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GRACE, Sherrill E., 2001 Canada and the Idea of North, Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 342 pages.

par Peter Kulchyski

Études/Inuit/Studies, vol. 28, n° 1, 2004, p. 197-201.

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sections étant en majuscules, on comprend mal quelle section on est en train de lire. Enfin, le texte étant au début du livre, les photos au milieu, et le catalogue à la fin, il faut continuellement tourner les pages pour aller voir les photos auxquelles fait référence le texte, puis aller dans le catalogue pour situer l'objet dans son contexte culturel, temporel et géographique.

Alors que les auteurs des textes, Tinna Møbjerg et Jens Rosing, ont droit à une brève biographie à la fin de l'ouvrage, rien n'est dit sur Asger Jorn ni Gérard Franceschi. Je dois toutefois à ce livre d'avoir piqué ma curiosité à propos d'Asger Jorn et grâce à l'Internet d'avoir découvert ce génial artiste[1].

Murielle Nagy
Revue Études/Inuit/Studies
Université Laval
Québec (Québec)
Canada, G1K 7P4
murielle.nagy@fss.ulaval.ca

GRACE, Sherrill E.
2001 Canada and the Idea of North, Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 342 pages.

I was born and raised in Bissett, Manitoba, located in bush country a few hundred kilometres northeast of Winnipeg. I considered myself a northerner, but when I went to the government-run residential high school in Cranberry Portage, I discovered I came from the southern part of northern Manitoba and my credentials and identity as a northerner were somewhat diminished. As a graduate student, I remember getting off the plane in Whitehorse, in Yellowknife, and discovering that anyone from south of sixty was a southerner. Some years later, when I first travelled to Cambridge Bay, I heard Yellowknife referred to as the south... This is the kind of story Sherrill Grace revels in: the ambiguous but powerful attraction of an identity (de)centred around "Magnetic North" is one of the themes of her *Canada and the Idea of North*, an ambitious, lavishly produced attempt to reconfigure the whole vexing debate around Canadian identity by centring nordicity and the discourse around nordicity.

Grace brings an impressive range of scholarship to the daunting task. She has clearly paid careful attention to debates on Canadian identity through a variety of fields. Though primarily a literary critic, the term "discourse" enables her to read anthropology, performance art, philosophy, history, government documents, as well as literature and literary criticism. One cheers for a book that can confidently cite Rabelais and Joyce as easily as it does Alootook Ipellie or Minnie Aodla Freeman. One also cheers for a study that brings the protocols of humanities discourse into the field of

[1] Asger Jorn est né au Danemark en 1914 et étudia en 1936 à Paris sous Fernand Léger. Membre fondateur de Cobra et de l'Internationale Situationniste, instigateur du Mouvement International pour un Bauhaus Imaginiste et de l'Institut scandinave de vandalisme comparé, Jorn est au centre d'expérimentations les plus dynamiques (voir: www.cobraart.dk/jorn.html, www.amb-danemark.fr/zoom/zoom_nov2001.htm). Il meurt en 1973.

northern studies, which has tended towards social science research even in the approaches of its historians. Sadly, for all its celebrations of Nunavut and Aboriginal arts and letters, the book loses its way in a snowstorm of confusion: "lost in the concept of north" will be how I ultimately think of it. The particular way in which it gets lost is instructive and deserves our attention.

Two broad interrelated issues concerned me in this text enough to actually produce real heat in my response: its politics and its use of theoretical terms. In political terms, the book is deeply flawed in that it makes no consistent deployment of Canada's settler-colony status. Hence, although in some chapters there is a sharp criticism of colonialism (one can hardly find a word to disagree with in the last substantive chapter, "The North Writes Back"), the book wants to celebrate "being north" as a Canadian identity at the same time as acknowledging Canada's colonizing impact on the lands and peoples in its far and mid north. The latter becomes increasingly muted, to the point that Aboriginal voices are appropriated to serve ends antithetical of the political project of decolonization that frequently inspired them.

This is related to the problem of the book's deployment of theoretical terms. It appears to desire to be "theoretically informed," up on the latest and hippest language and concepts. But adding the term "hybridity" to one's list of what one praises in a text, throwing around the term "discourse" as an excuse to read different kinds of texts without embedding them in a politics, involves a deep depoliticization of Bhabha's and Foucault's theoretical projects. Although in my mind the problem with Bhabha's and Foucault's analyses is precisely that their terms give way to a liberal depoliticization, it remains painful to see this happen in practice. Grace's book represents an exemplar of how not to read either Foucault or Bhabha, in particular.

A few examples will make this clear. "North" here is deliberately constructed as a very broad sphere of discursive play: from cottage country to the High Arctic and from the anthropological writings of Stefansson to the literary work of Thomson Highway. But to not fully recognize the way in which the latter attacks and overturns the former is a serious problem. In her homage/appreciation to Highway for *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, although Grace sees it as "writing back," "a powerfully dialogized, hybrid narrative"(p. 255)—the terms already seem sterile in her handling—she concludes the chapter by suggesting that the discourse can be changed in order to "transform the subjectivity interpellated by that hierarchical binary system of dominated/dominator, White/Other, South/North, into a multiplicity of shared, equal subjectivities [...]. In so far as *Kiss of the Fur Queen* is a statement of discursive formation, it has introduced change"(p. 260). But this is not simply a matter of "new stories" adding to a rich panoply of existing stories, as it is not a matter of the levelling power of equality in political discourse (the agenda of the Alliance Party on the political right is centred on "equality rights" as a challenge to the notion of Aboriginal rights). The supplement here is not an "addition," the supplement in Bhabha's terms overthrows that which it supplements. Highway is not contributing to our sense of Canadian heritage by making our notion of north more complex. He is on one level quite explicitly showing how the settler-colonial attitude to north covers over a deeply repressive regime. Implicitly, at least, this challenges the ability of newcomers to Canada to think of themselves as

"northerners"; it shows how the category "northerner" is itself ideological. A northerner can equally be me or an Aboriginal person, the category levels us, presumably we can both "write back." But to be or not Aboriginal in Canada is to cross a colonial chasm. A cultural politics that ignores this chasm colludes with the dominating power that desires to erase it.

In her lengthy discussion of the Yukon gold rush, Grace becomes interested in centring the story of Shaaw Tlaa/Kate Carmacks, a "forgotten voice" of his/tory. Strikingly, in searching widely for sources that might give any trace of Shaaw Tlaa's "voice," Grace ignores a text she earlier offered fulsome praise to, Julie Cruikshank's *Life Lived Like a Story*. Although Grace shows deep appreciation for that text, and although she wants to "destabilize" the masculine narratives of the gold rush so popular in the Canadian northern imaginary, she does not read *Life Lived Like a Story* very closely. Hence, she says several times that there are claims that Shaaw Tlaa actually found the gold, without referring to Angela Sidney's remarkable story in Cruikshank about Skookum Jim making the find. She does not seem to see how the elders in Cruikshank's text have performed their own destabilizing of the gold rush narrative already, both by making it a small story in their own stories of the Yukon rather than a central event, and in making of Shaaw Tlaa's loss of her daughter a modern version of the "stolen woman" stories that are a genre from their oral traditions. Sidney, in particular, is in part—her stories are layered with meanings—showing how wealth did not create happiness, it lead to familial breakup. These are significant elisions: her refusal of oral his/tory undercuts her attempt to reclaim the missing voice and demonstrates that her appreciation for *Life Lived Like a Story* is more paternal than substantive.

While the breadth of Grace's reading must be remarked on—one hates to be dismissive to a senior scholar who has done so much work—its depth often consists largely of plot summary. Hence, as I read that "Writing Back" chapter I paused to wonder, has she read Markoosie? Sure enough, a few pages in, there it is. This had already happened enough times with the book that one cannot help but be impressed. Yet, for all the breadth, many of the actual "close readings" are not all that close. For example, in all the pages devoted to a William Blair Bruce painting, "The Phantom Hunter," especially in her extended discussion (pp: 116 to 121), she does not mention the possibility of a homo-socious tension in the work as one possible key to reading it. She goes so far as to suggest that the snow represents a "feminine presence" as if such a presence were essentially required, rather than think the possibility that the two male figures positioned back to front with the one in back weakened and losing vitality as the ghost facing away strides fully erect, might in any way represent quite a different sexual construction. In this latter reading the painting would be taken as masculine heterosexist distrust of homosocial relations. Such a reading would at least notice that the homo-socious narrative represents quite a strong destabilisation of the conventional, masculine myth of the north. Though critical of the masculine myth, it actually gets off quite easily and is even at points celebrated in Grace's text (*pace* her readings of Service, Kroetsch and Wiebe). Like Grace, I am not trained in the protocols of art criticism, and I have not read the scholarship regarding this work, but the painting would seem to me to obviously beg the question of a reading that acknowledges sexual

orientation as a problem. The idea is more invisible in Grace's text than the ghost is in the painting.

Finally, in terms of examples, *Études/Inuit/Studies* readers will be interested to discover that the Netsilik live in Baker Lake (p. 162), that *Inuuk* refers to the singular (chapter 6), that the map in Coates and Powell's *The Modern North* "visualizes for us [...] a decolonized north"(p. 88) rather than a map with Aboriginal place names such as that of the Dene Cultural Institute's *Denendeh*. Perhaps because she can not recognize her own work's appropriative dimensions, she thinks the film *Sedna: The Making of a Myth* is only about "three Inuit carvers from Baffin Island creating the massive sculpture that now resides in the lobby of a Toronto bank" and not about the non-Inuit carver who made the centre-piece Sedna figure. Although such errors of fact or judgement are of generally small moment in a text of such range, here they seem emblematic to me of the problem of an attempt to appropriate an Aboriginal view of north without an understanding of the political dimensions of the project. Although Grace has been to the far north (at the outset of this essay I also trafficked in the ideological gesture of letting the reader know, in the anthropologist Clifford Geertz's framing, that "I vas dere"), a childhood devotion to cottage country alongside a few trips to the Arctic do not expertise make: cultural tourism is a profoundly compromised position from which to build a national project.

I will use the final paragraph from the epilogue as my emblem for what is wrong with this book. Not happy to end with the north writing back, Grace closes the book with a concept, Magnetic North, that has enough "ambiguity" and "hybridity" to satisfy a Sunday afternoon reading group titillated by the daring spice of an Aboriginal text and a few theoretical terms. She ends by pronouncing that the great Canadian epic poem is not Pratt's "Toward the Last Spike" but Beissel's "Cantos North," discusses Atwood, Lawren Harris, dips into Jin-Me Yoon and Dionne Brand, and concludes with to accept the Magnetic North thesis of our national identity is to listen to Beissel's love song, to see what contemporary artists like Yoon and Brand show us, or to write a book like *Canada and the Idea of North*. It is to accept the north as multiple and always changing and to respect the diversity and heterogeneity of our home and native land. It is to search for new ways of creating an inclusive nationality that inscribes an empowering ideology of dialogic hybridity. To go north is to seek not Wiebe's "true north" but the Magnetic North. To go north now is to be kissed by the Fur Queen (p. 268).

Oh, the self satisfaction that the liberal conscience can give itself: one might as well have said, "or to write a book like mine!" Having found her own true north through Highway (p. 260) she can dismiss Wiebe's. Aboriginal names drop off the list of important contributors to the discourse, except for the final reference to the Fur Queen, which without substantive support becomes appropriation. Diversity and heterogeneity are the slogans of a liberal multicultural project that wants to displace the particular social claims of, in Canada, Aboriginal peoples. Had she read Jonathan Bordo's essay on the group of seven, or Daniel Frances's *The Imaginary Indian* or Robert Berkhofer Jr's *The White Man's Indian,* she might have had the resources to recognize the way the settler colony needs a national identity to displace and repress

the profound injustice its existence is predicated upon. One person's inclusive nationality is another person's appropriating, totalizing power.

Peter Kulchyski
Department of Native Studies
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada, R3T 5V5
kulchysk@ms.umanitoba.ca

HART, Eliza J
2001 *Reindeer Days Remembered,* Inuvik, Inuvialuit Cultural Resource Centre, 112 pages.

Reindeer Days Remembered is a contribution to the growing literature sponsored by First Nations about their histories and cultures. Written primarily for members of the local cultural group, it features their observations about their activities in the industry. That said, the book has appeal beyond local audiences to those interested in Mackenzie Delta/Beaufort Sea history. The oral history quotes, the historic and contemporary photographs, and the clearly organized charts and graphs personalize the elders' story.

As the title suggest, this is a book about the herders' recollections of herding between the years 1935-1964. Interviews were done in 1991, 1992, and 2001 by the Inuvialuit Cultural Resources Centre with additional support from Northern Oil and Gas Action Program and Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre. Additional support was provided by the Polar Continental Shelf Project and the Inuvik Research Centre (now the Aurora Research Institute). Part of the documentation by the elders was recorded by the Inuvialuit Communication Society. They produced a video for their weekly program, "Tamapta."

In *Reindeer Days Remembered*, we learn that reindeer were introduced to the Delta because of the scarcity of caribou and that the herd came from Alaska on a drive that began in 1929 and took five years. The book chronicles the stress of herding, the hard work, and the isolation that herders and their families experienced. "The lack of success of the Native herds showed that herding was not a stable or predictable way to make a living. It was too isolating and presented too many hardships" (p. 94). Despite this pronouncement, and after years of management by Canadian Fish and Wildlife Service, the herd was sold to William Nasagaluak in 1978 and he maintained it.

Students of reindeer herding history in Alaska will find this book of interest for multiple reasons. The "story" of the five-year trek from Alaska is one that is known and told in Alaska. The theme of isolation and herding resonates in an all too familiar way with the recollections of Alaskan herders. The period of recollections recorded here ends in the early 1960s and snowmachines were introduced to northern communities in the mid 1960s. We know from the Alaskan experience, and the