



Early Edition

Newsletter of the Early Canadian Literature Society

Volume 1, Issue 2

November 2008

Worth Noting

- “New Directions in Early Canadian Literary Studies” panels were a huge success at Vancouver Congress.
- ECLS has submitted two panels to ACCUTE for Congress 2009.
- Heather Murray begins term as President of ACCUTE.
- Gwendolyn Davies named professor emerita by UNB.

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Welcome

I'm sure you have all been eagerly awaiting the fall installment of the ECLS newsletter.

Summer was a great success for the Early Canadian Literature Society. At Vancouver Congress, the panel co-chaired by myself and Janice Fiamengo yielded two incredible sessions: the morning panel was standing room only with more than 50 people in attendance, while the afternoon session was an equally respectable 30 attendees.

The ECLS meeting was well-attended and productive, with lively discussion on a number of topics. It was ultimately agreed that a better way to focus our energies was to create some Steering Committees. As a result, the following society members have been tasked with focusing on three key areas: Benjamin Lefebvre (lefebvrebp@gmail.com) will manage the society website; Tobi Kozakewich (kozakewich@cogeco.ca) will focus on future conference and

symposium opportunities; and Thomas Hodd (thodd@cogeco.ca) will investigate publishing opportunities for the society. If anyone wishes to help out, or has suggestions/ideas for any of these areas, please feel free to email us!

Preparations for Congress 2009 are already underway, and the November 15 deadline for proposals is quickly approaching. The Early Canadian Literature Society has submitted two panels to ACCUTE: **Snap, Crackle, and Pop: Rethinking Early Canadian Popular Literature** and **Where Would We Be Without our Supporting Cast?: Cultural Workers in Early Canadian Literary Society**. We hope you will consider proposing something to one or both of these panels. The descriptions can be found in the CFPs section of the Newsletter.

Also included in this Newsletter is our list of member publications for 2008, as well as an informative and

entertaining interview with D.M.R. Bentley.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome several theatre scholars who recently joined our ranks. Two other society members who deserve special mention: Heather Murray (U of Toronto) began her term as President of ACCUTE; and after a long and successful academic career, Gwendolyn Davies (UNB) has begun her retirement as a visiting senior resident at Massey College and Visiting Fellow in the Book History and Publishing Program at the University of Toronto. She was also recently named professor emerita by UNB. Congratulations to both Heather and Gwen.

I hope everyone is having a tremendous fall term and we look forward to seeing you at Congress 2009, if not before!

-Thomas

Member Publications Appearing in 2008



Betts, Gregory. Afterword. *The Aureole* by Albert Durrant Watson. Toronto: BookThug Press, 2008.

---. "Non compos mentis: A Meta-Historical Survey of the Historiographic Narratives of Louis Riel's 'Insanity'". *International Journal of Canadian Studies*. 38 (Fall 2008).

---. Editor and Introduction. *Lawren Harris In the Ward: His Poetry and Painting*. Toronto: Exile Editions, 2007.

Fiamengo, Janice. *The Woman's Page: Journalism and Rhetoric in Early Canada*. Toronto: UTP, 2008.

Gerson, Carole (intro). *Tilda Jane* by Margaret Marshall Saunders. Halifax: Formac Press, 2008.

Jones, Manina. "Wildlifewriting? Animal Stories and Indigenous Claims in Ernest Thompson Seton's *Wild Animals I Have Known*." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 42.3 (Fall 2008).

Murray, Heather. "Doubled Lives: Florence Valentine Keys, David Reid Keys, and the Work of English Studies" *University of Toronto Quarterly* 76.4 (Fall 2007).

---. "The Canadian Readers Meet: The Canadian Literature Club of Toronto, Donald G. French, and the Middlebrow Modernist

Reader." *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* (2008).

Rifkind, Candida. *Comrades and Critics: Women, Literature, and the Left in 1930s Canada*. Toronto: UTP, 2008.

Rothenburger, Sunnie. "Beyond the Marriage Metaphor: Nation, Violence, and the Fallen Woman in *The Canadian Brothers*." Forthcoming in *Studies in Canadian Literature*.

Vincent, Tom. *A Bibliography of Ralph Connor's Fiction*. Kingston, Ontario: Loyal Colonies Press, 2008.

Ware, Tracy. "Byron's Influence on Early Canadian Literature." *Byron: Heritage and Legacy*. Ed. Cheryl A. Wilson. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. 25-34.

---. "Al Purdy, Sam Solecki, and Canadian Tradition." *The Ivory Thought: Essays on Al Purdy*. Ed. Gerald Lynch et al. Reappraisals. Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 2008. 227-38.

---. "The Making of a Nation: English-Canadian Literature, 1867-1918". *History of Literature in Canada: English-Canadian and French-Canadian*, ed. Reingard M. Nischik. Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2008.

Interview: David Bentley



*Dr. David Bentley is a Distinguished University Professor and Carl F. Klinck Professor in Canadian Literature at the University of Western Ontario. A Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, he has published widely in the field of early Canadian Literature, particularly on the Confederation poets and early Canadian long poems. His books include **Mimic Fires: Accounts of Early Long Poems on Canada (1989)**; **The Gay]Grey Moose: Essays on the Ecologies and Mythologies of Canadian Poetry, 1690-1990(1992)**; and **The Confederation Group of Canadian Poets, 1880-1897(2004)**. He is also the editor of **Canadian Poetry: Documents, Studies and Reviews** as well as the General Editor of **Canadian Poetry Press**. His current projects include scholarly editions of Archibald Lampman's *Collected Poems**

*as well as the **Letters of Lampman and Duncan Campbell Scott**.*

This interview was conducted as an email exchange in October 2008.

Q: Did you develop an interest in Canadian literature before your M.A. coursework with Malcolm Ross?

A: Funnily enough, I didn't study Canadian literature with Malcolm Ross. He taught Can. Lit. and Victorian poetry in alternating years at Dalhousie, and in my M.A. year it was Victorian poetry, so I took that and then went on to do a thesis with him on the roots of the aesthetic-decadent movement in the work of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Morris. He was definitely a great influence on me, however, and it was no doubt largely due to his good offices that I was accepted into the Ph.D. programme at King's College, London. Later it was to him that I went for advice about whether to accept a job that I was offered at Wilfrid Laurier or do an M.A. in Canadian Studies

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at Carleton. He recommended the latter, and, needless to say, I am eternally grateful that he did! As time went on we became good friends, and I still greatly miss his sage advice and sharp wit.

When I was in the honours programme at the University of Victoria, Canadian literature was anathema: there were no Can. Lit. courses, and I remember vividly being hauled over the coals by the director of the honours programme for electing to do an essay on Leonard Cohen in one of the compulsory honours seminars. We did study some Canadian writing in high school in B.C. - a sonnet or two by Charles G.D. Roberts - but, until Carleton, my knowledge of Canadian literature came from outside the classroom. Al

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it was too scholarly for the journal. That wasn't quite an epiphanic moment, but it certainly helped to strengthen my conviction that the field badly needed a scholarly - and refereed - journal devoted to Canadian poetry.

paragraph of *The Confederation Group of Canadian Poets, 1880-1897*, there is a perhaps pitiable attempt at a purple patch in which I give three reasons for what you rightly call my "passion and interest" that I hope you will forgive me for repeating: (1) a sense of "indebtedness" to a couple of them for "helping to make me feel at home in Canada," especially central and eastern Canada; (2) a "conviction that poems are an essential part of the soil from which our roots are formed, and that in them are nourished the filaments that bind us in love to our portion of the earth"; and (3) a "belief that beautiful, moving, and intelligent things are worth preserving and cherishing." Corny and cheesy? I guess, but there it is.

Q: *Canadian Poetry* recently celebrated its 30th anniversary, and one of its unique offerings is the "Documents" section. What motivated you to include this element in the journal?

A: In the late 'seventies when Michael Gnarowski and I started the journal there was a paucity of supportive archival material - interviews and the like - readily available, so it seemed like a good idea to have a section of *Canadian Poetry* available for unpublished or difficult-of-access documents as a means of making them available and thereby encouraging scholarship. I also remember sending an article on Archibald Lampman to *Canadian Literature* and getting it back by return of post with a curt note from George Woodcock stating that

"Al Purdy's poetry made a deep impression on me while I was in high school and at the University of Victoria, as did Irving Layton's and, of course, Cohen's. Later, came A.J.M. Smith, P.K. Page, Alden Nowlan, and others."

Q: You've written about the Confederation poets for more than twenty years, while most scholars treat them as passé subjects for critical investigation. What sustains your passion and interest in these canonical figures?

A: I cherish the hope that you are being at least a bit hyperbolic and provocative! But, be that as it may, I'll rise to the bait. In the final

Q: What do you think of Carole Gerson's observation that despite the work done on early Canadian poetry, even fundamental editions of collected poems by Lampman or Scott have yet to be published? Why do you think such groundwork scholarship is largely ignored by critics?

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A: That is an indeed an anomaly, and Carole's observation was touched by synchronicity for me because when I read it I was in the process of cranking myself up for scholarly editions not only of Lampman's collected poems (Scott will have to wait awhile), but also of Lampman's and Scott's letters (the latter helped greatly by a mass of material inherited by way of Stan Dragland from Rob McDougall). But perhaps we shouldn't beat ourselves up too harshly about the gaps in the realm of early and early-ish Canadian scholarly publishing: full-dress editions of Tennyson, Arnold, Christina Rossetti and other Victorian poets were long in coming, and Jerome McGann's editions of Swinburne and D.G. Rossetti have been out for only a few years.

I think that such scholarship tends to be ignored by critics in two different ways: when it's in place, it is largely taken for granted; when it isn't, the prospect of doing it seems to many people to be tedious and "unsexy," which, frankly, it can be. But it can also be immensely exciting and

gratifying, and perhaps we could do more to get students and colleagues appreciate this.

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Q: Do you think Charles G.D. Roberts would have preferred red or white wine?

A: At last, a serious scholarly question. The drinking habits and preferences of the Confederation poets (or, for that matter, their Modern successors) have yet to be the subject of serious research and theorization of the sort that is now being accorded, for example, to the putative *n o n - e t h n o c e n t r i c* ethnocentrism of George Bowering, Susan Musgrave, and doubtless others in

relation to the biopolitics of the North Pacific triangle. Lampman's paeans to the products of John Labatt are well know; Frederick George Scott can be assumed to have drunk red wine, at least on Sundays; and Duncan Campbell Scott and William Wilfred Campbell were almost certainly predisposed to scotch whisky by their ethnic background and to gin by their imperialistic beliefs. Bliss Carman's preferences are more difficult to ascertain, although a rumour has recently been circulating that he was partial to white wine, or at least white as well as red. As to Roberts, an early letter to Lampman and Joseph Edmund Collins suggests that in his republican and hypernationalistic years he drank rye because of its unimpeachable Canadianness. My own suspicion - educated guess, if you will - is that the red-blooded masculinity that earned Roberts the title of "the pocket Hercules" inclined him to red wine, but I suspect that he would not have refused a glass of white (or anything else) if it was offered to him by a female companion.

Call for Papers



Snap, Crackle, and Pop: Rethinking Early Canadian Popular Literature

Organizer: Tobi Kozakewich, Queen's University

In his study of the popular genre of romance, *The Secular Scripture* (1976), Northrop Frye argues that whereas 'elite' literature looks backward and occasionally abroad, privileging tradition and erudite obscure allusions, popular literature looks around and ahead. As a result, it is the latter that typically "indicates where the next literary developments are most likely to come from." Despite anticipating the development of literature in this way, however, popular literature has consistently been relegated to the margins of literary canons and historical narratives rather than being awarded a place of special prominence. Exceptions to this commonplace exist - in our Canadian context, for example, the persistence of Anne Shirley as a literary and cultural icon belies any notion of a deprecation of popular literature *writ large* - but those exceptions themselves raise questions about the viability and value of popular texts: do the exceptions simply prove the rule? Do they problematize it? How are the texts that remain in the cultural and literary consciousness different from those that quickly disappear from critical purview? (How) Is it possible to reconfigure the parameters of the Canadian literary canon to acknowledge the contributions of 'popular' writers and their best-selling but ephemeral texts? Recently, critics such as Clarence Karr and Lorraine York have turned a critical eye to questions pertaining to best-selling Canadian authors, including the ways that such authors contribute to the construction of 'Canadian Literature' both at home and abroad. Early Canadian popular writers - including but certainly not limited to Ralph Connor, Mazo de la Roche, Nellie McClung, L. M. Montgomery, Gilbert Parker, Robert Stead, and Arthur Stringer - potentially represent ideal case studies of the ways that popular literature has shaped the Canadian canon as well as the ways that, as a whole, it is at once ephemeral *and* preserved, and both marginalized *and* canonized, insofar as our temporal distance from the writers and their texts allows us to trace their reception history and to assess critically their merits, aesthetic and otherwise.

Submissions to both kozakewich@cogeco.ca and thodd@cogeco.ca by Nov. 15, 2008.

Where Would We Be Without our Supporting Cast?: Cultural Workers in Early Canadian Literary Society

Organizer: Thomas Hodd, Guelph-Humber

In the introduction to their Special Issue on "Canadian Literature and the Business of Publishing" (2000) Jennifer Andrews and John Ball posit that "When it comes to the literary text as a *written* object, we are usually more than willing to examine material, political, historical, and cultural contexts; when considering the text as a *published* object, however, we behave surprisingly like New Critics." While the focus of Andrews and Ball is chiefly on the production and dissemination of the text, a concept addressed more generally in recent book history criticism, there is little scholarship being done that seeks to understand questions of promotion and support for early Canadian literary culture. Whether through influential editors such as Goldwin Smith or William Arthur Deacon, cultural journalists such as Sara Jeannette Duncan, publishers like Lorne Pierce or influential theatre men like Roy Mitchell, Canada has employed a host of cultural workers who played vital roles in the shaping of our early literary culture. This panel invites papers along any genre line which address issues, figures, or forms of cultural production that played a significant role in the dissemination, critical or otherwise, of early Canadian literary culture, texts, or authors. Topics may include, but are not limited to the following: newspaper, magazine, or journal editors; influential book reviewers; early drama critics; theatre company directors or producers; national or regional publishers; cultural philanthropists; book buyers or literary agents.

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