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Stephen Henighan, *When Words Deny the World: The Reshaping of Canadian Writing*. Erin: Porcupine’s Quill, 2002.

Nations no longer seem to have walls, and while some theorists think this a good thing and call it postmodernism, others are less sanguine about the effects of Free Trade agreements and “globalization,” a term now rather loosely used for neo-liberal economic policies, and carrying a tinge of paranoia. Stephen Henighan’s informed and stimulating essays are polemics in the tradition of George Grant’s *Lament for a Nation*. He relates what he reads as the non-appearance of a Great Tradition in the Canadian Novel to the advent of Free Trade and NAFTA, a slide from the historically distinct achievements of high nationalism in the Canadian literature of the 1960s into mere professionalism, the internationalization of the publishing industry, and an elision of the particularities of place and time that make Canada Canadian. This tone of lament in his critical essays is rather surprising because his fiction is about the exploration of Canada’s links with Latin America, both as a destination for Canadian travelers and a source of Canadian immigrants.

Henighan’s essays share an argument about the novel and nation in Canada as a connecting thread. Growing up as an insider/outsider whose Irish/American family immigrated to the Ottawa valley when he was five (what could be more typically Canadian?), he claims his imagination was gripped by the novel and nourished on foreign language traditions. A child of the Trudeau era, he believed a Canadian was someone who had inherited equally from the English-language and French-language traditions: the Anglo-American tradition, rooted in imperialism did not fit his Canadian experience. The loss of this bilingual consciousness within Canada owing to polarized political debates and legislation could be seen as a more significant loss for the country than the globalizing cultural trends he notes and dislikes. As a student in the United States, Henighan confirmed his Canadian differ-

ence, and he found a United States model of a regional rural writer from the margins in William Faulkner.

Henighan argues that American intervention in Vietnam was a fork in the road for Canadian cultural identity and a stimulus to differentiation from American military and cultural attitudes, leading to the modernist achievements between 1965 and 1975 of Margaret Laurence's Manawaka cycle, Robertson Davies's *Fifth Business*, Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women*, Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*, and Mordecai Richler's *St. Urbain's Horseman*. The era of the Vietnam War was an important signifier in the South African novel as well, forming a structural component of J.M. Coetzee's first novel, *Dusklands*. Henighan feels that the Canadian novelists who emerged during the nineties—Timothy Findley, Janette Turner Hospital, Matt Cohen, W.P. Kinsella, and Katherine Govier—are both less ambitious and less urgently historical. Canadian fiction, according to his thesis, has not achieved the scope of the postmodern epics of cultural identity produced by Salman Rushdie, Peter Carey, Gunter Grass, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Carlos Fuentes. He mentions Nadine Gordimer among South Africans, whose *None to Accompany Me* is the closest she comes to a postmodern epic, one constrained by the legacies of the post-apartheid era, though Andre Brink and Zakes Mda are the post-modern fabulators of the contemporary South African novel.

Chief culprits in Henighan's polemical sketch of the genealogy of the Canadian novel are Michael Ondaatje and Anne Michaels, whose *The English Patient* and *Fugitive Pieces* are described as selling their Canadian birthright to Europe, instead of engaging with current Canadian realities. However, I believe that, in *The English Patient*, Ondaatje speaks to the historical origins of modern Canada in the Second World War, and to that war's damaging consequences, and that Michaels explores an underworld of Jewish faith and memory that is part of modern Toronto's consciousness. The writers whom Henighan dismisses from any pantheon of Canadian fictions - Rudy Wiebe, Carol Shields, Janice Kulyk Keefer, Jane Urquhart, and Aritha van Herk - are precisely those Canadian novelists who engage with immigrant histories and cultural traces of other nations: the Russia and Germany of Mennonite origin (Wiebe), the US as Canada's North American counterpart in pop culture (Shields), Ukraine in transition (Kulyk Keefer), Ireland and its colourful rebels (Urquhart), and Holland as one origin of Canadian rural life and culture (Van Herk). They are some of the novelists creating resonant national allegories that speak to the specific histories of race, class and gender in Canada. *The English Patient* in particular, marks one stage in Michael Ondaatje's gradual approach in fiction to the Sri Lanka of his origins: from *Coming Through Slaughter*, with its ambiguous transference of the psychic trauma of racial

minority immigration to Afro-American jazz and mental breakdown, to the larger theatre of war in North Africa during WWII, to the re-imagining of civil war in Sri Lanka in *Anil's Ghost*.

Henighan found his own doorway to provocative and dynamic literature in Latin America, and thus he uses Latin American writing as a model of a novelistic language capable of a liberating creative hybridity. In one of the most interesting sections of his argument, he begins to indicate the many interpenetrations of our anglophone and francophone literary traditions. He points out, rightly, that the popularity of contemporary postcolonial theory has directed attention towards the problems of immigrants and Native Canadians within English Canada but has failed to facilitate a dialogue with Quebec. Thus the outward-looking fictions of francophone writers such as Daniel Poulquin, Monique Proulx, and Louis Hamel have drawn few responses in the rest of Canada. Solutions to this problem might lie in transforming the structures within which literature is taught in Canadian universities, so that English Canadian and francophone literatures are taught in dialogue with each other, in creating more departments of Comparative Literature so that genres such as Magic Realism can be taught across different languages and literatures. Another crucial step is persuading parents of the huge benefits of French immersion schooling. Canadian Studies could be taught in a more inclusive, interdisciplinary way, referring to Quebec Studies, founding pioneer traditions, and the histories of First Nations. The wider teaching of international languages, cultures and literatures would have valuable spin-offs for global understanding and Canadian multicultural tolerance, as well as creative fiction.

Writers need a palpable social reality from which to write, and one of Henighan's complaints is that the pseudo-professionalism and the Americanization of consumer culture have eroded this community. He sees continental Free Trade as dominating the Canadian national project. This is economically important if it decreases the public funding of the cultural infrastructure, writers' grants and publishers' subsidies, but it may have less damaging effects on imaginative literature as writers find new ways of narrating their societies and histories. One effect has been a drive toward historical fiction in Canada, as in Atwood's *Alias Grace*, and another toward ways of imagining geographically distant lives, like those of African elephants in Barbara Gowdy's *White Bone*, which create new forms of empathy with survival, community, competition and power.

Henighan's critique of the corrosive effects of media culture is very good, and he continues the tradition of McLuhan in his critique of the depoliticizing effects of an image-obsessed consumer culture. He suggests that Toronto's

media-channeled obsession has obliterated the transmission of a literary heritage. The publishing industry has been retooled to serve the global market. The Canada Council needs larger budgets for travel and readings by writers, and regional publishers outside Toronto need financial resources. Perhaps we also need to lobby for more politically and socially instructive television and radio, instead of too many glib comedies and game-shows. Television is a wonderful medium for political and historical information, but in Canada it has only recently been used for purposes of national and international understanding. Communications media are crucial, not just to imaginative literature, but to the gradual spread of cultural and political literacy to all. Africa, which has been the subject of so much debate by the G8 and the UN in recent years, also needs basic literacy, as do many developing countries. The forms of literary contestation and connection evident in these essays, as in Henighan's novels, *Other Americas* (1990) and *The Places Where Names Vanish* (1998), help to keep a global awareness alive. National memory can be a constricting and violent place to live.

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Judith Mayne. *Framed: Lesbians, Feminists, and Media Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000. pp xxiii,226, \$18.95 (U.S.).

Judith Mayne introduces her recent book on feminists and lesbians in contemporary media culture by distinguishing between "feminist film studies" and "feminist film theory," and firmly inscribing *Framed* within the former category (xi). Her eleven essays, written since 1987, elegantly attend to the particular and eschew generalizing theoretical claims whether her critical gaze is turned to mass culture (for example, prime time feminism on *L.A. Law* or Clint Eastwood's *Tightrope*) or analyzing works more regularly associated with theoretical explorations (the experimental lesbian videos of Su Friedrich and Midi Onodero or the *femme fatale* in New Wave French cinema). Mayne wants to distance herself from "feminist film theory" so as to resist the mastery of theoretical paradigms over the films they speak to; instead, she is interested in "incorporating theoretical inquiry into studies of individual films" (xi). Mayne is no stranger to theory as her earlier books attest (*The Woman at the Keyhole: Feminism and Women's Cinema; Cinema and Spectatorship*) but her self-proclaimed shift away from theory indicates, at its roots, the desire to get outside the theoretical paradigm that has dominated feminist film criti-