

CANTEXT

The Newsletter of the BACS Literature Group

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Editor Linda Knowles

Meeting Canadian Authors and Scholars in Siena

On October 10th, 2013, I found myself in the elegant salon of Siena's Pensione Palazzo Ravizza, seated beside the Steinway piano donated by Helen Frick (founder of the Frick Gallery in New York) where Evelyn Waugh and Aldous Huxley once stayed. I had been invited by Laura Forconi-Ferri of the new CanaDiana Club (see *CanText* 15:2) to speak to an audience of about thirty secondary school students about Canadian literary studies in the United Kingdom.



Piazza del Campo, Siena

Counting on the fingers of one hand the Canadian names that had international recognition in the nineteen seventies, I then took the students through a quick history of the Centres for Canadian Study in the United Kingdom and the role of BACS, the BJCS and CanText in promoting the study of Canadian authors. As I remarked on the positive effect of awards in bringing Canadians to the attention of the wider world, I was, with the most fortuitous timing, interrupted with the news that Alice Munro had won the Nobel Prize for Literature.

It was then my pleasant task to introduce Canadian author Genni Gunn who read excerpts from her novel *Solitaria* (Signature Editions, 2010), followed by students reading the same passages from Isabella Martini's newly-published Italian translation (Felici Editore, 2013).

After the readings, Genni and I had a short conversation about her work, the subject turning inevitably to questions of identity and home, which are prominent in *Solitaria*. Genni, who came to Canada at eleven years of age, explained that she feels at home in both Italy and Canada, and, indeed is accustomed to making herself at home wherever she finds herself. She also suggested that much of the immigrant angst in recent writing is



Genni Gunn

perhaps overstated and in danger of becoming a cliché.

Questions from audience and book-signing over, we moved to the hotel's terrace garden where we toasted Alice Munro's Nobel Prize with a glass of prosecco.

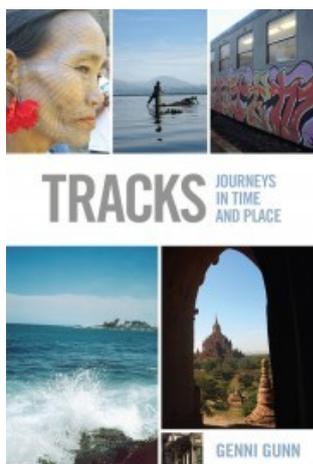
I am very grateful to Laura Forconi Ferri for introducing me to Genni Gunn and showing us such elegant hospitality, to Lisa Fallon, the proprietor of The Book Shop (Siena's only English-language book shop) for hosting the seminar, and to Siena's Licei Scientifico G. Galilei & Liceo Linguistico e Biologico Monna Agnese for bringing their students.

Linda Knowles



Left to right: Laura Forconi-Ferri, Linda Knowles, Isabella Martini (translator), Genni Gunn, Lisa Falloni (Book Shop owner), Fabrizio Felici (publisher)

Book News



Genni Gunn, *Tracks: Journeys in Time and Place* (Winnipeg: Signature Editions, 2013), 160pp. Paper. \$18.95. ISBN 978-1-927426-32-6

There are many sorts of tracks: animal tracks, railroad tracks, race tracks, music tracks. Tracks also can be a verb, and in this new book, Canadian novelist Genni Gunn tracks herself through a series of travel essays in which places evoke memories, and memories link one place with another.

“. . .when one travels, the unknown awaits to be discovered—about one’s self, about others, about one’s relationship to time and place.” (8)

Genni has always been a traveller, from her childhood in Italy when she lived with an aunt in one place and her sister with their grandparents in another, travelling to be with each other while their parents worked abroad. At the age of eleven she travelled to Canada, to Kitimat B.C. where the family was at last reunited, their playful adventures on Sunday picnics captured by their father’s 8mm cine camera.

There are music tracks in Genni’s life, criss-crossing Canada on tour with a rock band, and railroad tracks, as she goes in search of the trackman’s hut where her grandparents lived during World War II. Other tracks include the mountain roads of Myanmar, where Gunn’s sister Ileana lives.

Following a broadly chronological arc from her childhood to the present, *Tracks* is arranged thematically in sections titled Escap (ad)es, “Explorations, Discoveries, and Excavations, in which explorations, for example, of caves and ruins allow one place to call to another, evoking memories and reflections. A description of Lawa Cave in Thailand leads to the Grotte di Castellana in Italy, where her uncle told her a secret: “I can’t step into a cave without recalling white alabaster walls and my uncle’s whisper in the dark.” (59) Here, and in the eponymous chapter, Tracks, readers of her novel *Solitaria* will find passages that, sometimes word for word, match passages in the novel, and, like the novel, turn over questions of memory, identity and home.

Not lavishly but satisfyingly illustrated, ranging widely in time and space, not quite autobiography, not quite a travel guide, this little book is much bigger on its inside than the outside suggests. LK

Monica Manolescu and Charlotte Sturges (eds.), *Imagined Communities, Recuperated Homelands. Rethinking American and Canadian Minority and Exilic Writing* RANAM (Recherches Anglaises et Nord-Américaines (46 (2013): 189 p.



Review Books

If you would like to review any of these books for **CanText** please send your contact details to the editor at l.c.knowles@talk21.com

Please also send any suggestions for books you would like to review and I will do my best to get them for you.

For books to review in BJCS please see the BACS website:

<http://www.canadian-studies.info/main/content/blogcategory/45/72/>



Government of Canada
Embassy of Canada

Gouvernement du Canada
Ambassade du Canada

Canadian Women's Postcolonial Writing



A Symposium

NOVEMBER 15, 2013

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
Caterina Ricciardi
Laura Forconi Ferri

Realizzazione grafica:
Davide Bovolenta, Claudio Montecose, Marco Pagliai, Roberto Piacasckio

Realizzazione grafica: Centro Multimediale del Dipartimento di Lingue, Letterature e Culture Straniere

SALA RIUNIONI (GROUND FLOOR)
VIA OSTIENSE, 234

Programme in Brief

Ailsa Cox, Edge Hill University,
Alice Munro, Fiction,
Autobiography and Something in
Between

Mary Condé, Senior Research
Fellow in English, Queen Mary,
University of London, and
Lecturer for CAPA International
Education, *The Climate of
Permission: Shani Mootoo's
Cereus Blooms at Night*

Oriana Palusci, Università di
Napoli, "L'Orientale": Indigenous
Canadian Women Writers:

Postcolonial or Postindian?

Biancamaria Rizzardi, Università
di Pisa, Canadian Fiction and
Sexual Citizenship: The Case
Study of Dionne Brand

Laura Forconi Ferri, CanaDiana,
Siena, *Dancing with Memory
towards Awareness: Olive
Senior's and Others' Stories*

Eleonora Rao, Università di
Salerno, 'The oracle/trickster has
come back': Margaret Atwood,
The Door

A Reading of Translations by

Rossella Pretto

Round Table: Translating Can Lit
in Italy. Moderator: **Laura
Forconi Ferri**

Marina Zito, Università di Napoli
"L'Orientale", *Kamouraska* di
Anne Hébert (o dell'inizio della
narrativa quebecchese)

Carla Comellini, Università di
Bologna, *Women and Writing:
Italian Canadian Female Voices*

Caterina Ricciardi, Università
Roma Tre, *Jane Urquhart's Books
in/to The Whirlpool*