

# CANTEXT

*The Newsletter of the BACS Literature Group*

Volume 17, Issue 1, Spring 2015

Editor Linda Knowles

## New Voices on Canada

For the second time in its history, *CanText* seems to have fallen into a black hole. The 2014 volume was interrupted by a variety of circumstances and so only one issue appeared. However, only the British Library Legal Deposit Digital Processing Team seems to have noticed the lack of issues two and three, so I have decided to start again with Volume 17.

Among the projects that distracted from *CanText* was attending the London Colloquium 'New Voices on Canada' at the UCL Institute of the Americas in July. The literature papers by scholars from Eastern Europe as well as those from the UK demonstrated the continuing interest in Canadian Studies despite the recent demise of the Understanding Canada programme.

As well as papers on **Stephen Leacock** (Ana-Magdalena Petraru, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Romania), **L M Montgomery** (Sarah Galletly, University of Strathclyde, UK), **Mavis Gallant** (Jakob von Baeyer, University of London, UK) and **Alice Munro** (Eva Zsizsmann, Karoli University of the Reformed Church, Budapest, Hungary), there were papers on immigrant fiction (Yavor Petkov, Sofia University, Bulgaria) and **M G Vassanji's fiction** (Monica Colt, University of Bucharest, Romania). There were papers on **Thomas King** (Jana Marasova, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic), **Maria Campbell (Métis)** (Anna Mongibello, University of Naples, Italy) and **Indigenous feminity** (Marija Dunovic, University of Belgrade, Serbia) and on less well-studied works such as **Roxanne Bochard's Whisky et Paraboles** (Jasmina Bolfek-Radovani, University of Westminster, London, UK) and **Laura Penny's case of 'Leading a Liquid Life'** (Andreea Lazar, Dimitrie Cantemir Christian University, Bucharest). Will Smith (University of Lancaster, UK) revisited two Toronto novels, **Hopkins Moorhouse's Every Man For Himself (1921)** and **Peter Donovan's Late Spring (1930)**, and Vanja Polic (University of Zagreb, Croatia) examined three versions of the cowboy western, **Caple's In Calamity's Way, Stenson's Lightning & Vanderheghe's The Englishman's Boy**, bringing city and country into the already varied menu.

Selected papers from this colloquium will appear in a special issue of the BJCS in September 2015.

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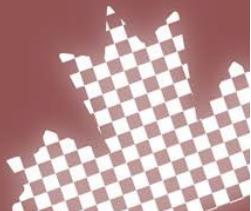
### CanaDiana News

# Call for Papers

## **7th Triennial International Conference of the Central European Association for Canadian Studies**

**9 – 11 October 2015, Zagreb, Croatia**

**Beyond the 49th Parallel: Canada and the North – Issues and Challenges**



**Keynote speakers:** Prof. Aritha van Herk (University of Calgary, Canada)

Prof. Daniel Chartier (l'Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada)

**Special guest:** Prof. Mark Anthony Jarman (University of New Brunswick, Canada)

**N**orth, in Western culture, is *the* fundamental direction.

As a geographical notion, “the North” can be used to indicate any or all locations in the northern hemisphere, from the equator to the North Pole. In relation to the United States, all of Canada can be seen as “the North”. But within Canada there is a whole range of different “Norths”, both historically and at present: the “Pays d’en Haut” of the voyageurs, the old Northwest, today’s camping and cottage country “up north”, the northern regions of many of the provinces (differing across the country), the northern territories (Yukon, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut), the Far North. Each of these reflects a different kind of “nordicity”, to use Canadian geographer Louis Edmond Hamelin’s now widely adopted term.

Beyond geography, “the North” is also a concept, one that encompasses a broad range of meanings and symbolic values. It is an imagined space as well as a space for the imaginary, a space of myth as well as a space shaped by myth, by turns cruel and ennobling, enigmatic and inspiring, powerful and fragile. The country’s “northerness” is often viewed as one of its distinguishing features, a vital element in the Canadian identity – even when “the North” in this case may mean only the nonurban part of Canada north of the thin populated band hugging the border with the United States. It is also a source of pride – “the true North, strong and free” – and, increasingly, in an era of climate change, a challenge. Canada’s imagined and real Norths have been literary and cultural obsessions for centuries.

The aim of this conference is to explore both the literal and the imaginative aspects of the relationship between Canada and “the North” – geographical, economic, literary, linguistic, cultural, social, political, diplomatic, environmental. We seek submissions from all disciplines that deal with Canada and Canadian Studies. (**see p. 6 for further details**)

We welcome proposals for twenty-minute presentations in the field of Canadian Studies. We accept paper proposals in English and French. Abstracts of between 150 and 250 words + a brief CV (150 words) should be submitted via the Paper Proposal Submission Form, which is to be found on the conference website. This must be sent **by 30 April 2015** to the conference email [zagreb2015conference@gmail.com](mailto:zagreb2015conference@gmail.com). Notification of acceptance of paper by 15 May 2015.

Conference website: <http://zagreb2015.hkad.hr/>

## Call for Papers

### Making sense of CanLit: Critical pedagogies and knowledgeproduction in the teaching of Canadian literature today BACS Literature Group Symposium

7<sup>th</sup> September 2015, University of Leeds

#### Keynote speakers:

**Professor Kerstin Knopf (University of Bremen)**  
**Dr. Susan Billingham (University of Nottingham)**

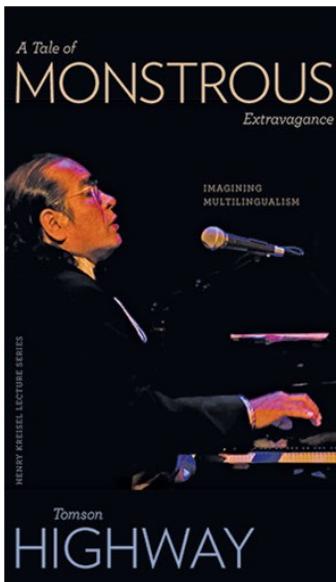
Amidst an ongoing public finance crisis, scholars of Canadian literature often find themselves confronted by the need to work within a new “research capitalism” paradigm (Coleman and Kambourelli 2011). While certainly not unique to the humanities, the current drive to refashion knowledgeproduction in view of the new socioeconomic and political realities has affected the development of critical pedagogies which challenge canonised views while “initiating ethical acts that have social justice and equity as modes of desire” (Miki 2011: 259). Do the revised financial, institutional and disciplinary agendas inevitably doom Canadian literary scholarship to embracing the proverbial “strategy of survival” (Sojka 2013: 16)? Or, could this moment be an opportunity for rethinking the parameters of our pedagogic practice and exploring “the unpredictable resources of the imagination, and the plethora of nonrational tensions and uncertainties that are operative in everyday intellection” (Miki 2011: 254)? This oneday symposium of the BACS Literature Group seeks to address the above questions by providing a forum for discussion, analysis and reflection on current practices of teaching Canadian literature in the UK and beyond. We are hoping that this event will give us the opportunity to share and reflect upon our teaching experiences, methodologies and approaches to curriculum design in a crossinstitutional and transnational setting, with a view of making an important contribution to pedagogic discussions taking

place in Canada. Proposals for 15minute papers, reflective pieces, reports or case studies on the above questions are invited. Although not limited to the following, these might address:

designing Canadarelated modules and syllabi within a nonCanadian HE setting;  
developing alternative models of Canadian literature knowledgeproduction and pedagogic practice in and outside the HE classroom;  
making Canada matter outside Canada – comparative and transnational approaches to teaching and learning;  
assessing the impact of “rhizomatic learning” (Cormier 2010), interdisciplinarity and the employability agenda on Canadian literary study;  
examining the role of Canadian Studies networks for the development of critical pedagogic practices.

The symposium is open to BACS members and nonmembers alike, and we welcome participants from any country, academic or professional background. Postgraduates and those with teaching experience in a nonacademic context (e.g., arts organisations, schools, community groups, lifelong learning, etc.) are particularly welcome. There is some funding available to help with the travel expenses of postgraduate / unwaged presenters. Outline proposals for papers, reflective pieces, reports or case studies (250 words) and a short bio note should be sent to Dr. Simone Lomartire and Dr. Milena Marinkova at [bacs2015symposium@gmail.com](mailto:bacs2015symposium@gmail.com). We also welcome alternative formats for presentation, such as workshops, roundtables or other dialogical arrangements (please note your suggested format on the proposal). Please submit your proposal no later than **30 May 2015**. Extended versions of the papers will be uploaded on the BACS website in August.

## Book News: Books for Review



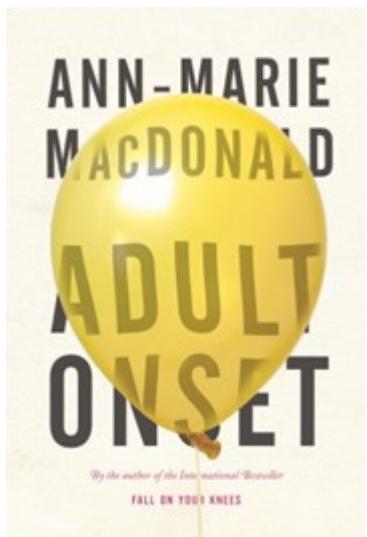
**Tomson Highway, *A Tale of Monstrous Extravagance: Imagining Multilingualism*, Edmonton, The University of Alberta Press and Canadian Literature Centre, 2015. 56 pages. \$10.95. £8.99. ISBN 9781772120417**

*"Speaking one language, I submit, is like living in a house with one window only..."*

In *A Tale of Monstrous Extravagance*, Tomson Highway writes with passion and exuberance about speaking multiple languages and the joy and connection it brings.

From his legendary birth in a snow bank in northwestern Manitoba, through his metamorphosis to citizenartist of the world, playwright, pianist, polyglot, storyteller, and irreverent disciple of the Trickster, Tomson Highway rides roughshod through the languages and communities that have shaped him. Cree, Dene, Latin, French, English, Spanish, and the universal language of music have opened windows and widened horizons in Highway's life. Readers who can hang on tightHighway fans, culture mavens, cunning linguists, and fellow tricksterswill experience the profundity of Highway's humour, for as he says, "*In Cree, you will laugh until you weep.*"

Tomson Highway enjoys an international career as a playwright, novelist, and pianist/songwriter. He is considered one of Canada's foremost Indigenous voices. He is best known for his awardwinning plays, *The Rez Sisters* (1986), *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing* (1989), *Rose* (2000), and *Ernestine Shuswap Gets Her Trout* (2005), as well as his critically acclaimed novel, *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998). He lives in Gatineau, Quebec.



**AnneMarie MacDonald, *Adult Onset*, London, Sceptre (a division of Hodder and Stoughton), 2015. £14.39. ISBN 9781473610132**

Mary Rose MacKinnon—nicknamed MR or “Mister”—is a successful YA author who has made enough from her writing to semiretire in her early 40s. She lives in a comfortable Toronto neighbourhood with her partner, Hilary, a busy theatre director, and their 2 young children, Matthew and Maggie, trying valiantly and often hilariously to balance her creative pursuits with domestic demands, and the various challenges that (mostly) solo parenting presents. As a child, Mary Rose suffered from an illness, long since cured and “filed separately” in

her mind. But as her frustrations mount, she experiences a flareup of forgotten symptoms which compel her to rethink her memories of her own childhood and her relationship with her parents. With her world threatening to unravel, the spectre of domestic violence raises its head with dangerous implications for her life and that of her own children.

### 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](mailto: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:

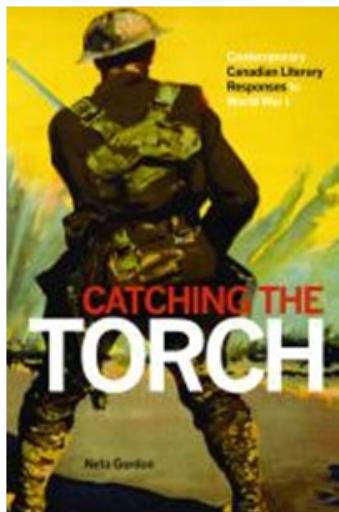
<http://www.canadianstudies.info/main/content/blogcategory/45/72/>

## Review

Neta Gordon, *Catching the Torch. Contemporary Canadian Literary Responses to World War 1* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2014), vii + 214 pp. Hardback. £54.50 . ISBN 9781554589807.

*Catching the Torch* takes its title from John McCrae's famous poem 'In Flanders Fields', in which voices of the dead charge readers to 'Take up your quarrel with the foe: / To you from failing hands we throw / The torch.' Gordon demonstrates that many of the tropes found in modern accounts of the First World War respond to questions and issues raised in McCrae's poem; above all, the focus is on Canadians' debt to the dead – a debt that has become part of the Canadian collective memory. In accordance with Maurice Hallbachs's theory of the collective memory, Gordon argues that individual remembrances are prerequisites for collective remembrance. Remembrance, individual as well as collective, must be renewed over time. Fiction has an important role to play in this process.

Gordon discusses a wide range of modern Canadian literature (novels as well as plays) on World War One under four conceptual headings, each of which forms the subject of an individual chapter: sacrifice, nation, commemoration and unity. Chapter One discusses Vanderhaeghe's *Dancock's Dance*, Massicotte's *Mary's Wedding* and Swan's *The Deep*. This chapter argues that the voices of the dead are muted in contemporary Canadian literature, thereby 'quelling any anxiety that their potentially unruly presence might cause'. Chapter Two examines MacLennan's *Barometer Rising*, Hodgins's *Broken Ground* and Itani's *Deafening*, focusing on the notions of national progress and idealistic national romance. The third chapter, which discusses the World War One novels of Alan Cumyn and Jane Urquhart, explores the role of the artist and his/her contribution to the practice of commemoration. Chapter Four examines the myth of the Cana-



dian national collective in four literary works: Thiessen's *Vimy*, Kerr's *Unity*, Boyden's *Three Day Road*, and Poliquin's *A Secret Between Us*. Gordon concludes that most of the works discussed in the four chapters are optimistic in their portrayal of the Canada

that was born in World War One: a country populated by those given to seeking healing and empowered by a sense of hope and obligation towards community. The figure of the father and the value of female work in time of war, argues Gordon, provide productive ways of communicating across cultural and experiential divides. Most of the works, she notes, look towards the future (which is now the present), offering a promise that is genuine and free from irony. Gordon summarises this as follows:

Thus, the remembrance of the First World War that has emerged in the past decade or so reflects a desire not to destroy the illusions Canadians have or have had about themselves, but rather to re-examine how those illusions about the war, with all its attendant horror and misery and loss, might offer a space for conceptions of the best Canadian self to emerge.

Modern Canadian stories about the War turn more to the compelling power of national myth than they do to the question of the historical record. As Gordon argues, Canada's best 'self-as-collective' came of age in 1914-1918 and constitutes a 'frontward-backward-looking activity' that is prominent in contemporary Canadian works of fiction on the War. The works of fiction discussed by Gordon thus take up the challenge offered by John McCrae in the final stanza of his famous poem: 'If ye break faith with us who die / We shall not

## Review continued from p. 3

sleep, though poppies grow / In Flanders Fields.'

The discussion of Cumyn's and Urquhart's works in chapter three is particularly interesting. Both authors suggest that it is impossible to recover witness's experience either because they may wish to protect the meaning of that experience from outsiders or because the witness may choose to forget. Remembering and reimagining Canada's participation in World War One becomes a mythmaking process. The reader is challenged to consider what aspects of myth, e.g. ideas about duty or sharing grief, we currently aspire to or find comfort in.

In the conclusion to *Catching the Torch*, Gordon reflects on how modern Canadian writers have turned their attention to more recent wars, including Vietnam and Afghanistan. This represents a move towards events that are part of living history as opposed to events preserved in historical memory. A case in point is Jane Urquhart's most recent novel, *Sanctuary Line*, which features the war in Afghanistan. The final sentence of the conclusion is a direct challenge to those of us focusing on literary representations of World War One:

'Paradoxically, as the centenary of the First World War approaches, [the] events themselves may have become a closed book.' The number of books and works of fiction about World War One currently being produced in Britain and the USA would suggest that this is not the case – not yet, at least!

*Catching the Torch* is a scholarly work that not only incorporates some of the most important works of fiction produced by Canadians in the past twenty years but also critical evaluations of contemporary Canadian literature on the War. Meticulously annotated and with an extensive bibliography, *Catching the Torch* is an excellent resource for scholars of contemporary Canadian literature as well as for World War One scholars.

## Zagreb Conference Details

**The topics may include but are NOT limited to:**

- the North and its representations: real and imaginary territory
- the North in Canadian literature: nordicity and its varieties
- First Nations artwork and literature
- the symbolic North in Canadian culture: hockey, curling, winter carnivals, canoes
- living in the North: Aboriginal communities, the life and survival of traditional cultures, demography and development of local communities, social problems
- North and South: Canada as America's "North", southern Canada and its "North"
- Decision making in the North: the roles of federal, provincial and territorial governments and of local administration
- the North and economic questions: exploitation of resources, gas and oil exploration, tourism
- the North and the international community: defence of Canadian sovereignty, the Arctic Council

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## Theatre

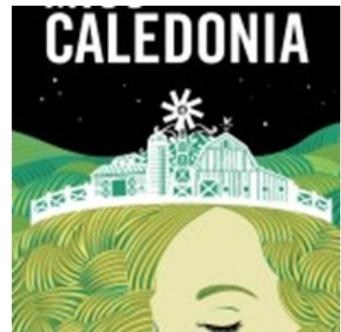
### MISS CALEDONIA

Written & Performed by Melody A. Johnson

Directed by Rick Roberts and Aaron Willis

Musical Arrangements and Original Score by Alison Porter

OUTSTANDING NEW PLAY and OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE  
(FEMALE) Nominations – 2013 Dora Mavor Moore Awards



The year is 1955. Desperate to escape the chicorypulling, stallcleaning, haybaling drudgery of life in RR#2 Caledonia, Peggy Ann Douglas has a plan. Following in the footsteps of starlet Debbie Reynolds, Peggy Ann will simply become a movie star – and she will start her journey to the top by winning the local pageant. Can she sing, twirl and pivot her way into the judges' hearts, or will shaky nerves and a “Puritanical Work Ethic” sabotage her efforts? Brimming with love, comedy, and a staggering work ethic of its own, *Miss Caledonia* is a delightful exploration of optimism and reality down on the farm. Dora and Canadian Comedy Award winner Melody A. Johnson, along with the delightful accompaniment of Alison Porter on fiddle, will have you in the palm of her hand on her quest for the tiara in *Miss Caledonia*.

Aptly dubbed “Irresistible and heartwarming” (National Post), *Miss Caledonia* has toured across Canada, including runs at Halifax’s Neptune Theatre, Ottawa’s National Arts Centre and Toronto’s Tarragon Theatre.

*Looks, charm, and no end of congeniality...a winning show you'd take your grandmother or granddaughter to in a wink.* – The Globe and Mail

**Touring the UK in May and June. See more at: <http://housetheatre.org.uk/productions/misscaledonia/#sthash.CwxVITrU.dpuf>**

## CanaDiana News

We are pleased to announce a new CanaDiana publication: **Licia Canton, *Vino alla mandorla e fertilità*** edited by Laura Ferri and Moira Mini (Italian translation of *Almond Wine and Fertility*, a collection of short stories), available for purchase from Il [miolibro.it](http://ilmolibro.it) (<http://ilmolibro.kataweb.it/schedolibro.asp?id=1118546>) and Feltrinelli bookstores.

Licia Canton is also a literary critic, translator, co-editor of the Canadian Literature page of *Bibliosofia* and editor-in-chief of *Accent Magazine*. She lives in Montreal with her husband and three children.



CanaDiana was founded in 2013 to encourage the flow of scholarship between Canada and Italy. The BACS Literature Group supports the club through *CanText*. For more information or to request a membership application form contact Laura Ferri-Forconi ([Laura\\_Ferri@alice.it](mailto:Laura_Ferri@alice.it)).