

# "AND Quebec": Canadian Literature and Its Quebec Questions

by Frank Davey

---

The current anglophone-Canadian impatience with francophone Quebec, and desire to get on with defining a Canada in which francophone Quebec political/cultural aspirations are not major elements, have been latent in anglophone-Canadian culture for most of this century. This impatience has been influential in English-Canadian literary studies, despite the various good-will projects of translation and comparative study in which many of our colleagues are involved. It has been particularly evident in English-Canadian literary studies during the last thirty years, the period of most of this good-will. This desire to go on with or without francophone Quebec is not a simple one, nor one entered into with much articulation and consciousness, but rather one that comes from a history of specific institutional structures, practices, assumptions, discursive problems, ideologies, and global power changes.

The impossibility of getting more than provisionally outside these various practices and assumptions in order to talk about them—an impossibility at least as troubling for Canadians in general as it is for literary scholars who, from time to time, make it their business to be aware of how discourse and practice constrain and direct language acts—should be evident in the troubled terms "anglophone-Canadian," "English-Canadian," "Canada," and "francophone Quebec" that I have employed in this essay so far. "Canadians" have no stable, unproblematic words for naming who they are in a debate such as this. The coincidence or non-coincidence of territory and language, or in Quebec of territory, ethnicity, and language, and the effects of cultural projects that would territorialize language, destabilize all of these words. The terms "English Canada" and "English-Canadian" have increasingly in the past decade become territorialized, that is, they have been brought to act as antonyms to the province of Quebec and to signify the other nine provinces. In this context my use of a term like "anglophone-Canadian" implies a politics—a resistance of such territorialization. On the francophone-Quebec side—to use another term that resists the territorialization of language—there has been a similar phenomenon. Lucie Robert in her *L'institution du littéraire au Québec* (1991) reports that Québec culture (by this she appears to mean francophone-Quebec culture) now views itself as "québécoise" and no longer as "canadienne française" (143). Robert herself, like many contemporary francophone-Quebec critics,<sup>1</sup> treats the "literary" in Quebec as a territorialization both of the French

language and of French ethnicity. Her study of "the institution of the literary in Quebec" does not attempt to address Quebec literatures written in English or other languages, nor does it comment on this omission. Robert's work, in what it leaves said and unsaid, suggests at least two versions of the word 'Quebec'—her own with its *accent aigu* and an unaccented 'Quebec' that can generate words like anglophone- and francophone-Quebeckers.

On the other hand, the very instability in these terms, and the conflict between anglophone-Canadian and québécois language practices that underlies it, does allow one to get *partially* outside the practices if one wishes to. The instability, for example, created embarrassment for Parti Québécois politicians during the past referendum when it became apparent that the word "québécois" very likely did not yet include those of non-French ethnic descent. It has created embarrassment for a number of critics, including myself, when "English-Canadian" seems not to include those Canadians of non-English ethnic descent, and when—more recently—"English-Canadian" seems no longer to include anglophone Quebeckers. This instability also creates—as I am about to discuss—potential embarrassment for many of us when it seems questionable whether or not "Canadian" literature includes, or should include, franco-phone-Quebec literature.

About a year ago at the university where I teach, the doctoral qualifying examinations committee in Canadian literature voted to discontinue listing francophone-Canadian texts in translation on the list of compulsory readings for this examination. Until then the list had contained about ten francophone-Canadian novels, from the nineteenth-century to the 1970s, and an anthology of poetry. The three members, who included myself, had various reasons for supporting the change. The most important was that very few students appeared to be reading these texts, and at least two of us were reluctant to approach the graduate program with a request to allow us to use the examination structure to oblige future students to read them. The general instructions for the examination told students that they would be rewarded for including references to francophone-Canadian texts in their answers, but in practice even the best students were often content to pass the examination without making such references, and our committee content to allow them to pass. Another reason was that the ten novels were year by year increasingly insufficient. We needed to add 3-4 novels from the last two decades, but couldn't agree to drop any of the earlier ten. The change was driven as well by the committee members' desire to add recently-written anglophone-Canadian texts to the reading lists without having to delete a corresponding number from the nineteenth-century or early twentieth. In the background but also contributing to the change was the fact that our department did not offer graduate or undergraduate courses in francophone-Canadian literature in translation, none of our five Canadianists were prepared to teach such a course, and only rarely did any of our Canadian literature doctoral students have the competence in French to take a francophone-Canadian literature course from the French department. (While our degree regulations specify two languages, they do not require candidates in Canadian to make one of these French.) In effect, we had been asking our doctoral students in Canadian both to

prepare on their own to be examined on francophone-Canadian literature, and to conduct this examination themselves. Our examination questions invariably addressed only anglophone-Canadian critical, textual, cultural, and historical issues; if the student wanted to acknowledge any francophone texts, he or she would have to imagine and construct the necessary connections without help of teacher or examiner. As one of our committee members observed, our list of francophone-Canadian readings had become more symbolic than functional.

Both the kind of examination we had been holding, and our proposed change to it raised the questions of 'What is Canadian literature?' and 'what is a Canadian literature specialist?' Our answer in delisting the francophone texts was clearly that Canadian literature could be understood as entirely anglophone-Canadian literature, and that a specialist in Canadian literature could be someone who had read not even one translated francophone-Canadian text. Our delisting recalled Northrop Frye's comment in his 1965 "Conclusion" to the *Literary History of Canada* that "every statement made...about 'Canadian literature' employs the figure of speech known as synecdoche, putting a part for the whole" (823-4)—except that our action operated to conceal the figure, by repressing the figured term. Since the meeting that made this change—a change soon afterward approved by our department's Committee on Graduate Studies—I have looked into the examining practices of most of the anglophone-Canadian doctoral programs. Pretty well all appear to define their degrees in Canadian literature as we at Western Ontario now have. Only the University of Toronto, as far as I can tell, formally requires competency in French language, and it requires it of all its doctoral students, not merely those planning work in Canadian. Most "strongly recommend" French competency to students undertaking Canadian specializations, but do not specifically require it. Several doctoral programs do not have comprehensive examinations; of these some hold what they call "qualifying examinations" designed to examine the students's proposed area of research. Of the doctoral programs that hold comprehensive examinations, I've been able to confirm only one that presently lists francophone-Canadian texts in English translation on its reading lists. This is the program at York, which happens to have three bilingual scholars on its graduate English faculty.

York's program notwithstanding, anglophone-Canadian literary institutions and their practices have by and large developed less in response to the general field of Canadian cultural conditions and more as adaptations of institutional structures already developed or concurrently developing in Britain and the US. In this they have differed from many of our country's federal institutions, like Parliament, the legal system, the Canada Council, or The National Film Board, which have developed bilingual practices not found in similar British or American institutions. The Arts faculties of anglophone-Canada's universities have adopted disciplinary structures similar to those that developed at Johns Hopkins and Indiana late in the nineteenth century. These structures replicated the nationalisms of the time particularly in their language and literature departments, which even today in many

universities have boundaries and customs posts around them, if not Maginot and Siegfried lines. The norm in such a structure is that one nation has one language and one national literature. Translation is viewed as a questionable or impure practice, one usually to be contained as much as possible within departmental boundaries.<sup>2</sup> That is, if French-language literature is to be taught in translation, such teaching is usually considered to "belong" to a university's French department—quite possibly so that the home territory can keep control of the translation and its interpretation. Behind this norm is a general European history of suppression or de-privileging of rival languages, and the emergence in the more successful nation-states, like France, Britain, Spain, and Germany, of a national language and one or more regional languages. This territorialization of language as nation was replicated at universities in the territorialization of national languages into distinct departments.

When Canadian literature began to gain recognition in the late nineteenth century as a possible academic field, not only were there no strong models available for theorizing and studying a bilingual or polylingual national literature, but there was in anglophone Canada a considerable sense that Canada was a unilingually anglophone country, in which francophone culture was a minor phenomenon, something like Welsh in Britain. As Margery Fee and Patricia Jasen have documented, the most powerful forces in universities throughout the 1880s and '90s were movements toward specialization and secularization, first in the sciences and then in the humanities, with the classical curriculum slowly replaced by the departmental divisions we have in today's faculties of arts. Although anglophone-Canadian literature was slow to be recognized in universities, when it was recognized and taught it was in the context of English departments—at the Ontario Agricultural College in 1907, McGill in 1907-8, Acadian and Manitoba in 1919, Bishop's, British Columbia, Dalhousie, Mount Allison, Queen's, and Western in the 1920s, and Toronto in 1934. Many of the early Canadian literature critics were teachers in these English departments, Archibald MacMechan, appointed at Dalhousie in 1889, J.D. Logan who taught without pay at Acadia in the 1920s, Vernon Rhodenizer, also at Acadia in the 1920s. As Fee and Jasen have argued, this generation of teachers was deeply influenced by the cultural nationalism of Matthew Arnold—by the beliefs both that national cultural greatness validates national sovereignty (MacMechan inscribes his pioneering study of Canadian literature with the epigraph *ad maiorem patriae gloriam*) and that British imperial culture, which for them included anglophone-Canadian, was the greatest achievement of contemporary humanity. The struggle in anglophone Canada in the 1960s to expand the teaching and study of Canadian literature thus took place in English departments, where Canadian literature had gradually gained a small but continuing foothold.

A similar kind of language division happened in other institutional areas such as magazine publishing, book publishing, bookselling, anthology development, and professional associations, where models first developed in unilingual nation-states were adopted in Canada—a process undoubtedly encouraged by a strong tendency in

both francophone and anglophone Canadian cultures to attempt to territorialize their languages, and to thereby create territorial marketplaces. While a printer-publisher like John Lovell in Montreal in the mid-nineteenth century could work in both French and English, there have been very few publishers in this century that have had the resources to work in both language— Ryerson Press of the 1960s was probably the last large publisher to do so with any regularity. The further regional territorialization of anglophone-Canadian publishing in the 1970s and '80s in the form of relatively small presses has further institutionalized unilingualism. All of which means that the production of a bilingual book, such as Nicole Brossard's 341-page anthology, *Les stratégies du réel*, which Barbara Godard and I shepherded through Coach House Press in 1979, has to be done without any internal editorial or proof-correcting assistance from the publisher.

Although a francophone desire to be *maîtres chez nous* has been the more public and polemical, a similar anglophone-Canadian desire for exclusive possession of the word Canada—or assumption that it already had exclusive possession—has shown up emphatically in Canadian literature from the earliest anthologies to the present day. When in 1864 the Rev. Edward Hartley Dewart titled his new anthology *Selections from Canadian Poets*, he understood by the term "Canadians" anglophone Canadians. When he wrote in his introduction the now well-known proposition that "a national literature is an essential element in the formation of a national character" (ix) he appears to have been anticipating a national character that was primarily English-speaking, with French occupying the same position in Canada as Catalan now occupies in Spain. Francophone-Canadian writing for Dewart is not really Canadian; it is a regrettable "sectionalism"—as he indicates in a paragraph in his introduction that serves as the only sign in his anthology of the presence of francophones in Canada.

It is to be regretted that the tendency to sectionalism and disintegration, which is the political weakness of Canada, meets no counterpoise in the literature of the country. Our French fellow-countrymen are much more firmly united than the English colonists; though their literature is more French than Canadian, and their bond of union is more religious than literary or political.

(x)

Dewart of course was writing at a time when the major English-language city in the two Canadas was Montreal, when the "English colonists" he refers to were spread more evenly across the Maritimes and the two Canadas than they are now, and before Crémazie, Fréchette, and Gerin-Lajoie had published. Nevertheless his assumptions—that French-Canada is no more than a sidebar to the main English-Canadian story, and that if it is at all a literary culture it is so in ways foreign to the anglophone-Canadian—not only reflected views common to his time but will become part of the ways in which many later anglophone-Canadians think about "Canada"—even down to the proportions of francophone-Canadian texts in

translation considered relevant to a Canadian Literature doctoral comprehensive.

William Lighthall published his anthology, *Songs of the Great Dominion: Voices from the Forests and Waters, Settlements and Cities of Canada*, in 1889. Lighthall's Canada is again essentially anglophone, as his selection of 434 pages of English-language poetry suggests. Canada, he writes in his introduction, is the "eldest daughter of the Empire" (xxi). In a curious dedication page, Lighthall consecrates his book "to that sublime cause, the union of mankind, which the British peoples, if they are true to themselves and courageous in the future as they have been in the past, will take to be the reason of existence of their empire ...." Perhaps as part of this union of mankind, Lighthall describes his anglophone-Canadian poets as having incorporated francophone culture and history. The reader of this book "shall come out with us a guest of its skies and air, paddling over bright lakes and down savage rivers, singing French *chansons* to the swing of our paddles" (xxiv). By the end of his introduction, in what may be the earliest instance of cultural appropriation in Canadian criticism, his anglophone poets have explicitly become *voyageurs*. "And now, " he announces, "the canoes are packed, our *voyageurs* are waiting for us, the paddles are ready, let us start" (xxxvii). Expressed in the moral discourse of British imperialism, Lighthall's urgings for unity, his appropriations of French-Canadian figures, and his reduction of these figures to a kind of tourism sound quaint today. But in almost any week in the letters-to-the-editor pages of present-day Canadian newspapers, one can find similar urgings—now in an impatient "common sense" discourse of English-Canadian nationalism.

As well, Lighthall begins in his anthology something that will soon become an anglophone-Canadian critical convention: the francophone-Canadian text as supplement to the anglophone. Following page 434 he provides a thirteen-page "Appendix"—four pages of "Old Chansons of the French Province" and nine of "Leading Modern French-Canadian Poets." Here is one version of the "AND Quebec" of my title—the uneasy addition of the francophone that simultaneously implies the incompleteness of the "Canada" of his title and the low relevance and significance of the appended French.

Quebec Literature as an appendix to Canadian literature—neither quite 'inside' the Canadian but necessarily summoned forth by it—becomes one possible model for Canadian anthologists and critics. The model allows the anthologist or critic virtual possession of the "Canadian" category, and an opportunity to construct the francophone literature as subsidiary, peripheral, or auxiliary. This model turns up in later instances sometimes as an obligatory chapter, as in Vernon Rhodenizer's 1926 *Handbook to Canadian Literature* in which "French-Canadian Literature" is the 31st of 32 chapters. Rhodenizer's only comment about this discrepancy is to describe the chapter as being "in summary outline, as we must present it here" (251). Why he "must" present it in such form—because perhaps Canadian literature in English is too large and has already taken up too much space? Or because his publishers don't want more than a 10-page discussion of the French-Canadian?—Rhodenizer does not say. In Lionel Stevenson's *Appraisals of Canadian Literature*,

also published in 1926, the appendix appears in the form of a one-paragraph apology in the introduction. "I deeply regret that I did not feel competent to include...an introductory study of French Canadian literature." Stevenson's only specific comment about French-Canadian here is that it is "a delightful body of literature"—the effect of his epithet is casually feminizing and minimizing. After pleading that, in any case, anything which he "might have written for this book would have been necessarily scanty, and uncoordinated with the rest of the chapters," he concludes with "and besides, an alien cannot do full justice to such a theme" (xiv). Even granting that at this time Stevenson was a Canadian who resided in the US, the word "alien" has the force of disassociating Quebec from the Canadian dominion.

In 1970 the supplementing model turns up as a few "French-Canadian" poems cited within D.G. Jones' *Butterfly on Rock*, accompanied by Jones' comment that, although he is convinced that French-Canadian poetry contains patterns similar to those he has found in Canadian, he "did not feel competent" to deal with French-Canadian writing when he began the study (9). In 1972, Margaret Atwood's *Survival: a Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* offers a combination of the Lighthall's appendix, Rhodenizer's obligatory chapter, Stevenson's apology, and Jones' qualified disclaimer. Atwood begins a 14-page chapter entitled "Quebec: Burning Mansions" like this:

I approach this chapter with some trepidation, since I'm far from being well-read in Quebec literature. Although I've done some of my reading in the original (usually with the aid of a dictionary, I must confess), I've relied for the most part on translation.... I've limited the discussion in this chapter to works available in translation. What, then is a visitor to French Canadian literature apt to find?

(217)

Unlike Rhodenizer and Stevenson, Atwood is aware of the growing territorialization of francophone-Canadian writing. She is unsure whether to call it "Quebec literature" or "French Canadian." But, as for Stevenson, this literature and possible territory are "alien"—the anglophone reader is a "visitor." In the next paragraph she will describe her own position as that of a "tourist." Curiously, this position conflicts with the arguments Atwood will offer in the conclusion to the chapter—that, "[i]n many ways, Quebec's situation—as reflected in its literature—epitomizes the situation of Canada as a whole" (230). Quebec is tourist-land for the anglophone-Canadian but also anglophone-Canada in miniature or metonymy. The anglophone-Canadian approaches Quebec in trepidation but encounters familiar things. Moreover, the introductory apology creates a discursive position for the critic different from the position she takes in the other chapters. The other chapters are written by an authority, someone who has read widely. This chapter is written by an amateur, who has read little, and even that mostly not the real thing, but only translation. Here is created for both the chapter and the writing it addresses the

quality of being a supplement—of being something lesser and appended.

As in the cases of Lighthall, Rhodenizer, Stevenson, and Jones, the use of the appendix model allows the anglophone scholar virtual possession of the terms "Canada" and "Canadian." The supplement permits or excuses the supplemented. Atwood can write a book in which 95% of the references are to anglophone-Canadian writing, and it is a book not on English-Canadian literature, or on Canadian literature in English, but on *Canadian* literature, and can do this without appearing to "write off" Quebec. Revealingly, in terms of the power relationship implied here between the two Canadas, this access to the word "Canadian" is one which Atwood is unwilling to grant to a francophone-Canadian critic. In excusing her own limited knowledge of "French Canadian literature" she writes "there ought to be a book written in French, describing more of the key patterns in Quebec literature, and with a single chapter on 'English' Canada parallel to this one" (216). One implication here is that this book written in French would be parallel to hers, which of course it wouldn't be. Another is that there should not (or perhaps could not) be a book written in French, describing the "key patterns" in Canadian literature, but with only a single chapter on 'English' Canada. Or, that if you are an English-speaking critic, Canadian literature can be a bilingual literature that contains both anglophone and francophone writing; if you are a French-speaking critic, it cannot.

The third major attempt to anthologize Canadian poetry in English, John Garvin's 1916 collection *Canadian Poets*, offers a second model for dealing with anglophone-Canada's relation to its large francophone minority: pretend there is no francophone Canada. Garvin simply appropriates the term "Canadian" for anglophone-Canadian writing, and makes no mention of the existence of francophone-Canadian writing in his introduction or elsewhere. Overall, this has been an extremely popular model in anglophone-Canadian criticism and anthology construction—so popular in recent times that it is hard not to see here a secret wish that Quebec and francophone-Canadians generally would simply vanish, secede, disappear, fall silent, or otherwise drop from notice. Garvin's approach is shared in his own time in books like Archibald MacMurchy's *Handbook of Canadian Literature* (1906) and J.D. Logan and Donald French's *Highways of Canadian Literature* (1924), books in which no francophone authors are considered and no mention of or apology for the omission is made. Canadians are for MacMurchy explicitly part of the "English race." "Canadians...are not one whit behind in the gifts of imagination and fancy which adorn the communities of the English race to be found in other parts of the world." "The literary production of the people of the Dominion is...equal...to that of any like part of the English-speaking race" (iv).

This attempt to appropriate "Canadian" as the default term, as it were, for English-Canadian, is given a curious twist by Thomas Guthrie Marquis, in 1913, in writing the section "English- Canadian Literature" for the twenty-volume history *Canada and Its Provinces*. He—or quite possibly his editor—adds this footnote to the first page of his essay:



To avoid repetition of the awkward and inexact expression English-Canadian, Canadian is used throughout this article to designate literature produced by writers using the English language. For a survey of French-Canadian literature see p. 435 *et.seq.*

(493)

English-Canadians are to be allowed to avoid an awkward, and perhaps culturally embarrassing, "inexact expression," but not French-Canadians.

While the Arnoldian British Empire rhetoric one finds, not unreasonably, in the many critics and anthologists of the early periods has evolved in our own time into other rhetorics of commonality, loyalty, and nationalism, the desire to appropriate "Canadian" as a synonym for anglophone-Canadian has remained. Some of the reasons for this seem straightforward. "English-Canadian," "anglophone-Canadian," or the appended "in English," as Marquis observed, are clumsy phrases. They threaten titles like *Canadian Canons*, *Poets of Contemporary Canada*, *The Contemporary Canadian Poem Anthology*, or my own *Reading Canadian Reading* with loss of alliteration, euphony, and wordplay. Titles like *Read Canadian* or *Canadian Poetry Now* or *New Wave Canada* risk losing their hints of drama and urgency. Seemingly straightforward also is a publishers' understanding that the market for such books is not particularly troubled by such usage of "Canada" and "Canadian." Anglophone Canada is in effect the *de facto* Canada for most anglophone-Canadians. Thus over the last forty years the large number of utilitarian 'Canadian' titles, in which sound and wordplay are not considerations: Daymond and Monkman's *Literature in Canada* and *Towards a Canadian Literature*, David and Lecker's *Canadian Poetry* and *The New Canadian Anthology*, Denham and Edwards' *Canadian Literature in the 70s*, John Newlove's *Canadian Poetry*, Klinck and Watters' *Canadian Anthology*. But beyond there appears to me to be motives that are not straightforward: an impatience at a cultural situation that makes the name of one's country problematical—in need of qualification and supplement; an impatience at the linguistic and political difficulty of creating inclusively Canadian anthologies; a resentment that a straightforward Canadianness is not easily available.

Complicating an anglophone's dealing with such matters, of course, has been francophone-Quebec cultural nationalism, whether theologically constructed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries or secularly constructed as it has been since 1960, and its growing rejection of what Lucie Robert describes as "*canadianité*" (140) and of *canadianité française* in favour of what we might call *québécoisité* (143). In effect francophone-Quebec literary and cultural criticism have renounced their rights to terms like "Canada" and "Canadien" at the very time that English-Canadians have implicitly staked exclusive claim to them. This concurrence of this renunciation and staking has created a dynamic in which latent English-Canadian nationalism has been both enabled by and moved to accept

There have been, of course, other models for anglophone-Canadian/francophone-Canadian relation, particularly the bilingual and bicultural model that has faced Canadians on its currency and postage stamps, and in more recent times on its much-contended corn flakes boxes. Such attempts at cultural bilingualism are relatively recent arrivals, however. Canadian postage stamps became effectively bilingual only in 1927, and Canadian coinage in 1937. In Canadian literary criticism, bilingualism emerges only slightly earlier, with the separate but equal chapters on English- and French-Canadian literatures by Marquis and Camille Roy in 1913 in *Canada and its Provinces*. This was followed by the biculturalism of MacMechan's *Headwaters of Canadian Literature* in 1924, with its two chapters each on the two literatures, and in 1927 by Lorne Pierce's *An Outline of Canadian Literature* with nine of its eleven genre-focused chapters divided into balanced sections on French-Canadian and English-Canadian authors, and its dedication to Camille Roy. The dedication was foregrounded by Pierce by his inserting an exchange of highly complimentary letters between himself and Roy, in French, as frontispiece texts. In his introduction, he claims that his book "is the first attempt at a history of our literature, placing French and English authors side by side" (which it wasn't) and announces "[h]ereafter they must share equally in any attempt to trace the evolution of our national spirit" (np). His "side by side" model has since been used rarely, however, in Canadian criticism, literary biography, or anthology creation. Often the side-by-side model has required editorial collaboration, as in Eli Mandel and Jean-Guy Pilon's anthology *Poetry/Poésie 62*, Jacques Godbout and John Robert Colombo's *Poetry/Poésie 64*, or the biographical dictionary *Canadian Writers/Ecrivains Canadiens* edited by Guy Sylvestre, Brandon Conron, and Carl Klinck in 1964. In the introduction to the latter, the editors claim it to be descended from Pierce's *Outline* (v). Often when the model has appeared, it has appeared only implicitly, in works like Klinck's *Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English* (1965), Bennett and Brown's *An Anthology of Canadian Literature in English* (1983), works which imply the hypothetical existence of companion volumes concerning Canadian Literature in French. The modifiers "English-Canadian" or "Anglophone-Canadian" have a slightly different effect. They usually occur in a subtitle, itself a kind of appendix or supplement, as in Linda Hutcheon's *The Canadian Postmodern: a Study of Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction* (1988), Robert Lecker's *Making It Real: the Canonization of English-Canadian Literature* (1995) or my *Post-National Arguments: the Politics of the Anglophone-Canadian Novel Since 1967* (1993). Here there is no ghost companion-book on French-Canadian implied. The presence of a Canadian literature in another language is acknowledged, but the possibility of a parallel work is either left in question or denied.<sup>3</sup> Hutcheon's title and subtitle, for example, carry the suggestion that the Canadian postmodern may be *best* exemplified by English-Canadian fiction.

The bilingual/bicultural model can, at the change of a word, modulate into yet

another model—a second version of the "AND Quebec" of my title. Here the conjunction "AND" signals not supplementarity but coordination. This model rests in part on the Quebec shift from what I called earlier *canadianité française* to *québécoisité*, and like that shift operates to exclude francophone-Canadian literature written outside Quebec. Two of the earliest instances of this model are Ronald Sutherland's *Second Image: Comparative Studies in Quebec/Canadian Literature* (1971) and Clément Moisan's *Poésie des Frontières: Etudes comparées des poésies canadiennes et québécoises* (1979). The model constructs Quebec and Canadian literatures as distinct, rather than constructing the Quebec as part of, or an appendage of, the Canadian. But while treating the border between the two as a linguistic, the model also implies it to be geographic or territorial. In this binary structure, the location and status of *anglophone*-Quebec literature is thus left ambiguous. As E.D. Blodgett has argued, the inevitable political dimension of some these texts has not been entirely what we might expect. While the critic's choice to separate Quebec from Canada (as in the naming of the Association for Canadian and Quebec Literatures in 1973) implies an interest in having one or the other stand on its own, the critical objective in the case of the Sutherland or Stratford can be to argue that the two literatures and cultures are fundamentally similar -- i.e. the objective can be to discover a strong and independent Canada within the binary of Canada-Quebec. This goal—of bringing anglophone Canada and francophone Quebec closer together by separating them—was also, I believe, that of the anglophone founders of ACQL.

Both Moisan's and Sutherland's studies invoke in their subtitles the discipline of comparative literature. Blodgett is interesting on this aspect of their work also, expressing skepticism that comparative literature approaches can be brought to bear on two literatures which history and conquest have brought together, rather than scholarly curiosity, and skepticism also that the thematic comparisons of Moisan and Sutherland have found genuine similarities. Disparities in power—Blodgett points to Quebec's economic dependence on English-Canada, and I suppose we could add to that Quebec's attachment to the fading international status of the French language versus English-Canada's participation in the rapid expansion of English as a global language, and the territorial vulnerability of the French language in northern Quebec—make it unlikely that studies that aim to construct general and cultural comparisons can avoid inventing similarities or focusing on incidentals. More fruitful, he suggests, would be studies that examine specific literary questions, like treatments of the Gothic, and that use a more theorized methodology. Blodgett here appears to be predicting a book like Sylvia Söderlind's *Margin/Alias*, which examines a specific issue -- differing views and versions of postcoloniality and postmodernism in Canadian and Québécois fiction—and which departs from other binary Canada/Quebec literary studies such as Pierce's or Sutherland's by its restricting and theorizing of what its terms of comparison are going to be and, more importantly, by its not setting out to find a presupposed commonality.

In general, comparative approaches to Canadian literatures in French and English form a relatively small part of Canadian literature studies. One reason for this is that

comparative literature departments are minor departments in most Canadian universities, and in the current economic situation vulnerable (as the once extremely productive University of Alberta department is at present) to cutback and dissolution. Another is that Canadian English departments have until the last ten years been reluctant to hire comparative literature PhDs, suspecting they will lack breadth in their knowledge of English literature. As well, most English departments, if they can afford to retain more than two Canadian literature scholars, will aim to have a nineteenth-century specialist, an early twentieth-century specialist, a contemporary specialist, and a women's literature specialist, before they consider someone with expertise in francophone-Canadian. Most of these other Canadianists will be working with about as much awareness of francophone-Canadian writing as they have of aboriginal writing, or Chinese-Canadian writing, or Italo-Canadian writing.

Here we are returned to the late nineteenth-century development at North American universities of specialized curricula and unilingual nationalist models of language and literature teaching, and the difficulty of conducting of Canadian literature teaching through them. Today's anglophone-Canadian English departments, with the possible exception of those in anglophone-Quebec universities, also rest—despite numerous French immersion programs in the public schools—on functionally unilingual general populations. Relative to the large numbers of undergraduates who enrol in English department Canadian literature courses, there are very few with the necessary language skills to undertake comparative Canadian literature offered through Canadian studies programs. There are fewer yet—an average of less than two per year at Western -- who undertake combined MA programs offered jointly by some English and French departments. I don't know of a similar program at any Canadian university at the doctoral level. Most of the Canadian doctoral students I've taught at York and Western have passed French language exams but are unable to understand conference papers presented in French or read scholarly books and articles in French with any ease or efficiency. When I refer them to a book or article in French, many of my current graduate students suggest I must be joking. In this limitation, however, they are not all that different from many of their seniors whom most of us have seen walking en masse from ACQL sessions during the first sentence of a French-language paper.

At this point I am not going to ask "what to do?" or propose that anything ought to be done about the structure of Canadian literature study. Institutional practices like the above change only through decades of accumulating reflection, commentary, and action -- and I doubt very much that Canadians, however we define them, have these decades. I think it is useful, however, to recognize that anglophone Canada and francophone Quebec have expressed their particular agendas very differently in the past hundred years. Francophone-Quebec's aspirations to retain, control, and elaborate its differences from English-Canada have been expressed publicly and with pride. Anglophone-Canada's agenda to conceal or diminish francophone Quebec, or to separate itself from it, has been covert, expressed often

in phrases of hypocritical affection, like Stevenson's comment about "delightful" French-Canadian writing -- it's been an agenda which anglophone Canada has rarely wanted to acknowledge publicly. Anglophones have thus been able to enjoy the various idealisms about Quebec which have informed translation projects, joint conferences, student exchanges, journals like *Ellipse* and *Tessera*, and associations like ACQL, at the same time as we have trained hundreds of Canadian literature specialists to be incapable of participating fully in an association like ACQL.

There is also the matter of what Blodgett calls the binarism that masks "an anglophone hegemony." None of the various models I've examined above correspond to the reality of francophone-anglophone Canadian relations: models that pretend the francophone is 50% of Canada are nearly as inaccurate as those that pretend that the francophone is not part of Canada, or a minor appendix to it. The binary models so popular with many politicians and a few comparatists—the ellipse, the double helix, the parallel spiral staircases—suggest that Quebec is an equal partner in Canada, when historically it was one of four British colonies which confederated in 1867, and today constitutes less than 25% of the population and 20% of the economy. Its British colonial status derived from a military defeat which has remained a difficult part of its cultural self-representations. Anglophone Canada's acceptance of the mythology of this binarism, coupled with its own self-imagining as linguistically homogenous, has created tragic expectations, misunderstandings, and resentments on both sides. As Blodgett points out, there are "several Canadas," and several Canadian literatures, rather than two. These have routinely distracted anglophone-Canadians from commitment to their bilingual/bicultural illusions. They have also stirred francophone-Quebec to attempt to secure functional binary standing—through Trudeau and the Official Languages Act of 1969 and most recently through Parizeau's territorially based goal of negotiating a "partnership" with English-Canada.

One perhaps should add that the binarism that Blodgett notices has been a discourse primarily of critics from central Canada, most often male, and—quite often—of some relationship to British ethnicity. Recently-emerged anglophone-Canadian critics from non-white backgrounds, like for example, Arun Mukherjee, Nourbese Philip, or Aruna Srivastava, have had little to say about francophone Quebec, and have in general constructed Canadian cultural issues on much different terms. Of those who have commented on it, most have adopted postcolonial positions, either following Pierre Vallières in constructing Quebec as an oppressed francophone society in need of liberation, or following Edouard Glissant or Homi Bhabha in invoking theories of *métissage* or hybridity—theories that provide many more cultural positions than the French-English binary. I am reminded here that postcolonial studies is an academic field that closely resembles Canadian literature in its having gained a place in university English departments while being at best problematically suitable to them. Like Canada, postcoloniality is polylingual rather than unilingual. There are postcolonial literatures in languages such as French, Spanish, Portuguese, Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Afrikaans, and African tribal languages, that English departments, having begun to house 'postcolonial literature'

courses, may eventually have to decide whether or not to include, in translation, on their postcolonial doctoral exams.

There is one very early text on Canadian literature which does not conform closely to any of the models I talked about earlier. This is J.G. Bourinot's 1893 lecture to the Royal Society of Canada, "Our Intellectual Strength and Weakness." The essay is marked by the earnest moral optimism about Britain and literature that marks other criticism of the period, and by the Imperialist belief that a largely anglophone Canada could be the leader-in waiting of the British Empire. Bourinot speaks with what was probably unconscious condescension about French-Canadians, suggesting that they have only become a literary culture because of their having been conquered by Britain. The essay is also heavily marked by what Margery Fee has theorized, in commenting on MacMechan, Pierce, and Rhodenizer, as the need of colonial scholars to condemn their own culture's literature in order to maintain the international legitimacy of their own credentials. However, one thing that Bourinot does remarkably in this essay is write about francophone and anglophone authors and texts as if they were parts of a single literature. Most of his comparisons are among writers rather than between language groups. He seems unconscious of moving from one language to the other. Clara Thomas has remarked that he had the advantage of writing before the specialization of university departments and fields of scholarship—before there was a need for fields like comparative literature or general studies, or for concepts like combined honours, interdisciplinarity, or postcoloniality. She also observes that he was writing as part of a small and privileged intellectual class. Less privileged classes could not have gained his easy and ostensibly seamless access to the two cultures. He also wrote before today's extraordinary global disparity between the cultural power of the English and French languages.

A text like Bourinot's, nevertheless, offers some of the qualities one finds in postcolonial criticism, and which might have been widely present in some imaginable Canadian literary studies. That is, Bourinot's easy command of the two literatures can make one curious about the hypothetical Canadas it seems to imply: about Canadas in which some universities might have, many years ago, established *departments* of Canadian literature. In these departments Canadian literatures in various languages—aboriginal, French, English, Czech, Japanese—might have been studied in translation or original, without secrecy, and without protests to the nearest dean. These would have been very interesting departments. But they would not have been in the Canada that our variously nationalistic ancestors, changing global culture, and ourselves, have created. A Canada in which French language and culture were not boundaried, whether by ignorance, lack of interest, condescension, or law, would almost certainly be one in which French was much less in use than it is today. In a sense, 'Canada,' however we define it, may have always had to lose some day its francophone culture: by assimilation as in Manitoba, non-recognition as in Ontario, or territorial separation. Western countries which continue to survive in more than one official language, like Belgium or Switzerland, are ones in which

the languages are more closely equivalent in cultural power than English and French are in Canada and in the world today. In the long term, with or without official bilingualism, Meech Lake, or Quebec separation, the only Canadian possibility may turn out to have been unilingually anglophone.

## Notes

1. The view among francophone-Canadian critics that the literature of Quebec consists (or ought to consist) only of French-language writing became commonplace in the 1980s and '90s, as in H el ene Dame and Robert Giroux's *Semiotique de la po esie qu eb ecoise* (1981), Axel Maugey's *La po esie moderne qu eb ecoise* (1989), Jacques Allard's *Traverses de la critique litt eraire du Qu ebec* (1991 ), R ejean Beaudoin's *Le roman qu eb ecois* (1992), and G erard Etienne's *Le roman contemporaine au Qu ebec* (1992). Earlier critics whose literary interests were similarly restricted were often more careful than their anglophone-Canadian colleagues in constructing their titles, with works such as Louis Joseph Tach e's *La po esie fran aise au Canada* (1881) and Pierre de Grandpr e's mammoth *Histoire de la litt erature fran aise du Qu ebec* (1967) offering considerable precision. The change to an exclusionary understanding of what constitutes Qu ebec -- and toward a territorialization of the French language -- seems to have occurred in the 1970s. Guy Sylvestre, for example, titled the 1963 edition of his anthology of French-language poetry *Anthologie de la po esie Canadienne-fran aise*, but titled the 1974 edition *Anthologie de la po esie qu eb ecoise*. As in contemporary Quebec politics, what appears purposefully left ambiguous in such titles is whether "qu eb ecois" denotes ethnicity and language or whether it is the adjectival form of the name of a Canadian province. [\[back\]](#)
2. Sherry Simon has noted in her study *Le Trafic des langues: Traduction et culture dans la litt erature qu eb ecoise*, how translations are frequently disparaged in Quebec as being necessarily a dilution of the original, which itself is correspondingly valorized as the sole authentic text. A similar phenomenon occurs among anglophone-Canadians, particularly when English departments are seen as teaching inauthentic texts when they teach francophone-Quebec texts in translation, and French departments viewed as custodians of the only true texts. A country that would be bilingual would need to avoid essentialist notions of original and less original texts, and read translations as new 'original' works which offer creative readings of the other-language text which occasioned them. [\[back\]](#)
3. Frye follows his remark about "Canadian literature" being a synecdoche with the comment that every statement which employs the term "implies a parallel or contrasting statement about French-Canadian literature" (824). [\[back\]](#)

## Works Cited

Atwood, Margaret. *Survival*. Toronto: Anansi, 1972.

Bourinot, John George. *Our Intellectual Strength and Weakness*. Royal Society of Canada Series. Montreal: Foster Brown, 1898. Rprt U of Toronto P, 1973, with Marquis and Roy, intro. by Clara Thomas.

Dewart, Edward Hartley. *Selections from Canadian Poets*. Montreal: Lovell, 1864. Rprt U of Toronto P, 1973.

Fee, Margery. "Canadian Literature and English Studies in the Canadian University." *Essays on Canadian Writing* 48 (1993): 20-40.

Frye, Northrop. "Conclusion." In Carl F. Klinck et al, ed., *Literary History of Canada*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1965. 823-4.

Garvin, John W. *Canadian Poets*. Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild and Stewart, 1916.

Jasen, Patricia. "Arnoldian Humanism, English Studies, and the Canadian University." *Queen's Quarterly* 95:3 (1988): 550-66.

Jones, D.G. *Butterfly on Rock*. Toronto: U of Toronto P., 1970.

Lighthall, William Douw, ed. *Songs of the Great Dominion*. London: W. Scott, 1889.

Logan, J.D., and Donald G. French. *Highways of Canadian Literature*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1924.

MacMechan, Archibald. *Headwaters of Canadian Literature*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1924.

MacMurchy, Archibald. *Canadian Literature*. Toronto: Briggs, 1906.

Marquis, Thomas Guthrie. "English-Canadian Literature," In Shortt, Adam, and A.B. Doughty, ed., *Canada and its Provinces*. 1913, vol. 12, pp. 493-589. Rprt U of Toronto P, 1973, with Bourinot, *Our Intellectual Strength and Weakness*.

Pierce, Lorne. *An Outline of Canadian Literature*. Toronto: Ryerson, 1927

Rhodenizer, V.B. *Handbook of Canadian Literature*. Ottawa: Graphic Publishers, 1930.



Robert, Lucie. *L'institution du littéraire au Québec*. Quebec: Les presses de l'Université Laval. 1989.

Roy, Camille. "French-Canadian Literature." In Shortt, Adam, and A.B. Doughty, ed., *Canada and its Provinces*. 1913, vol. 12, pp. 435-489. Rprt U of Toronto P, 1973, with Bourinot, *Our Intellectual Strength and Weakness*.

Simon, Sherry. *Le Trafic des langues: Traduction et culture dans la littérature québécoise*. Montreal: Boréal, 1994.

Söderlind, Sylvia. *Margin/Alias: Language and Colonization in Canadian and Québécois Fiction*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1991.

Sylvestre, Guy, Brandon Conron, and Carl F. Klinck. *Canadian Writers/Ecrivains Canadiens*. Toronto: Ryerson, 1964.

Stevenson, Lionel. *Appraisals of Canadian Literature*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1926.

---