader would soon find herself ranging from sea to sea to sea. The editors' Introduction celebrates the pluralism that is the mantra of the age. Consequently, it does not suggest that the contents answer the question: what is proto-Canadian or, after Confederation, Canadian about the works under discussion? The editors do, however, claim that "[w]hat this volume offers is a nuanced reassessment of contemporary literary production in English and French, together with a reconfiguring of the literature and national myths of earlier periods, drawing attention to ethnic, cultural and regional diversities that were sometimes submerged in previous paradigms" (2). Reassessment and reconfiguration from what to what, I wonder. I still do not know.

What I *do* know is that literature is not rendered in the plural and the history claims to be "complete." Perhaps it is the case that, as long as literature is taught by national identity, reference works structured geopolitically, whether literary histories, economic histories, or something else, will be valued; and that any literary history will in time show its readers what a parcel of academics if not all Canadianists understood by the term *Canadian Literature* and what we understood by the term *literary history of Canada* at the time of its publication. In their Introduction, the editors observe that "[o]ne striking feature of Canada's literary history is that it has always been a fractured discourse" (2). I suggest that that discourse's fracture has been more than identified by this volume; it has been enhanced.

The compensation, writing literary history in "more inclusive ways" (2), whatever those are, is not forthcoming.

It is possible that only reviewers read an entire literary history to determine if its contents produce what the title claims; probably, most readers dip into it for particular chapters, perhaps prompted by their titles, perhaps encouraged by the level of detail provided by the index, perhaps because they are writing an essay about particular authors and their times. To those who treat the volume as a reference source, it would not matter if the independently written essays together produced a "complete," focused, single history of Canadian literature. (Of course, as part of a series by a foreign publisher, the volume could move a cynic to argue that, wanting a first literary history of India, CUP felt obliged to commit to literary histories of other former British colonies or protectorates.) But what about the possibility that discussing literature by nation in discrete volumes keeps the late nineteenth-century idea of nation, perhaps even of commonwealth, academically alive? Situated as it is at the centre of the old empire, does CUP find itself wishing to retain post-imperial control over the world's literature in English? Are Canada and studies of Canada the better for an interest taken by CUP in producing a single-volume history? What about the alternative of a *Cambridge History of French-Canadian Literature*, a *Cambridge History of the Literatures of Indigenous North America*, and so forth, in smaller volumes, trying less hard to be both complete and inclusive but also blurred and interrogative, let alone reconfigured?

What if one were to structure the project otherwise, by decades, for example, as, oddly, co-editors Howells's chapter does for the 1940s and 1950s and Kröller's does for the 1960s, comparing writing done in any genre, any language at one time? Would it prove more interesting, more coherent *not* to separate French and English, Native and non-Native, creative and reportorial writings, children's and adult literatures, poetry and prose, books and single short stories or poems, sacred and secular writing in the same decades? The question arose as I read Gerson's mention, while discussing Moodie, of Thomas Chandler Haliburton's earlier dealings with Richard Bentley, her English publisher. Haliburton's work already comes up for discussion in a previous chapter, by Marta Dvorak, but this revisitation is more stimulating than the discrete treatment of his work in the usual context—that of Thomas McCulloch's—in a chapter entitled "Migrations," which awkwardly (in part because Thomas Cary goes unmentioned) extends from Frances Brooke to Haliburton. (The same fragmented fate is meted out to Richler, whose work is best discussed by Kortenaar in

the context of the relation of the Montreal Jewish community to Québec [568-69].)

What lessons might the shape that emerges from a chronologically emphatic approach have to teach? I wondered something similar while reading Bentley's splendidly economical distillation of his years of ground-breaking work on the Confederation poets. Coming to it right after Blodgett's chapter about history and historical fiction before 1900 proved stimulating in several respects. One is that Carman, Roberts, Archibald Lampman, William Wilfred Campbell, and their colleagues were mainly ignoring the writing of French Canadians, importing and adapting Classical, Romantic, Victorian, and USAmerican influences instead; meanwhile, however, history and historical fiction were, in Blodgett's reckoning, less inclined to look abroad, fascinated by the passing of New France, the emergence of the theme of *la survivance* in French-language writing, and taken with the rebellions of the 1830s (French) or the War of 1812 (English)—subject matter of only occasional interest to the Confederation poets, on whom, Bentley notes, "[p]erhaps surprisingly, French Canadian writing had little impact" (134).

Reading two or three decades' worth of literature together would make, it would seem, a worthwhile enterprise, and Kröller's own chapter's focus on the 1960s demonstrates as much. She uses the Canadian Centennial to organize her discussion of French- and English-language writing of that decade. And yet, its method does not resemble that of most chapters. Engaging as far as it goes,[4] it does not seem firmly to fit, perhaps because, though much revised, it began as an independent essay ("Expo"). Another instance comes to mind: more than 300 pages apart, the reader learns that Jane Rule's novel, *Desert of the Heart* (1964), a "lesbian romance" (329), was published only a year after "the first novel to transgress the taboo of lesbianism" in Quebec, Louise Maheux-Fortier's *Amadou* (641). Is this but another "of those mysteries of creative synchronicity," as Lynch calls the nearly simultaneous publication of the first animal stories by Roberts and Ernest Thompson Seton (173)? Could a remark by Anne Nothof (author of the words quoted in the title of this review [421]) about English-Canadian plays since the 1960s not apply accurately to *all* genres in that era, in both French and English: they "have attempted to expose the dislocation and discords endemic in a postcolonial society: racial conflict, social disparities, alienation, isolation, adjustment, and resistance" (408)? How could one test such an hypothesis given the volume's structure?

In a similar vein, what of Fisher's observation of "the ironic circumstance that the [First World] war, despite its terrible cost, had brought ben-

efits to women" because of a shift in their economic role in society (229)? War changed many early twentieth-century Canadians' identities. So it is intriguing to consider this remark in light of Gammel's emphasis in the volume's next chapter on the ways in which authors experimented with multiple identities in their lives and works—authors such as Greve/Grove, Martha Ostenso, Kathleen Strange, John Glassco, and others who were "driven by the beautiful lie that is at the heart of a number of Canadian authors of the modernist era" (271) and whose works often featured "[u]nreliable first-person narration" (264). Fowler's subsequent chapter does not raise the matter in discussions of Pratt and the McGill Group, although *perhaps* Howells, in the chapter that follows his, revives mention of it when she states that Sheila Watson "finds the modernist aesthetic solution to confusion in the role of the artist as mythographer" (297) and speaks of Ethel Wilson's "mild duplicity" (298). It is too bad that the chapters stand as silent sentinels to one another, all the more lamentable when the editors claim as their aim "to demonstrate continuities and interconnections across decades and event centuries" (5).

The most evocative of these silences comes between, on the one hand, two chapters about Indigenous writing and, on the other, the following chapter, on life-writing, which is predicated on the idea of Canada as a country of ethnic immigration, and on the supremacy of the Constitution's enshrinement in 1988 of the Multiculturalism Act (1982) as the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*. After two chapters' treatment of Native identity and voices, Alfred Hornung's "Transcultural life-writing" silences or erases them, saying nothing whatsoever about them in the context of the genres discussed. The silence resonates all the more because one of the entire volume's only two interior references to another chapter (the second is New's reference to Thacker's chapter [397]) comes in the suggestion by Kröller that her chapter can be read "as a companion piece to the previous chapter"—by Howells (312). The tension that the volume develops from these silences is remarkable. It is not a tension of which the contributors could have been aware and about which they could have done something. Getting beyond that tension (which not only highlights but also, I think, inaccurately exacerbates the "fractured discourse [of] Canada's literary history") (2), leaves one wondering if the apparent lack of traditions, interconnections, continuties in the literatures of Canada—especially, the neglect by subsequent generations of writers of the works of their forebears—is indeed a defining feature or, alternatively, the result of this sort of structure for a literary history, one that seeks to identify aspects but not a shape, threads but not a garment.

Perhaps what would most benefit every multi-authored reference source is a gathering of its contributors once they have had a chance to read each other's drafts, to see what holes remain to fill, what connections are worth drawing. Short of SSHRC conference or MCRI grants, however, this rarely occurs (though it did with *The History of the Book in Canada*). From its plethora of *Cambridge History of* ... titles and the longevity of the series of them, one infers that CUP does rather well with this sort of volume. It knows that titles like this one will be purchased by libraries both within academe and beyond it (for example, already the Toronto Public and Vancouver Public libraries each have two copies of the *CHCL*, Edmonton Public Library and Bibliothèque publique de Montréal have one, Halifax, Ottawa and Calgary Public none yet, but then even Amazon.ca wants a whopping $173.50 for a copy). If such a title is likely not to lose the press any money, ought it not to foot the bill for a teleconference call if not a conference that would concentrate on what shape all these aspects might compose, what additions and changes and connections should be made? Otherwise, of course, this work falls to the editor(s). Professors Howells and Kröller, it appears, contented themselves and CUP with autonomous chapters, uncommunicative one with another. This observation does not mean to undervalue all the work of coordination that such a volume demands (Kröller has mentioned that she and Howells "met for intensive work sessions at UBC and in London, but above all [they] communicated by email and telephone: [they] exchanged approximately 3,500 emails over the course of four years between the two of [them] alone" [Constantino]); rather, it means to suggest that CUP makes money from this well-worn formula. Consider that, according to Susan Stanton, publishing director for humanities, CUP initiated the project after detecting "a clear library and institutional market for such a history, within Canada, but even more so within the USA (our largest single market for academic books of this kind) and Europe" (Contantino).

Why are chapters not talking to one another or, with the two exceptions already noted, at least acknowledging the existence of each other? One perhaps would expect such acknowledgment all the more given that this was not an entirely new editorial enterprise for Howells and Kröller: including themselves, eight contributors to the *CHCL* had contributed chapters five years earlier to *The Cambridge Companion to Canadian Literature* (2004), edited by Kröller, or three years earlier to *The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood* (2006), edited by Howells. Could the editors not have coordinated this initiative based on previous experience? As it is, at least if one is reading the entire volume, and is doing so in an effort to gain an

understanding of Canadian literature's (literatures'?) history, the perils of supply-side writing inadvertently and unsurprisingly come to the fore. Would it not be wonderful (I think wistfully) if some time, some where, some how one were to bring academics together to argue about whether Munro and Gallant have exploited US markets in a way different from, similar to, or exactly as Roberts and his cohort a century before them? Ought a reference source to bother pursuing such innovation? I think so.

The first *Cambridge History of Canadian Literature* amounts more to a collection than a history. Taken as a whole, it is a very qualified success. Chapters in it, however, make truly valuable contributions to our understanding of moments and movements in literary history. Their observations deserve to be considered together, and their continuities and interconnections identified. In that exercise, more than diversity, polyvocality, and pluralism, a literary history might be discerned and delineated.

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Notes

1 Only because Greenfield provides justifiable and useful discussions of books that issued from the first land expedition to the Arctic under John Franklin's command (1819-1822) and of the Hudson's Bay Company's expedition under Thomas Simpson's command (1836-1840) should his discussions have included mention of the publication of Franklin's own journal from that expedition (edited by Richard Davis [1995]) or the journal of Peter Warren Dease, who accompanied Simpson (*From Barrow to Boothia*, ed. William Barr [2002]). (Greenfield *does* note the publication of journals by three officers serving under Franklin on that first expedition [85].) Mention of these might well also have prompted a little more discussion of how differently published and unpublished accounts present the same events, but that is doubtless a personal wish for a literary history.)

2 Even if he had only novels and short stories in mind (he does not state as much) Thacker contends that his chosen "quartet constitutes the leading English-Canadian writers of the latter half of the twentieth century," though Michael Ondaatje and Margaret Laurence are mentioned as possibilities (357), but surely he overlooks Mordecai Richler

and, if he hadn't particular prose genres in mind, Leonard Cohen and other poet/songwriters, such as Joni Mitchell, Ian and Sylvia Tyson, and Gordon Lightfoot.

3 That a visitor like Jameson enjoys more than passing attention suggests that works such as Father Jean-Louis Hennepin's *Description de la Louisiane* (1683) and *A New Discovery of a Vast Country* (1699), Pehr Kalm's *En Resa til Norra America* (1753; English transl. 1770-1771), George Heriot's *Travels through the Canadas* (1807), John Lambert's famous *Travels through Lower Canada, and the United States of America* (1810), John Howison's *Sketches of Upper Canada* (1821), and Barry Lopez's *Arctic Dreams* (1985) ought to have received at least mention. For their day, these offer as significant a contribution as Jameson's. Instead, Jameson's book is left alone to represent all travel writing in, in her case, the Canadas. Worse, there is no mention of any title from the literature of travel in the Atlantic colonies.

4 The essay is lacking in two respects: It misses the allusion to Psalms 8:4 in what Kröller calls the "sharpest criticism" of Arthur Calder's sculpture "Man" at Expo 67, and thus it does not appreciate the glibness of the question posed by the *arts/canada* editorialist: "'What after all, in the 1967 world of mass communications, mass control and mass revolution, is Man, that we should be mindful of him'" (317); and Kröller neglects to discuss—or even mention—in a centennial context Purdy's *North of Summer: Poems from Baffin Island* (1967).

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