



Université de Montréal

**Bodies, Stories, Cities : Learning to Read and Write (in)  
Montréal with Gail Scott**

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## Résumé

Cette lecture, tant critique, comparative, et théorique que pédagogique, s'ancre dans le constat, premièrement, qu'il advient aux étudiantEs en littérature de se (re)poser la question des coûts et complicités qu'apprendre à lire et à écrire présuppose aujourd'hui; deuxièmement, que nos pratiques littéraires se trament au sein de lieux empreints de différences, que l'on peut nommer, selon le contexte, métaphore, récit, ville; et, troisièmement, que les efforts et investissements requis sont tout autant couteux et interminable qu'un plaisir et une nécessité politique. Ces conclusions tendent vers l'abstrait et le théorique, mais le langage en lequel elles sont articulées, langage corporel et urbain, de la dépendance et de la violence, cherche d'autant plus une qualité matérielle et concrète. Or, l'introduction propose un survol des lectures et comparaisons de *Heroine* de Gail Scott qui centre ce projet; identifie les contextes institutionnels, historiques, et personnels qui risquent, ensuite, de décentrer celui-ci.

Le premier chapitre permet de cerner le matérialisme littéraire qui me sert de méthode par laquelle la littérature, à la fois, sollicite et offre une réponse à ces interrogations théoriques. Inspirée de l'œuvre de Gail Scott et Réjean Ducharme, premièrement, et de Walter Benjamin, Elisabeth Grosz, et Pierre Macherey ensuite, 'matérialisme' fait référence à cette collection de figures de pratiques littéraires et urbaines qui proviennent, par exemple, de Georges Perec, Michel DeCerteau, Barbara Johnson, et Patricia Smart, et qui invitent ensuite une réflexions sur les relations entre corporalité et narrativité, entre la nécessité et la contingence du littéraire. De plus, une collection de figures d'un *Montréal littéraire* et d'une  *cité pédagogique*, acquis des œuvres de Zygmunt Bauman, Patricia Godbout, et Lewis Mumford, constitue en effet un vocabulaire nous permettant de mieux découvrir (et donc

enseigner) ce que lire et apprendre requiert.

Le deuxième chapitre propose une lecture comparée de *Heroine* et des romans des auteures québécoises Anne Dandurand, Marie Gagnon, et Tess Fragoulis, dans le contexte, premièrement, les débats entourant l'institutionnalisation de la littérature (anglo)Québécoise et, deuxièmement, des questions pédagogiques et politiques plus larges et plus urgentes que nous pose, encore aujourd'hui, cette violence récurrente qui s'acharna, par exemple, sur la Polytechnique en 1989. Or, cette intersection de la violence meurtrière, la pratique littéraire, et la pédagogie qui en résulte se pose et s'articule, encore, par le biais d'une collection de figures de styles. En fait, à travers le roman de Scott et de l'œuvre critique qui en fait la lecture, une série de craques invite à reconnaître *Heroine* comme étant, ce que j'appelle, un récit de dépendance, au sein duquel se concrétise une temporalité récursive et une logique d'introjection nous permettant de mieux comprendre la violence et, par conséquent, le pouvoir d'une pratique littéraire sur laquelle, ensuite, j'appuie ma pédagogie en devenir.

Jetant, finalement, un regard rétrospectif sur l'oeuvre dans son entier, la conclusion de ce projet se tourne aussi vers l'avant, c'est-à-dire, vers ce que mes lectures dites matérialistes de la littérature canadienne et québécoise contribuent à mon enseignement de la langue anglaise en Corée du Sud. C'est dans ce contexte que les propos de Jacques Rancière occasionnent un dernier questionnement quant à l'historique des débats et des structures pédagogiques en Corée, d'une part, et, de l'autre, les conclusions que cette lecture de la fiction théorique de Gail Scott nous livre.

**Mots-clés** : Littératures Québécoises, Littératures Canadiennes, Littératures (Anglo)Québécoises, Littératures urbaines, métaphore, pédagogie, dépendance, violence, Corée de Sud

## **Abstract**

This simultaneously comparative, theoretical, and pedagogical project is rooted in the recognition that it behooves students and teachers to ask about the costs, complicities, and competing interests constantly involved in learning to read and write (about) literature today; that literary practice takes place in a space or a structure of irreducible differences called, variously, but not exclusively, metaphor, narrative, or the city; and that the labour and investments required therefore to negotiate our (dis)course towards becoming increasingly learned and literate subjects is as costly and interminable as likewise a pleasure and a political necessity. While such conclusions tend toward the relatively abstract, the language of bodies and cities, and of addiction and violence, is meant to be all the more concrete and material therefore. The introduction maps out the landscape of readings and comparisons of Gail Scott's *Heroine* that are the centre of the project and identifies the institutional, historical, and personal contexts that threaten at every turn to decentre my practice here.

Chapter one articulates and illustrates the literary materialist methods employed, whereby literature is the preferred medium for conducting such theoretical investigations. Derived first from Gail Scott and Réjean Ducharme's theoretical-fictions, and then from the work of Walter Benjamin, Elizabeth Grosz and Pierre Macherey, this materialism refers to a collection of figures of the world as a book, and to the close comparisons consequently of different representations of the practice of reading found, for instance, in George Perec, Michael DeCerteau, Barbara Johnson, and Patricia Smart, all of which invites an interrogation of the relationship between bodies and stories that make the simultaneous necessity and contingency of literary practice all the more legible and teachable. Similarly, a collection of figures of literary Montreal, and of the pedagogical city more generally, gathered from a range

of writers including Zygmunt Bauman, Patricia Godbout, and Lewis Mumford, provides a vocabulary in which to better describe what the differential spaces of literature look and feel like and what reading in turn (and learning) requires.

Chapter two reads Scott's *Heroine* alongside other contemporary Québécois women writers, including Anne Dandurand, Marie Gagnon and Tess Fragoulis, initially, in the context of debates surrounding the institutionalization of (anglo)Quebec literature, but then in terms too of the much broader and more urgent pedagogical and political questions raised by the recurrence of gun violence at schools like the Polytechnique in Montreal, in 1989. That question of the relationship between violence, literary practice, and pedagogy, here, is compelled and enabled, specifically, by a collection of literary figures. Specifically, a series of cracks in both Scott's narrative and across much of the body of critical writing about her work, invites a reading of *Heroine* as a *narrative of addiction*, so-called, whereby the peculiarly recursive temporality of addiction, as well as its logic of introjection, invite a better understanding of the violence and power of the practice of literature upon which, in turn, is grounded the pedagogy under construction here.

Looking back, then, onto the work the project does as a whole, the conclusion looks forward also to the ways in which the materialist readings of literature here lead and contribute to the author's teaching of language to aspiring teachers of English as a foreign language in Korea. In this context, the assumptions investing Jacques Ranciere's work provide a frame for my intersecting of the history of educational debates and structures in Korea and the conclusions drawn in these close literary readings of Gail Scott's experimental prose.

**Keywords** : Quebec Literature, Canadian Literature, (Anglo)Quebec literature, Urban writing, Metaphor, Pedagogy, Addiction, Violence, South Korea.

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## Liste des sigles

ACQL : Association of Canadian and Quebec Literatures

ANEL : Association nationale des éditeurs de livres

CÉTUQ : Centre d'Études Québécoises

CRILCQ : Centre de Recherche Interuniversitaire sur la Littérature et la Culture Québécoises

IALSS : International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey

ICEF : International Consultants for Education and Fairs

IRC : Institute for Research in Construction

LLL : Low Literacy Level

MCRI : Major Collaborative Research Initiative

NRC : National Research Council of Canada

OECD : Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

PISA : Programme for International Student Assessment

SSHRC : Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada

TCTQ : Trans-Canada Trans-Quebec graduate student colloquium series.

UNESCO : United Nations

*For my students who inspire me to keep learning,  
my teachers who taught me how, and  
for all of those who have asked me to explain.*

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remains a bench-mark for me and a lesson about what it means to work and learn together.

To all my colleagues, peers, and friends, finally, who have read pieces of the following at different stages and in different contexts, and have always been so eager to discuss the ambitions and contingencies of literacy with me; to the friends and family further afield from this discipline, whose interest in my studies and patient understanding of how long it has taken me to finish made it seem possible still and worth the while; and to my students and colleagues now in Korea, whose desire to learn (and learn about teaching, in particular) has made them an exceptionally receptive and critical community in league with whom to test, in the context of foreign-language acquisition, the reach and resource of these my literary conclusions, thank you, more than these words allow. I shudder to think of where I would be without you.

# **Introduction – On The Time, the What, and the How of these Literary Studies**

Quiconque se trouve dans la filiation comparatiste, que ce soit par hasard ou à dessein, doit répondre constamment à la question : "Qu'est-ce que tu compares?" Cette question insignifiante se révèle sans réponse pour tout ceux qui ont fait des études dans la discipline.

En fait, le comparatiste ne compare rien.

- Terry Cochrane, *Plaidoyer* (5)

Oh Mama why'd you put this hole in me?

- Gail Scott, *Heroine* (31)

## **On Réjean Ducharme, Comparative Literature, and the Violence of Learning**

This dissertation began as a 4th year honors thesis in Comparative Canadian and Québécois literatures at the University of Ottawa, in a seminar which I had the good fortune to take with that hirsute old man of comparative studies, the late and regretted Professor Camille Labossière. Having been given permission to add the page requirements of my then still unfinished mid-term paper onto that of my no doubt still overly ambitious final project and then again several desperately sought extensions, the 30-some pages I finally did hand in, which allowed me to graduate, remained in a sense incomplete, providing me only space enough to frame the project I had in mind and to pose the questions that continue therefore to haunt me here. All of which begs the question of the time of literary studies.

Then, after two years of teaching English in Korea and wondering what else to do with a B.A. in literature and philosophy, the questions I brought to an exploratory conversation with a notably generous Professor Lianne Moyes at *l'Université de Montréal* could not help but be a further expression of that still as yet unfinished undergraduate endeavor. The same

questions, moreover, would structure my eventual masters thesis proposal which had, it was felt, with a few adjustments and the addition of a second author to my corpus, all the scope and promise needed to become this doctoral project. I was told that the university had money enough to fund me for two years — as a PhD student is worth more to a department than an MA student — and that I could hope in turn to be very competitive in my applications for a SSHRC fellowship. Thus, I was invited to fast-track into to PhD program the following year. I was warned, of course, of the risk involved in moving perhaps too quickly from one disciplinary step to the next, taking two steps at a time, in a sense, and as such biting off more than I might be able to proverbially chew; but, honestly, all I actually heard at the time was the promise of desperately needed income and the suggestion consequently that my literary studies could (at least in that sense) be of some value after all!

I'll have much more to say, in the course of the two very long, respectively, theoretical and literary critical chapters that follow, about the ends and means of literary study, its various temporalities, and its incessant and valuable corporealities. I would like though, in this introductory meantime, to begin with some indication of that series of unanswered questions that I've been carrying around with me since the late 1990s in Ottawa and, in the process, say something about the projected third chapter on Réjean Ducharme that would have been but could not finally be included here. Indeed, as the epigraphs above are meant in part to signal, there is a hole in the heart of my dissertation where my reading of Réjean Ducharme's *Bérénice* was to have been, a hole that means and affects in ongoing ways the course of my thinking still and which I therefore want to highlight and recall though I might have simply left it out, instead, when the limitations of time and space made such difficult decisions increasingly unavoidable. I do so, first, in deference to the violence that absence speaks so

loudly of in so many ways, (a violence that was indeed to have been the central theme of that Ducharme chapter), and as a testament, then, to the haunting affects and presence that such absences always have. Pragmatically, though, discussing here the main lines of my prospective third Ducharme chapter provides me an occasion from the outset to discuss and theorize the necessarily comparative nature and nurture of my practice of and arguments about reading and writing and learning here.

Although, as its title indicates, this dissertation is primarily a reading of Gail Scott's work, and of her first novel, *Heroine*, in particular, it remains very much a product of the explicitly comparative context which gave it birth almost twenty years ago now in Ottawa. As originally proposed, and in the form that did in fact win me a SSHRC fellowship, the project had not one but two main corpus chapters, one on Gail Scott and one on Réjean Ducharme.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the often frighteningly expansive and digressive nature of my reading and writing practice has resulted (for better or worse) in an evident lack of space enough and time to complete chapters on both such important and engrossing bodies of writing simultaneously. Indeed, I think, one result of my having been fast-tracked past the erstwhile need to produce a smaller scale master's project is that I failed, therefore, to learn quickly enough to restrain the wide ranging and digressive cycles of reading and research and writing and reading that I, for one, am prone to and, as such, although the conclusions that both Scott and Ducharme invite me to draw are remarkably continuous, by the time I had realized that I had, with Scott's

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<sup>1</sup> The fact that only one such corpus chapter remains, when precisely a second (on Scott) was added in order that this project might more obviously accede to the status of a doctoral dissertation is, at least in part, one facet of the implicit critique ongoing here of the dissertation as the privileged form of professionalization and doctoral knowledge production, about which I'll have more to say below.



heroine, circled right back to where I had started from with Ducharme's Bérénice, I had run out of the time and pages needed to articulate and map out the very particular landscapes of theoretical discourse and figure that *L'Avalée des avalés* presents with, except in this all too-brief and introductory fashion.

Still, I insist that the practice of reading I am engaged in here remains thoroughly comparative, as Canadian Literature is and literary studies must always arguably be. Comparative, though, not simply because Ducharme, in the guise of his enfant terrible, child narrator, Bérénice Einberg, remains a constant and recurrent presence throughout, alongside the many other literary, critical, theoretical and cultural texts that constitute the sprawling and in that sense 'urban' corpus of my project. It is not, consequently, a comparative project in the sense embodied by the centennial comparatists in Canada, whereby pairs of English and French language writers are read alongside one another in the interests of producing suitable figures of national identity or disunity according to the interests of the critic in question.<sup>2</sup> I am not, in that sense (and in a way that will be made clearer especially in chapter two) *hooked on*, or *addicted to* the *pharmakon* of national identity in my practice of reading here. In fact, it is my hope to have kicked, so to speak, that noxious habit of thought by then. Rather, mine is a comparative project in what I would call the deeper and more meaningful sense of that word, described *entre autres* by Terri Cochran as much less a field of study with well-circumscribed

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<sup>2</sup> E.D. Blodgett has described and critiqued how Ronald "Sutherland's *Second Image* must be considered the fundamental point of departure" for that "technique" of "'facing-off' thematically similar francophone and anglophone writers" ("Canadian Comparative Literature" np). One of the prospective advantages therefore of having two equally weighted corpus chapters on Scott and on Ducharme, within a single project, was to have been to occasion a reference to that disciplinary, comparatist tradition in order, then, to better and more effectively undermine the assumptions of identity that it has been so roundly and decidedly criticized for (as I will discuss with reference to the notion of 'thematic criticism' in chapter one). This relatively single corpus version of my thesis hopes to raise, however, the same questions in a necessarily different way.

and rationally distributed objects than, broadly speaking, a practice or act of thinking (*Plaidoyer* 5, 11). Indeed, I mean by comparative an inherently theoretical project which, as Gerald Graff put it, "treats literature as in some respects a problem," and then uses the literary itself as the very means and method of (re)formulating that problem "in general terms" (*Professing* 252). Thus, this is a theoretical practice that remains expressly conscious of and beholden to its literary, which is to say its figurative, affective, and narrative modes of argument and thought. Thus, I will argue throughout, reading and writing, or learning and thinking do not happen in straight lines and singular, conclusive statements, but in the 'comparative' back and forth movement that is native to those gaps and spaces that Scott calls the cusps and commas, or as Blodgett says the "thresholds" (*Configuration* 35), of all sorts of irreducible metaphorical, national, gendered, and generic differences.<sup>3</sup> Alternatively, the comparative nature of reading and writing and learning at work here, I argue, is beholden to the starts and stops where thinking necessarily belongs, says Walter Benjamin, and like Scott's heroine in her bathtub, as much to the movement as to the arrest of thoughts (Benjamin, *Arcades* N10a,3).

Rather than presume, therefore, to produce x-number of quantifiable units of tradable knowledge about Gail Scott and her work, about her sexual or national identity, or her relative place in and influence upon the canons of Canadian, Quebecois, feminist and experimental literatures — all of which of course this project does also do in some way — mine is a

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<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Scott refers in a number of different ways and places to the "the cusp" ("My Montreal" 5) and the "comma of difference" (*My Paris* 107) and "of translation" (*My Paris* 107, 49) that represent, she says, "the site of drifting identity" ("My Montreal" 8) and of "the threshold, the movement between individuals, cultures, expressions and possibilities of gender" ("Cusps" 64), where she locates her writing practice of "protecting difference from assimilation" (*Cusps* 66).

comparative project, which is to say, a practice of thinking "*par la littérature*" (49), as Cochran puts it, by way of the literary and about the role of the literary in any "future configurations" of knowledge production (47); about both the "*puissance épistémologique du littéraire*" (72), and the "*rupture temporelle*" too that any such puissance must be founded upon (79). Rather more about the *when* and the *why* and the *how* of literature and literary studies than only the *what* of one or two particular bodies of writing, it is a comparative, which is to say, a theoretical project set, as I describe below, amidst the "ruins" of the university and of our literary discipline within it, as Bill Readings put it, a discipline whose founding assumptions "*s'effondrent*," says Cochran again (101), whose sense of its own place and power has been "*supprimé*" (96), and whose future therefore (and mine too) depends upon a "rupture" with the dangerous "detritus" of that intellectual "tradition" piling up in its stead (98). Comparative, in that sense.

I will return below to the sense of literary crisis and vocation being articulated here by Cochran and Readings, and will speak at length of those figures of rupture and refuse that so often recur in the course of my close readings of the literary and theoretical texts, in both English and French, from Canada and elsewhere that I've gathered around and alongside my reading of Scott. However, before I do so, and before I get to Gail's work too, let me briefly say something a bit more specifically about the reading of Ducharme that was eventually to be very usefully and fruitfully compared to, but ultimately displaced by, this *comparative* reading of Scott's *Heroine*. Because, if my literary critical readings in chapter two both predate (though here they follow) and so shape and determine, in ways that I will comment on below, the course and content of the more properly theoretical first chapter, so is that reading of Scott in the first place framed and occasioned by the terms and theoretical questions posed by my

reading of Ducharme, which I would like to outline now, though it is largely otherwise absent in what follows. Indeed, in a private conversation, Gail has described to me how reading Ducharme's *L'Avalée* did much, as reading Kathy Acker for example did too, to set her "on the trail of the writer" she continues to become; something about the "voice from *L'Avalée*," she described later in an email, "so direct and close" ("A Quick Question"). This idea that Ducharme's voice might be powerful enough to influence Scott's, across the gulfs of linguistic and cultural difference and time that separate them, finds its echo — which it is the purpose of this thesis to document and then translate into pedagogy — in the extent to which Scott's writing both guides and oddly compels my own practice of writing and reading and learning here in turn. Indeed, it is the intent of this project to document and theorize the learning about reading and writing I've done in the course of my moving slowly through and bathing even in Gail's work but, before getting on to that directly, let me first point to the methods and means I learned first from that reading of Ducharme that both predates and yet remains still unfinished in the wake of my reading of Scott.

In the context of Canadian and Quebecois comparative literatures at the University of Ottawa — a context which I could not have helped but take to heart, being myself a bilingual born of parents whose linguistic and other differences brought them together as intensely as eventually they would tear them apart; a context which could not in turn have found a warmer second home in the English department at the French speaking *Université de Montréal*, next door to that *Département de Littérature comparée* that it has since been merged with (Leduc, "Fusions") — it was perhaps inevitable that I should come to notice, interrogate, and in that way propose to learn about comparative modes of reading and writing from the surprising number and shockingly violent quality of the actual comparisons coursing through

Ducharme's first and still to me most compelling novel, *L'Avalée des avalés*.<sup>4</sup> I mean, unable to wrest my attention from the sheer number of the very finely wrought figures found on virtually every page of the narrative, I began to collect them and ask about their significance. As I will describe at some lengths in chapter one, I theorized that these literary figures of comparison (structurally speaking) are the same sorts of spaces of difference as those that (institutionally speaking) we inhabit here in comparative studies and in the ruins of our universities generally, and I felt therefore that there might be much to learn about how, where, and when we read from the figurative, in this case comparative, language that we read, including, the way Bérénice feels that "*comme la douleur, l'espérance va et veint. Comme la douleur, aussi, l'espérance est une chute*" (299; emphasis added throughout this paragraph); how she would like to be a sister, "*comme une statue est une statue*" (212); how she does not, of course, herself want to be toyed with "*comme avec une chose, comme avec sa montre*" (18), and least of all by a man sticking his fingers in her 10 year old mouth "*comme si c'était [sa] propre bouche*" (19) though, ironically, she seems content all the while to treat her beloved but estranged brother as "*doux et triste comme une fleur, comme de l'eau, comme tout ce qui est tranquille et laisse tranquille ... doux comme une chose*" (14), such that

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<sup>4</sup> Though it is the first published of a trilogy of novels that Ducharme offered to Gallimard in Paris after having had them rejected by virtually every publishing house in Québec (much to their eventual embarrassment), *L'Avalée* is not for that matter the first written of the three. Indeed, critics now agree that *L'Océantume*, rather, was the first and that it was Gallimard, later, that decided to invert the order of their publication, as Jozef Kwaterko describes in his *Le roman québécois et ses (inter)discours* (81). This inversion of the order of writing and publication in turn echoes the discussion I have below about the conventions governing the order of, indeed even the relationship between the theoretical and literary critical chapters in a doctoral dissertation. For though it is replicated here, that kind of progress-oriented linearity does little to represent the actual course of my reading and writing and learning. Indeed, long before the 'theory' chapter one that ostensibly frames and presumably therefore conditions my reading of Scott, in chapter two, came Scott's *Heroine*; and so before Scott, came Ducharme.

"*Christian, c'est comme un trophée. Le plus fort l'emporte ... Le plus fort, c'est moi*" (34).

Indeed, there was much there to learn, I felt.

My project as a whole, then, can be described as a product of the way the sheer number of such very striking comparisons, their often breathtaking precision, and then again their sometimes utter seeming redundance call attention to themselves as literary (here, comparative) figures to such an extent that they raise questions about the function and force of comparative (figurative) practice itself. Again, I will spend some time below elaborating on the theoretical grounds for this continuity between figure, generally, and comparison, specifically. In the meantime, I want to illustrate the allegorical practice of reading that I first learned from Ducharme's fiction by remarking on how the surprisingly and excessively violent seeming terms in which Bérénice sits thinking of her brother so often, for example, and so possessively that "*son image cogne dans mon âme comme un marteau sur un clou*" (174), and so how, consequently, she would like to be able to "*entrer, comme une épée, dans la tête de Christian*" (34), raises questions for me not only about the relation between the world that Bérénice inhabits, on the one hand, and the language she uses to describe it, on the other — both of which are notably violent — but about the relationship, more importantly, between that formally and thematically 'comparative space' in which Bérénice lives and narrates her story, and the disciplinary or institutional spaces of comparative literature as such in which as a reader I watch and write about her heroic *bildung*. Indeed, I ask, borrowing the question from Blodgett, what does it "signify" (Configuration 23) this structural continuity between, on the one hand, the comparisons that Bérénice uses to describe the 'comparative' spaces that she inhabits — torn as she is between a father who claims her as his own exclusive property, and a mother to whom she cannot but wants to belong — and, on the other hand, the 'comparative

space' of the disciplines and institutions that I myself inhabit as a doctoral candidate in English literature or professor now of English language education? For one thing, it means that in Ducharme's work I found ways of asking about the relationship between the poetic, literary world in which Bérénice lives and the political, literal world in which I live and enjoy teaching others to read and write and belong. It means that my reading practice poses and engages with such decidedly theoretical questions by way of the literary and comparative forms that simultaneously matter so much to, and are the very matter of, both Scott's work, and Ducharme's.<sup>5</sup> By comparative, then, I mean a theoretical practice of reading engaged, necessarily, with that very old and still vexing question of the relationship between the poetic, the personal, and the political.

Thus, Elizabeth Nardout-Lafarge, in her compendious *Réjean Ducharme: la poétique de débris*, seemed to be describing my project exactly as she concluded that to read Ducharme carefully is inevitably as much a theoretical as a literary critical and comparative practice. "*Lire Ducharme*," as she put it, "*consiste aussi à retracer une sorte de théorie de la lecture, perceptible notamment dans les nombreuses représentations de livres, scènes de lecture et propos sur la lecture qui jalonnent les romans*" (17). Indeed, they are theoretical-fictions I am reading here, that provide, however, much more than only a pre-set theory of reading always already given, thematically, in the text, and needing therefore only to be (re)collected and (re)presented here in the thesis. Theory instead appears here as a responsibility always already incumbent upon the pleasures and profit of a reading / critical practice because Ducharme (like Scott) simultaneously compels and enables interrogations of the practice of reading itself, its

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<sup>5</sup> That useful disambiguation of the two verb and noun senses of *matter* is, of course, Judith Butler's (*Bodies*).

disciplines, its methods, and its pedagogical purposes in ways that require of each reader his or her own ongoing engagement.<sup>6</sup> Such anyway is the project that engages here.

Specifically, Scott and Ducharme in different ways have provided me means of raising and concretely and tangibly engaging with such a basic series of methodological and pedagogical questions about what it means to read, and learn to read, and eventually to teach literature today. For example, where Bérénice contends that "*un livre est un monde*," that "*Chaque page d'un livre est une ville. Chaque ligne une rue. Chaque mot une demeure*" (107), I am made to ask, in turn, about what (and how usefully!!) a collection of figures of urban spaces and practices might have to teach me about literary studies and its modes of knowledge production. As suggested by the third of the three keywords in the title of this project, Ducharme and Scott have taught me to ask, as recorded in chapter one, questions about how representations of walking, riding or driving, for example, through the city and to school could help me to make sense of and better use different literary theories, different ways of reading, writing and teaching, or different ways of moving through different textual spaces. What, likewise, and how concretely could representations of different forms of urban space — in Zygmunt Bauman for example, or Walter Benjamin, or Jane Jacobs; or in Ducharme and Scott themselves — tell about what literature is exactly and what reading therefore requires? What

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<sup>6</sup> The discussion of 'fiction-theory' that takes place in and around the special *Tessera* issue, for instance, published at the *Canadian Fiction Magazine* (Godard, et. al. eds.), which Moyes discusses in her "Into the Fray", or in Scott's own *Spaces like Stairs*, and in contemporary interviews, makes every sort of descriptive and contextualizing statement about fiction-theory that I might want to make here, and which I will therefore not reiterate. I should, however, take the time to note that the attention paid by feminist writing and thinking then and still to the ways in which the "work" that writing is, and the "research" it represents (Godard, "Fiction/Theory Editorial" 4-5) transforms the relationship between subject, gender, text and genre, does much in turn to allow me to affirm, as Scott says, "the otherness" of my own voice and of its fictional or narrative forms in the context of this academic, doctoral discourse (Scott, "Theorizing" 7). For this "other way to pose the question" of what I am doing here (*Heroine* 21), I am very grateful.



do we mean, actually, when we call Montreal, for example, a "literary city," and how could the answer to that question help me become a better reader, student and teacher of reading and writing about the literary? Or, to cite two specific examples that I will attend to at length below, what can we be said to learn from the figure of a landfill as an open book (in chapter one) or of an addicted and deferent writing practice (in chapter two), about where I am, what I do, and what I learn to do when I read and learn to become increasingly and professionally literate? My comparative / theoretical project, in that sense, is likewise a pedagogical one, by which I mean, a project governed by questions about how and where and why, and at what costs, we learn to read and write and learn.

These then are the kinds of questions that reading literature, and reading Ducharme and Scott in particular, compels me to ask and provides me moreover the means with which to fruitfully and concretely engage — which asking and engaging is precisely what this project is designed to do and document. They are important questions, I believe, as I am now a student of literature and would teach others to read (and write) at increasing levels of complexity, force, and precision. It behooves me therefore to ask them of myself, as they will ostensibly (or should) be asked of me later, by any manner of eventual students, family members and friends, funding agencies and hiring or advancement committees. It is significant too that I am not alone in asking them of late — indeed, I am grateful to those who have taught me to pose them — for the rush of new information technologies and new forms of economic organization (and disorganization), which we call globalization, are transforming and have already transformed not only what we read but how and how often and why in ways that require a rethinking of the very terms and conditions in which we understand the place and

undertake the business of literary learning and teaching.<sup>7</sup>

I will speak to that sense of crisis again below and, so, to conclude with Ducharme, one feels that these sorts of theoretical questions are all the more urgent as the ostensible continuity between the literary and disciplinary forms that I am discussing suggests that literary studies are not all they are cracked up to be. I mean, at issue here is not simply the love of reading pleasures that seduced us into graduate programs in the first place, as Kit Dobson describes ("Culture as Resource"), and which we then learned expressly to distrust (Crete, "Narrative"). Indeed, as Stephen Slemon notes in his framing of the *ESC - Readers' Forum* that both Dobson and Crete are contributing to, English is "Inalienably, and from the beginning," rather less a matter of pleasure than "a formal process of ... curiosity-driven obedience" ("Why?" 1); rather a disciplining than a pleasure in the true sense of the word. Thus, making of literature itself an object of literary critical and 'comparative' investigation, as I described it above, is predicated on my recognition of the fact that literature itself is a risky business. Reading, indeed, can even be dangerous, as I will suggest in chapter one. Hence, the violence of the comparisons that Bérénice deploys in the telling of her story — how the squirrels that share the island she lives on as a child have tails that bounce "*comme la plume d'autruche au casque d'un lancier chargeant, comme une plume d'autruche à la queue d'une torpille*" (65), or how her cousins, who lay around the campfire after a long day of fun, "*comme balayés par une rafale de mitrailleuse*" (77) and will later end their visit to her island home, suddenly, "*comme un coup de fusil*" (100) — these figures that reflect I suggest the

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<sup>7</sup> As Diana Brydon put it in her "Mission Itself is in Question" : globalization means that "the former autonomy of cultural, social, economic, and political realms is thrown into question in ways that force scholars to rethink how they frame their work and how they communicate their questions and their findings" (29).

violence of the situation that her language is meant to respond to and describe suggests, in turn, a very concrete basis for having a specifically literary conversation about the violence lurking, even potentially, in the institutional forms and disciplinary practices (in comparative Canadian literary studies, for example) which I am being trained in and trained to reproduce in turn. As Nardout-Lafarge put it, "*les textes de Ducharme mettent en cause l'enseignement lui-même et obligent donc à le repenser*" (13), which rethinking this project is expressly designed to facilitate.

The comparatist E.D. Blodgett, too, and long ago, warned about the "metaphorical tendency" (*Configuration* 9) of comparative practice to "look upon difference as a kind of failure" (15); that "unhappy meaning" (6) of the verb to com-pare, which often and mistakenly presumes "a relationship among things of the same kind — among equals" (6) and, as such, imposes a "violent stasis" (9) and does a "certain violence" (24). Likewise, while Rita Felski and Susan Stanford Friedman, in their introduction to a recent special issue of the *New Literary History*, are happy of course to invite readers to consider how comparative practice is necessary, indispensable, desirable (v), inevitable and even constitutive (vi), they are rightfully just as quick to warn of how, like virtually every other modern form of knowledge production, comparative studies has been "insidious" in its "buttressing" of complacency and "inadequacy" in its initiates (vi), and "complicit" in the dissemination of the racist assumptions and reductive ideologies that enable forms of (neo)"colonialism" (v). What I am suggesting then is that Ducharme's texts, like Scott's too, I argue, oblige us to consider what actually goes on in literary classrooms, namely, what relation there may be between a) the figurative forms of violence "sprayed" (Scott, *Heroine* 154) across the pages of the novels and texts we read, b) the structural forms of violence implicit, even potentially, in the knowledge, disciplines, and

methods by means of which we read, and c) the explosions of actual gun and other physical and emotional violence rifling through the classrooms and hallways where we have come to (learn to) read.

Ducharme's and Scott's work in this way obliges us, as the memorial to the women murdered at the *Polytechnique* in December 1989 does (as we'll see in chapter two), to ask whether (and how) the growing list of similar shootings, at Columbine High School (1999), Dawson College (2006), Virginia Tech (2007), and most recently at the SandyHook elementary school in Connecticut (2012), for example, might not somehow be only the most visible expressions of a violence that is contingent upon and constitutive of the way we actually learn and learn to read; that they are not (as is too often supposed) just accidents come from outside to invade and destroy the security of our pedagogical spaces and practices. Indeed, the insistence at the heart of the specifically feminist response to the so-called Montreal massacre, collected for instance in Louise Malette and Marie Chalouh's *Polytechnique, 6 décembre*, that the shooting was not at all the 'personal' expression only of a disturbed 'individual', but an explicitly political act, rather—un "*acte politique dirigé contre les féministes*" (Brossard, "6 décembre" 29)—something "global" Scott argues ("Of Blood" F7), is consistent with the assumptions that animate my refusal here to think about literary forms and bodies of writing in isolation or abstraction from each other or from the institutional and political spaces in which I am being professionalized. In fact, as I complete the writing of this dissertation in South Korea, where student suicide rates are among the very highest recorded by nations belonging to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), teachers must remain at the very least conscious of, if not explicitly and in an ongoing way interpolated by, the potentially pedagogical sources of that (self-)

violence ("Tackling"; "Students"). Such indeed are the contexts of and political stakes involved in my interrogation of the contiguities between literary forms and political and pedagogical practices. Whereas politicians are compelled (or not) by such acts of 'senseless' violence to consider and review legal measures designed to protect against their happening again — measures such as gun registries and assault rifle bans — I am given, as a student of literature, to open up a rather more specifically literary and pedagogical line of response, however, to the same end.

## **On Gail Scott, Learning from Narrating, and the Doctoral Dissertation**

*Je me hortensesturbe, en attendant.*  
- Ducharme, *Le Nez qui voque* (289)

*Au lieu de se ruiner la santé à combattre l'angoisse, l'anxiété, la nervosité, on va les cultiver, qu'on se dit, on va les rendre dix fois plus pires qu'elles sont là puis on va les toffer, puis on ne craquera pas.*  
- Ducharme, *L'hiver de force* (169)

Gail Scott, in this context, was an obvious choice for a second author when it came time to transform my MA thesis proposal into a PhD program application, and that for several reasons, not the least of which is the fact that her project from the outset has always been about renewing and augmenting our understanding of that relationship between the personal, the poetic, and the political (*Heroine* 102), "in terms of form as well as content" ("Face to Face" 24), which is to say, the relationship "between the condition of women's lives and formal research into writing" (*Spaces* 33), or between the forms that writing takes and the 'real' that it rubs us up against (*Spaces* 79). Indeed, writing "out of a place where language, which is public, and the body, which wants to be private, spar it out" ("In Conversation" with Moyes

209), Scott cannot but have been especially sensitive and attentive to how language "hits you like mud in your eye," how it is "a matter of argument, of jousting," something to fight for, "about," and with ("My Montreal" 5). The choice therefore was apt, in that sense, politically but also pragmatically where Scott has been and remains an active member of the faculty at the English department and available, therefore, to me as a resource in a way that Ducharme expressly could never be. Indeed, Ducharme's decision to keep himself totally and permanently out of the public sphere is (however interesting in its own right) diametrically opposed to Scott's generous and varied presence. I've already mentioned, for instance, how it was during one of the weekly mixers in the campus pub, for example, that she mentioned having read Ducharme's *L'Avalée* and that "it was certainly one of the novels that inspired me for *Heroine*" ("A Quick Question"). My project, admittedly, is not about tracing lines of subtle and not so subtle influence in the body of Scott's work. What it is, instead, about in part is the irony that this presence of hers at the department and in the public sphere more generally, as a writer and a teacher, a journalist and activist does not, for that matter, make acting (or knowing how to) any easier, at least initially. Indeed, a good example of that telling sort of irony is the time it took Scott to learn how publicly and effectively to respond to the massacre at the Polytechnique in 1989 ("Of Blood" F7). I mean, her response took close to 4 years to produce, and then appeared only in the form of her second novel, *Main Brides : Against Ochre Pediments and Aztec Sky*, "a novel" she says "with a gap in the progression of time" at its centre meant in part to represent the absenting of so many young lives by such violence ("Of Blood" F7). Scott's work was easy therefore to graft onto the project I had imagined and developed thus far, because of how the temporality of its (by fiction?) inevitably delayed and deferred response to gender violence seemed, I will argue at length in chapter two, to have to

teach me about my own interrogations of that intersection of the violence and time of language and learning.

Similarly, Lianne Moyes' ongoing and extensive working on and with Scott meant that she would be able consequently to guide me in my research in ways that I could not necessarily benefit from when it came to my work on Ducharme, given that all the local ducharmiens belong to decidedly other (however neighborly) departments and universities. Without wanting to overly dramatize this otherness that is perhaps inevitable, I want to note that choosing to include Scott's work in my proposal occasioned the raising of institutional questions about how the disciplinary boundaries that separate departments of *Études anglaises* and *françaises*, as they are called at *l'Université de Montréal*, do make certain exchanges, at the very least, more difficult. Though the CRILCQ research centre and the Département de littérature comparée do provide important spaces where English students can engage with and benefit from (and contribute to) research taking place in French in Québec, and vice versa, still, funding that I might otherwise have been perfectly eligible for, given the nature of my project, remained categorically out of reach to a student of the English department.

Perhaps, as I have said, this kind of disciplinary distance is inevitable. Nevertheless, choosing to add Scott's corpus to my project would provide me an occasion to more concretely point to the habits of identitary thinking privileged by the conventional sorts of departmental structures in the university that will, moreover, act in what follows as a recurring object of, at the very least, ambivalence. I will not therefore say anything more about that or them now, except that I do not think I am alone in the perception of a simultaneously necessary and regrettable distance between, for example, such two departments of literature in the same institution. Indeed, in her review of the anthology co-edited by Scott, *Biting the Error*,

Sandrina Joseph notes how, though only a corridor separates her French department from the other that Gail belongs to, she has never yet (and may never still) set foot in the latter (30).

What I appreciate especially about Joseph's remarks in this context is the candor of her admission that the reason for this ostensible distance and *méconnaissance* is not only the fear and cowardice that one may well have expected of what could too easily have become a polemic, but a kind of comfort also and a reassuring sense of belonging, notably, elsewhere (Joseph 30). Indeed, as we will see in some detail below, identity can serve as an obstacle to (even a sign of the violence upon which I argue is contingent) the production of knowledge, however, perhaps necessarily.

I mean, both Ducharme and Scott are rightfully counted among the vanguard of their respective canons : Ducharme, at the very first rung of the ladder leading into that *vraie littérature québécoise* that Gilles Marcotte describes ("Neil Bissoondath") and Scott, by virtue of her claiming to belong to the province of Quebec, or her taking ownership over the French language and culture here, and regardless that she writes in English ("Miroirs" 23; "My Montreal" 5), is at the heart of a whole new field of (anglo)Quebecois literary studies about which I will have much to say in chapter two. In literary historical terms, as I've already noted, Gail has spoken privately of the effect that reading Ducharme had on her writing career ("A Quick Question") and, while nothing has ever been written about their not-unrelated labors of formal and linguistic experimentalism, their respective forms of surrealism perhaps, neither has anything yet been made of the specifically thematic link between, on the one hand, Scott's own early interests in what Frank Davey dismissively called heroine-ism ("Totally" 69) and, on the other, that climactic and so all the more terrible moment at the end of *L'Avalée* when Bérénice claims for herself (and is ostensibly granted) a kind of heroism precisely as she



manifests the sorts of violence and cowardice that could well be read as the very opposite of heroic (276-380).<sup>8</sup> And yet a heroine to us she remains. Thus, I will argue, epistemological and disciplinary/institutional questions are intimately linked to expressions of violence and to sites (citations) of identity. Because Scott's *Heroine* is very well described — as I argue in chapter two — as precisely the sort of *roman à l'imparfait*, or novel of deferral and imperfection that Gilles Marcotte, reading Ducharme, defines as particularly Québécois, and because it thereby helps to undermine the language-identitary bases of national literary studies — what Gail felicitously calls "the hurdle of nation" (*Spaces* 36) — her work appears to me as offering, in her own words, "another way to pose the question" (*Heroine* 21, 51) of the violence that is being, even potentially, reproduced in the pedagogical structures and practice of literary studies today.

By far though the most important point of comparison between Scott and Ducharme — from my point of view — and the claim that binds my thesis as a whole together (even in the absence of the Ducharme chapter) and remains a comparative project still, as I argued above, is the fact that both of these first novels open themselves up in similar ways to what could be called allegorical readings, meaning, close rhetorical readings of the continuities between the literary themes and forms that I read, on the one hand, and the disciplinary, institutional, and

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<sup>8</sup> Heroism, generally, seems a recurring topic of late and a sign moreover of the sense of crisis that informs my project generally. The late Bill Readings, for instance, was quick to agree with Harold Bloom's "conclusion that 'the adventure of a liberal education' no longer has a hero. Neither a student hero to embark upon it, nor a professor hero as its end" (*University* 7). It is perhaps for this reason that Michel DeCerteau dedicated his *Arts de faire*, as he put it, not to the "*acteurs possesseurs de noms propres et de blasons sociaux*" who have largely been abandoned by the spotlights of sociological and anthropological research, he says, but to "*l'homme ordinaire*," "*ce héros anonyme*" instead (11). Indeed, as Grahame Gilloch suggests in his reading of Walter Benjamin, to whom I will have occasion to turn below, "Modern heroism can only ever" anymore "be a playing at heroism" (Gilloch 151), a game that is not for that matter without significance here.

pedagogical structures of literary studies where and in which I read, on the other.<sup>9</sup> That is, what binds this project together, and what brought Scott and Ducharme's work to comparison for me, most of all, are the methodological and pedagogical questions raised by these most difficult and challenging, these queerest of novels I have ever had the pleasure to be asked to read.<sup>10</sup> Such questions about the relationship between the forms and implications of what and how I learn to read are aptly raised again by Nardout-Lafarge's claim, at the outset of her critical reading of his work, that Ducharme, she says, "*ne s'enseigne pas*," and that literature even "*n'est pas matière à enseigner*" (12). She argues I think rightly that while Ducharme's writing in this case (like Scott's I argue) is not something that can be taught, *per se*, it remains "*le terrain, le lieu, parfois l'alibi de l'enseignement d'autre chose*" (12), which begs of course the question, the pedagogical question, which I've taken as mine own here : what precisely is there to get from this reading and how moreover is that teaching and learning, methodologically speaking, to be done? I mean, if Northrop Frye was right to say, in the "polemical introduction" to his *Anatomy of Criticism*, that it is "impossible to 'learn literature' [for] one learns about it in a certain way, but what one learns, transitively, is the criticism of literature" (11), and if the question therefore remains as to how such criticism is to be taught, and what precisely it is that we are supposed in this way to learn, then Gail's work provides, as

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<sup>9</sup> Allegory of course is an enormous topic unto itself, which I do not intend to account for deliberately except by way of the performance that my reading itself engages in, or in my discussions of the differential structure of metaphor, for example, in chapter one. I might note though that my sense of allegory as only one of many different species of the genus metaphor, which I will describe at length below, comes from Robert McGill's reading of Elizabeth Smart's, *By Grand Central Station*, as "a metafictional allegory of reading" and "an anticipatory allegory of its own reception" (78), whereby the text is shown to be "preoccupied by the same notions of desire and abandonment that characterize the book's reception" (70).

<sup>10</sup> That distinction, belonging to Scott, between 'straight' and 'queer' prose, goes a long way to identifying the "slippery boundaries" (*Prismatic* 93), for instance, between fiction and theory, teaching and taught, writer and written-about that make the work in question here seem so rich in rewards and possibilities.

I argue at length in chapter two, and as Ducharme's would have too, a language and logic through which to engage profitably, and *in a materialist way*, with what it means and how we learn to read.<sup>11</sup> Thus, I read the heroine's story of coming in the end to start writing her novel, allegorically, as a story of how we learn to read and write and learn from the process of doing and the time we take to do so.

One obvious other way to respond to such pedagogical and methodological questions might have been to follow along and intervene in the theoretical conversation that Frye has played a canonical role in, a conversation stretching all the way back to Aristotle's sense that the "genius of metaphor"—by which I understand the ability to read and write, effectively—cannot be taught (*Poetics* 1459a 3-8), which raises serious questions about the ambitions of a teacher of reading and writing. However, rather than read through and engage explicitly with the properly philosophical or critical version of that conversation, I prefer in what follows to read instead literary fictions directly, and Scott's prose most of all. One of the reasons for this preference for and privileging of the 'literary' over the 'theoretical' text in this way is the fact that I was raised, so to speak, in the English department at the University of Ottawa, in the late 1990s, where forms of New Critical textual practice still held sway, and to great effect, at least at the undergraduate level. As such, I was only very very rarely invited to read anything other than the literary text itself, which means that every time I engage even now with theory and criticism, I do so in ways governed by the habits of a reader of fiction who attends as much to

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<sup>11</sup> The phrase, "in a materialist way," is from the title of an essay, first, and then a whole collection of essays translated into English by the marxist and materialist critic, Pierre Macherey, author of the reputed *Pour une théorie de la production littéraire*, in which he usefully describes many of the lengths to which I have gone to make sense of and use of Scott's narratives.

the "'material' qualities" and the "textures" of the language itself as to the argument it is meant to "communicate," as Scott says of her experimental and simultaneous attentions to both poetry and prose ("My Montreal" 5). Furthermore, if I have in what follows the habit of reading theory as fiction, I have also acquired the parallel habit of reading fiction as theory. Indeed, from Moyes ("Into the Fray") I've inherited the conviction, expressed above by Terry Cochran, that theory is not so much a thing, properly speaking, but a (comparative) practice rather, and that a novel, consequently, can be read 'as theory,' which is to say as a stage for institutional and pedagogical self-reflections, every bit as much as 'theory' proper can, and perhaps even more productively so, because more concretely and materially.

Scott's work, then, raises and provides too the means of engaging with a whole series of such theoretical questions about the pedagogical horizon and methodological contributions of literary objects, forms, and practices. Indeed, the bulk of chapter two is dedicated to illustrating just how that works, and to what ends. I would like, though, to add here that Scott also does so explicitly, not only where she decries the ways in which we "are increasingly taught to read [only] thematically" (*Prismatic* 90), but also, from a more positive angle too, referring to her grandfather, "who was a superb storyteller" and who, as such, "used to teach us things" ("In Conversation" with Moyes 208); and then elsewhere, too, where she characterizes "writing" as "the act of always seeking more understanding, more lucidity" (*Spaces* 62) or "narrating," finally, "as a way of learning to know" ("In Conversation" with Moyes 214). These "words," to borrow hers, "excite me so much" for learning to read (*Spaces* 86). They are — and the last in particular — compelling in their promise that the pleasure I get from reading novels is indeed valuable, pedagogically speaking, which is to say, that there is much indeed from the process to learn and to know.

That promise of worth, though, is a challenge too to the extent that the methodological question—learn to know how? or by what means?—remains still unanswered. I mean, how is Scott suggesting, exactly, that I learn to know in this way from the practice of narrative? What, indeed, does she mean by narrative that it can be said to teach me to learn, and how, for example, is "reading" to be understood, by extension, as "a part of writing" (Interview with Daurio 6)? What precisely is the relationship between this pedagogical practice of writing (narrating) and the act of reading that, as a student of narrative, I am engaged in developing and accounting for the art and mastery of? Is reading also, on its own, a way of learning to know, too, and if so, how? Or, more to the point, does reading precisely remain incomplete (or imperfectly pedagogical) until it gives birth in turn to some practice or activity of writing (narrating), which then begs, again, the question of what, exactly, is meant by writing (narrating) here? How and when, and to what ends are we made to write (narrate) in the course of programs of literary study, for example, and how in turn does that writing function as a way of learning to know? How much less effective, moreover, do our seminar and lecture-based courses appear from this perspective — organized as they are around detailed discussions of other people's writing and the students' quiet submission of one-off term and midterm papers that only the instructor reads — as compared to writing workshops, in creative writing classes, where the mechanics and form of each students' own writing practice is all the more often and in more detail discussed and critiqued by the class as a whole?<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> I say *presumably* here because, though I have watched and listened to so many others who have, I myself have never taken a creative writing course. Simultaneously, I have often struggled with the very few ways in which the practice and product of students' writing itself was integrated into the pedagogical structure of English (literature) courses I have taken or heard tell of.

Perhaps even more to the point, I want to ask, does narrating here include also the kind of writing that a dissertation requires or, alternately, does accepting what Scott means by the pedagogical affect of narration invite us to challenge the status accorded to, and the shape that the dissertation takes in the university? I mean, to what extent, in this dissertation, am I able or allowed to *narrate*, in Scott's sense of the word, as a way of learning to know, and what institutionally speaking might doing so mean? Can the doctoral dissertation, for example, which is arguably the most emblematic form of academic writing, serve me as just such a narrative means of learning to know, and can the narrative forms that Scott herself praises and practices teach me anything about how the dissertation functions in this way – or how to dissertate? Thus, reading *Heroine* in this context provides I think some very fertile and original grounds, however allegorical, upon which to engage with and perhaps contribute to the institutional and disciplinary conversation that has been recently taking place about the status and form of the doctoral dissertation. Leslie Monkman, for example, has noted that the imperative to rethink literary studies generally, and the "writing expectations in our discipline" in particular, which has of late become more pressing, ultimately boils down to "a re-thinking of the doctoral dissertation" that is, in turn, "at the centre of the complex network of interrelated changes in our universities, SSHRC, and our university presses, and thus it is at the core of the current tensions we are experiencing in our disciplinary and institutional identities" ("Confronting Change" 22). He notes that while there is nothing especially new in our current questioning of the wisdom and shape of the dissertation—and to that end he cites William James's 1903 essay, "The Ph.D. Octopus," alongside David Damrosch's 1995, *We Scholars*, and the Carnegie foundation's 2006 report that I referred to a moment ago (in Monkman 22)—"we continue" he says, "to ignore the relation of the doctoral dissertation to

the much talked of and multiple crises in the humanities and do not even discuss the variations proposed by Damrosch and others" (22).<sup>13</sup> Scott's fiction, I argue, allows me to raise and engage with important theoretical questions, however, in decidedly literary ways.

I mean, a certain willingness to call into question the shape and purpose of the dissertation itself that I am writing, as I write it, is to be expected, I think, of anyone interested in writing like Scott's that, as I will discuss at length in chapter two, is constantly stopping to "reflect on the process" and even then to reject "the form" it takes (*Spaces* 47, "On the Edge" 17). Indeed, it should be no surprise given the ways in which the term 'academic' has served as a recurring figure, if not of outright disparagement, then certainly of some palpable amount of disappointment on Scott's part, from whose pen such phrases like "too academic" (*Spaces* 68), recur regularly in her essays and interviews, connoting forms of writing that are seen as "pedantic" ("In the Feminine" 17), meaning closed, rigid, and pedagogically useless, or even harmful. Described as more "competitive" than "dialogic" ("Very Rhythmic" 256) and, as such, as the very "opposite" of the "participatory stance" and "collective process" of so much of the "new writing by women," including Scott's ("In Conversation" with Godard et.al. 122), that I am engaged in learning to know from here, academic writing in general, therefore, and presumably the dissertation especially – and like the journalism she quit ("On the Edge" 15; *Spaces* 73) and the "straight" writing she resents and resists (*Spaces* 82, 102) – is in some ways to be understood as a form of writing "in a very communicative" or linear "manner," one "that inhibits thinking outside the box" (*Prismatic* 93), which is to say, reflexively and, as such, should be seen to preclude the kind of thinking and learning about language itself which

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<sup>13</sup> See also Diana Brydon's contribution to the same *ESC: Readers' Forum* ("The Mission" 30).

notions of "writing as research," on the other hand, tend to privilege (Godard et.al., "Editorial" 5). Therefore, and because to "question," says Scott, "is to break apart, to open" (*Prismatic* 108), and just as her heroine risks the "ruination of the novel form" (*Heroine* 132), so do I allow myself in what follows really to break with, at times, or push back on the assumption that language, in a doctoral dissertation most of all, should be communicative and its meaning transparent; that the purpose of a critical reading should be to package and distribute identifiable quotas of marketable knowing; that progress in this direction should be strictly quantifiable; and that theory/criticism be understood therefore as constitutively different from and other than literary prose ("Communs Espaces" 26), or that the task of the former, precisely, is to draw conclusions from, and make legible what, by implication, the latter is presumed unable to express on its own.

Scott's work, in this sense, has been much more than just the subject-matter of my doctoral research. Indeed, it has served too as a guide and a model in my encounter with and negotiation of the triple obligation to generate, as well as to conserve and transform knowledge that it is, according to the recent Carnegie Report of the PhD, incumbent upon the sort of stewardship that PhD programs are tasked with instilling (Golde, "Envisioning" 10). Specifically, *Heroine* provides for the possibility of proceeding, necessarily, with a practice of knowing (reading and writing) in advance of, and even in the absence of, resolution or identity. Indeed, I am emboldened by Scott's narrative forms, as well as by Walter Benjamin's (literary) historical materialism, as I'll describe in a moment, to give voice here to certain



stylistic idiosyncrasies,<sup>14</sup> including my penchant for long French sentence structures and a consequent clinging to such a goodly number of deictic, narrative techniques, which no doubt are the cause of "certain obscurities," as Benjamin acknowledged of his own, much more radical choices and project (in Arendt, Introduction 48). Similarly, from the open end of the heroine's narrative, as we'll see in chapter two, and from Benjamin's unfinished *Arcades Project* also, I am made to feel less anxious about my insistently tentative, open conclusions and sometimes narrative, circular, or digressive (Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin* 76) and inductive (Tiedemann 940) forms of reasoning. Indeed, given what Scott says about the quotation mark, that it most of all could be abolished, as Gertrude Stein thought to abolish the comma (Scott, *My Paris* 23), for "we are all quoting each other all the time," Scott says ("Cusps," 66), I learn to let the practice of citation I am engaged in here, throughout, raise as many questions about the anguished limits of the authority and purpose of 'academic' writing, generally, as the citations themselves are meant, in each individual case, to address.

I mean, if "life, like literature" and criticism too, I suggest, "is a matter of plagiarizing and cutting up," as Scott has noted (*Spaces* 32), or a practice of paraphrasing "to my own advantage" ("My Montreal" 8) and, if Susan Sontag is right to say in her introduction to Benjamin's *Reflections*, that "One doesn't really understand a book unless one copies it," or "a landscape from [above, in] an airplane," except "by walking in it" (Sontag, Introduction 21), so do I feel about Gail's work, as she says about the effect of translating France Théoret, that "now I probably understand [her] work better than I ever [would] have" otherwise (Scott,

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<sup>14</sup> "Idiosyncratic itineraries and paradoxical twists and turns around a number of central ideas, hopes and yearnings" (Braidotti 10).

"Writing-Translating" 3), now that I have walked a mile (end) around in her citable shoes or bathed in the tub so to speak of her narrative forms. I mean, the "quotations" I accumulate in the course of my comparative readings are not, in that sense, intended simply "to facilitate the writing" or "verify and document opinions," namely, mine about Scott's work, as Arendt says of Benjamin's style (Introduction 47). Instead, as Scott says of how her own text is "punctured by other languages" and bespeaks therefore "the stranger within one's own writing-subject topography," the "confusion of subjectivities" that is the consequence of such a conception of what narrating (and so learning to know) involves, helps me "objectify the process of writing" that this dissertation engages in (an accounting of) here as it "brushes [me] up against the complex contemporary question of Who am ... WE?" who read and write and learn and teach (Scott, "Mrs Beckett" 90-91). Simply put, the edifice of authority, or subjectivity, that I am constructing for myself in the process is therefore manifestly, and perhaps inevitably, built up of bricks fired by the flame of oh so many other voices. If, therefore, as Benjamin insists, to "write is to cite" (*Arcades* N11,3), the "activity" of writing is "arranging" (Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin* 12), and "to write is to relate things" (Scott, "In Conversation" with Moyes 225),—and if writing here includes dissertating—then "the main work" of this practice of citation I give vent to in what follows, as Arendt might say (Introduction 47), is to raise (and respond to) serious questions about the nature and meaning of that generating of new knowledge demanded of a doctoral candidacy alongside the duty to preserve what knowing has come before and, finally, to transform all of that in view of the needs and aspirations of a forward-looking kind of stewardship (Golde 10-12).

What follows then is more than only the comparative, theoretical, and pedagogically driven reading of Gail Scott's *Heroine* that I have discussed so far, but an *essai* too, in the

French sense of the word to "try" ("On the Edge" 18), meaning an attempt, or a practice, unfinished but still of value and productive nonetheless. Hoping that, as Gail herself loves "the essays of Benjamin and Montaigne," or of Gertrude Stein and Virginia Woolf, for their "highly personal side" and "subjective manner," so might my own readers too be given, in what follows, to enjoy the competing ambivalence about and "deference" towards the kind of "authority which obsesses authors of academic essays" (Scott, *Spaces* 106), or the way in which the "perpetual work-in-progress" that follows here remains most of all "marked [...] by its context, its community, both of which are also part of how the writer is and how [he, I] changes over time" (*Spaces* 9). Thus, I submit what follows less as a series of "firm statements" asserting definite conclusions and theories about a body of work than a "record" of my "journey" amongst the possibilities and improbabilities of literary practice that Gail's work allows for (*Spaces* 10), a record of what I "have grasped," my "breakthroughs," and of what I have "failed to grasp," my "limits," and a narrative therefore "of the movements" of my writing and thinking with Gail Scott through the time and the spaces between the literary and the urban, the violence, and pedagogy of bodies, stories, and cities (*Spaces* 9).

Rather more than only an account, therefore, of what one I, *entre autres*, thinks and concludes about reading and writing about Gail Scott's work, what follows below should be taken rather as a record of the process of constructing that I who reads and write and teaches English teachers now in South Korea (Markotic 42); a *bildungs* narrative of my coming out here to teach language through the lessons of literature I have learned from Scott, as I'll describe in conclusion; a story (very much like that told in *Heroine*) about how in order to finish writing, at such long last, about learning to read (in) Montréal with Gail Scott, as I promised in the title, I needed paradoxically to move all the way out here and alone; and a

story, finally, that starts first of all with a more detailed and less anecdotal account of the contents and narrative of the two chapters to follow as well as, most importantly, of the method I employ there.

## **On the Time of Addiction and the Practice of Collaboration**

What's he doing in there?  
- Tom Waits, *Mule Variations*

Learning was a form of collecting ... Thinking was also a form of collecting, at least in its preliminary stages.  
- Susan Sontag, Introduction (22)

I've already suggested that though chapter two comes later in this doctoral narrative, it is nevertheless first in consequence and, thus, I begin with it here. My so-called 'cracks' chapter, on Scott's *Heroine*, argues and illustrates throughout that the novel raises pedagogical and methodological questions about what reading and learning to read involve and require. Moreover, I show how the novel provides, in that series of cracks that craze the surface of the narrative from beginning to end, a literary means of engaging with such theoretical questions. As I had hoped to do with the comparisons I collected in Ducharme, the cracks I found IN Scott's narrative serve me below, not only as (specular) figures for the space and practice OF the narrative itself, but as allegorical figures also for the pedagogical spaces and disciplinary practices within which I encounter her work in the first place. Thus, just as it is through "the cracks, the cracks in everything," that "the light gets in," as Cohen sang, following Emerson,<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> I am referring of course to Cohen's song, "Anthem," and to Emerson's essay, "Compensation," in which, and referring to Achilles' heel, for instance, Emerson notes how "so it always is. There is a crack in every thing God has made." While Cohen, of course, may or may not be thinking of this passage at all, it nevertheless is hard to ignore once the suggestion has been made.

so is it through this series of literary figures, these cracks that the pedagogical and disciplinary work and conclusions of this critical reading emerge. Indeed, just as I would have used the comparisons collected in Ducharme as a way of speaking, however anachronistically, to the debates raging in the 80s and 90s around the status of the *littératures migrantes* in Quebec, in journals like *Vice versa* and *Spirale* (cf. Harel, *Passages*), so does the series of cracks I collect in *Heroine* and elsewhere serve me as a way of intervening in the disciplinary conversations, for instance, about the founding of new areas of research, in this case, la *littérature (anglo)québécoise*.

It is for this reason that, before I even get to my reading of Scott's *Heroine*, and of the figures I collect there, chapter two opens with a close and rather long reading of the critic Gilles Marcotte, in which I argue that the assumptions governing his arguably polemical response to the question of difference posed by the presence of English language writing in Quebec — assumptions represented by the wall of national and linguistic identity that he erects there, ostensibly, in defense of Quebec literature — are the very same sort of assumptions that cause the heroine of Scott's novel to be, at the outset of her narrative, stuck in what I call her *bath tub state* of illiteracy and silence where she remains, until the end, at risk of drowning so to speak in silence. Indeed, I show that such assumptions are both fatal, perhaps, and yet necessary still. Certainly, that wall of identity erected in Marcotte and the series of cracks that courses through Scott's narrative come to represent two very different ways of responding to the pedagogical and disciplinary questions and challenge that novels like *Heroine* raise. I suggest, moreover, that if the details of Marcotte's performance are any indication of the outcome of the habit of grounding the study of literature upon the imperatives and anxieties of national identity, then the admittedly ambivalent postures performed by

Scott's writing, and the time required properly to read them, represent such pedagogical models as will be all the more so urgently needed if we are, it is hoped, to avoid unnecessarily reproducing in our very classrooms and pedagogies the kind of violence that sometimes / too often comes bursting tragically into them from outside. Indeed, this project is governed by the conviction that our survival, possibly as a species, but certainly as a discipline, may well be said to depend upon our learning to read, and to articulate what it means to read, as Roxanne Rimstead put it, "otherwise" than on the identitary bases of some form or other of linguistic nationalism (*Remnants*).

There is, of course, nothing very new in this call to do literary studies otherwise, nor to the attendant imputation of value and purpose to (the study of) literature, both of which are as old as they remain still urgent.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, though I return throughout and in a number of different ways to that sense of disciplinary, social, pedagogical and personal crisis that compels such calls and imputations as will remain, here, the ultimate frame and context of my project as a whole, I will only ever be very brief in my accounting of it, even anecdotal. For the main purpose of this project is not to specify a diagnosis that every student of literature (or citizen) can confirm for herself. Neither is the reach of this project, or of my expertise, particularly historical, in that sense. For that, students can turn to Gerald Graff (*Professing*), Bill Readings (*University*), Paul DeMan (*Resistance*), or Smaro Kamboureli and Roy Miki

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<sup>16</sup> The history of such a call indeed might reach back from the recent contributions to Daniel Coleman's blog-space, *whydoesitmatter.ca*, all the way, on the one hand, to Plato's expulsion of the poets from his *Republic*, precisely, for the power they wield and, on the other, to his very own use of those same poetic forms in the articulation of his philosophy, as Derrida noted in his "La Mythologie Blanche: la métaphore dans le texte philosophique." Michael Holquist's reading, for example, through the extent text of that genre of MLA "Presidential Address" is telling also in this respect, as is Graff's discussion of the history of such teachable conflicts (*Professing*).

(*Trans.Can.Lit*) among many other qualified contributors to debates about the current and historical, institutional status of literary studies, each of whom has informed my sense of where and when is here.

What is new here, I suggest, is the methodology I derive from and develop on the basis of, as I said, that series of figures collected in *Heroine* and elsewhere. Indeed, I argue, that for all the currency accorded to the figure of the crack in the criticism of Scott's oeuvre to date, and so given how often that same figure is used to describe the work that her narratives do, not nearly enough has been made of the role that figure plays in the novel itself, mapping as it does its itinerary from beginning to end and providing thereby means of answering questions about the novel, including the question of how exactly the heroine manages, finally and suddenly, where she never had before, to get out of her tub and start writing. Certainly, no attempt has ever been made to make anything of the pun on crack (the figure I collect in the novel) and crack (the deadly mix of heroin and cocaine that appeared like an epidemic on American streets in the 1980s).<sup>17</sup> Though some references have been made in *Heroine's* critical reception to the drugs and drug use taking place there, nothing has been made of the homophony between heroine (the object of our readerly attention and interests, and our guide in this narrative and pedagogical course) and heroin (the powerfully addictive narcotic first marketed by Bayer in 1874, ironically, as a cure for morphine addiction).<sup>18</sup> Reason there is

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<sup>17</sup> In her introductory comments on the experience of *Tessera*, Kathy Mezei recalls the "punning, parodic, polysemic" nature of the title of so many novels being published at the time, including Scott's *Heroine* (Mezei 16); although she does not, for that matter, go on here to elaborate on the particular pun she has in mind.

<sup>18</sup> Meredith Quartermain's recent contribution to the special *Open Letter* issue on Scott's work, "How Fiction Works," does make reference to the ways in which the novel does make a connection between "drug dependence and heroineism" (112), and does thankfully speak of the paralyzingly "toxic narratives" that the heroine has to "get out of" as she gets out of the tub (118-119), one short and recent essay doth not a sustained interrogation make; though it does secure me in the legitimacy of my own.

therefore to do so now, I argue. Indeed, the novel has never been, but will be here, read as providing ways of thinking about the relationship between narrative, pedagogy, and addiction. I will insist on how, if the brain is, very basically, a "habit-forming machine" (Lewis 155), and if addiction is indeed "a form of learning gone bad" (Lewis 135), then the language, logic and temporality of addiction on display, even formally, in Scott's experimental prose, have much usefully to contribute to a conversation about the pedagogical means and ends of increasingly advanced levels of literacy education.

Reading *Heroine*, in this sense, as what I call a narrative of addiction, does a number of useful things, not the least of which is that it allows me to situate Scott in relation to a series of other both English and French language women writers in Quebec, including Anne Dandurand, Marie Gagnon, and Tess Fragoulis. Such a multilingual and yet still local set of comparisons is useful, in itself, in relation to the disciplinary questions I raised earlier about the role and effect of linguistic nationalism in literary studies, questions that I had intended to address by way of the comparison between Scott and Ducharme, however more directly. Moreover, the thematic of addiction, along with the series of cracks that elicit it are all the more useful as they allow me to pursue that related conversation about literature and violence, discussed earlier in both institutional and figurative terms, however now at a very much more visceral and intimate level. Indeed, the economies of intravenous and inhalatory drug use in question here have as much to do with both violence and corporeality as, I argue in chapter one, reading itself does too.<sup>19</sup> Thus, if I can be permitted to reduce my whole project to only

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<sup>19</sup> The physical effects of even relatively prolonged drug use is, perhaps, as obvious as it is interesting. Dr Gabor Mate's work on the neuroscience and psychology of addiction (*Realm of Hungry*), among the many other recently published accounts of the relatively new findings enabled by advanced technology, and aside from its discussion



three keywords (as I do in the title), the first being cities (of which I have said some and will say more), and the second being stories (which is perhaps inevitable given the literary and theoretical nature of this project described thus far), the third keyword is bodies, which is after all what I read with and where I am ultimately most affected by my ability (or inability) to read well. It is, I argue, upon my body that the stakes and the violence even potentially involved in literacy and literary studies is most profoundly and indelibly marked, and that in part is why bodies is first in order of appearance in my title.<sup>20</sup> I mean, reading, for better or worse, affects my body every bit as much as, if perhaps more subtly than, drug use does, and Gail's writing I suggest helps make the ways and means of that affect productively legible and eventually teachable.

What is most useful, however, and perhaps most concrete about this introjection of the discourse of addiction into literary theory is, I suggest, the temporality it introduces into the conversation. Indeed, the recursive and deferent temporality of our increasingly varied and wide-ranging cultural experience of addiction (to coffee, oil, television, capitalism, porn, prozac, guns, identity, plastic surgery, video games, sugar, and speed — to name just a few) is reflected in the unending experience of reading such an open-ended and experimental fiction as Scott's, I suggest. I should note, though, that addiction here refers to the insidious and overwhelming, compulsive and potentially destructive, which is to say, violent effect of a

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of particularly Canadian sites and policies, is of particular note for the ease with which it links the most intimate and corporeal dynamics of addiction to the most broadly geopolitical economies feeding international drug trades, wars, and policies even today, as they did too in the days of the *Opium wars* in China, in 1839 and 1856 (Marez, *Drug Wars*; Buxton, *The Political Economy of Narcotics*). Indeed, he is remarkably compelling, I think, in his linking of the violence of the drug war, whether on the street corner or on an international stage, and the violence of addiction itself, which is to say, its ability to insert itself into and take control of individual lives.

<sup>20</sup> It is also alphabetically first but, mostly, it just sounds better than *stories*, *bodies...* or *cities, stories*.

given substance (or behavior) on a given body, politic or otherwise. The onus of course was initially on a particular substance (like nicotine and opium), but is increasingly also ascribed now to behaviors. As Maté defines it, addiction refers to "any repeated behavior, substance-related or not, in which a person feels compelled to persist, regardless of its negative impact on [the addict's] life or the lives of others" (224). This radical extension of "potential addiction attribution" not only, increasingly, to "every form of substance ingestion" but also to "every form of human behavior" as such, Eve K. Sedgwick describes ("Epidemics" 131), is not a matter of our being merely and decoratively metaphorical. Indeed, it serves as an occasion to contextualize that deferent and circular temporality, which I call of addiction, that describes, I suggest, both my own protracted experience of reading for and writing this dissertation over the last ten years and, for better or worse, something important about the process of reading and learning to read itself, namely, that it should not be rushed and is neither a linear process moving from left to right, top to bottom, or beginning to end like the words on a page (Perec 60), nor without either only risk or reward. Indeed, so much of what gets said about addiction can also be said, in turn, about reading and writing and learning to do so, or so in *Heroine* I argue it seems (46).

This thematic of addiction then, and in a number of different ways, is useful as a means of finding a place for my voice amongst the chorus of excellent critical readers that Scott's work has attracted to itself over the years. Before I go on, though, to cite one final very concrete example of that utility, I feel compelled to note (in something of an aside here) that the question of addiction is an intensely personal theme also, and that it is no accident therefore that I've found it, in particular, to be so central to my reading of Scott. Thus, and though I will not spend too much time here discussing this, I feel that my own relationship

with addiction wants to be outed. Indeed, throughout my academic career, and long before as well, I have struggled with the highs and lows of substance abuse of one form or another—with addictions that are fueled, as all addictive behaviors are, says Maté (83, 272), by what Scott's heroine calls some "hole in me" (*Heroine* 31). In fact, I feel I have at times been stuck, exactly like the heroine, in the addictive, empty seeming temporality of my own bathtub state of silence and inactivity, deferring the production of my long promised dissertation (as the heroine does her novel), and distracting myself in the meantime with one pleasure (or non-pleasure) or another after another and another until, in some anacoluthonic moment, as Hillis Miller will say below, something changes and in the next scene I'm already out of the tub and writing again and finally now. Indeed, there is no doubt in my mind that it has, in part, taken me this long to complete this project because of the number of joints and cigarettes I've smoked or the relationships I've jumped into and out of "about which (deep down) I had serious reservations," as Scott describes (*Spaces* 99). There is even a sense in which having this project still to complete and hanging over my head like a dark cloud, or around my neck like a leash and a dog-tag, is itself something I've become addicted to and which, consequently, has kept me for a time from completion.

Suggesting that the time it has taken me to 'complete' this project is, at least in part, due to the modes of deferral and the forms of repetition compulsion that addiction compels is not however meant as an excuse; though there is something to be said for that moment in 12 step programs where an addict takes stock of the effects his behaviors have had on the people around him, and owns up to these by way of an apology, in my case, to the advisors, editors, colleagues, lovers, and friends who have been subjected to no small amount of exasperation by my repeatedly promising to do one thing and then doing another. I am glad then to have an

occasion here, sincerely, to apologize. But, again, this is not meant as an excuse, nor is the productive power or the degree of necessity that I will be ascribing in chapter two to the logic and time of addiction merely some decorative figure of speech. Indeed, to the extent that addiction and drug-use is made to serve in what follows as a metaphor for the logics and economies of literary practice and pedagogy, that metaphoricity, in turn, is much more than only a paraphrasable and therefore discardable means of dressing up what might otherwise be a too-blandly academic or abstractly theoretical project; though it no doubt is also that. Instead, and throughout the pages that follow, I take the metaphorical relation between literary practice and drug use (as that between poetic and political) rather more literally, which is to say, as an expression of the ways in which the logic and time of addiction is actually, not only powerful, but pedagogical. I mean, if getting high as often as I have been in the habit of has contributed much to my putting off the ending of this dissertation over the years, doing so was also, I argue, in some ways both necessary and pedagogical.

Indeed, I argue in chapter two that Scott's novel shows how there is something not only destructive but also "dynamic" and "necessary" in the ostensible inactivity of addictive temporalities (Anzaldua 69, 71), something simultaneously disabling and enabling. Likewise, I argue (however from the comfortable vantage of retrospect) that some part of the time I have spent not yet having finished my dissertation has perhaps been inevitable, and necessary to the pedagogical process being theorized here. I mean, if doing this dissertation may have both suffered from and even enabled some of my addictive inclinations (by providing for example such large periods of unsupervised 'free' time in which the *hungriest ghost* versions of myself

were allowed to govern my everyday life<sup>21</sup>), simultaneously, there is no doubt in my mind that actually having this dissertation to complete—having introjected Scott's *Heroine* so completely into my self-conception—and knowing that a whole community awaited my long-promised pages has provided for the rock bottom that I needed to confront (in ways I might never have done otherwise) the extent, consequences, and sources of that self and substance abuse. I mean, were it not for *Heroine*, (pun intended), I may still now be getting high on a very and too regular basis. Indeed, it is only by virtue of having this to write, perhaps, that I've had to take the time and occasion to prefer (and learn to prefer) a different version of myself enough, anyway, to step out at long last of my bathtub state and start (to finish) writing. Indeed, now that I'm out, I see how "the pages I've written," to take another page from Scott's *Heroine* (180), have in many ways transformed the look and feel of the walls amidst which I abide, and transformed in turn the Richard who abides in them. Thus, if I live in Korea and don't smoke anything anymore, and while I sometimes am still afraid of that "hole in me" that remains, I know at least "where the fear comes from," as the heroine puts it, "so that it doesn't get sprayed all over" the place (*Heroine* 154), all this is to say, I think, that I am more than ever convinced by the necessity of the temporality represented by Scott's bathtub "device" (*Spaces* 80), and the business of this project therefore is to translate that conviction into pedagogy.

That discourse of addiction that Scott's narratives help me introject then into literary

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<sup>21</sup> The emphasis here refers to Gabor Mate's recent *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*, an excellent book arising in part out of his work in the downtown Eastside of Vancouver which, though I do not cite it as much as I might, for I found it only very late in the course of my writing, did much to confirm the links my argument depends upon between addiction, violence, learning and narrative.

studies, along with its attendant thematics of risk and deferral, is important for personal reasons, though by no means exclusively so. Indeed, this deferent, recursive and so risky, but nevertheless (and perhaps even therefore) productive and pedagogical temporality that I'm ascribing to the practice of literature and describing by way of the language of addiction, is useful in considering, for example, the question of collaboration (or for that matter the questions too raised earlier about the dissertation itself). I mean, it was in the course of an open-ended collaboration between students and faculty at the English department at *l'Université de Montréal* and the TransCanada Institute at the University of Guelph, that a fortuitous pairing of projects suggested another instance of that connection between the literary forms that I am engaged with in my reading of Scott and the methodological and pedagogical structures that are the legacy of contemporary literary studies. Specifically, the workshop pairing and consequent comparison of Scott's prose work and Fred Wah's avant-garde poetics – aside from providing me an opportunity to see the connections between Scott's work and another contemporary literary moment in English-Canada,<sup>22</sup> as I had already connected it to writing in Quebec, and seen it connected also (as Scott herself does) to writing in San Francisco, New York, and Paris<sup>23</sup> – confirmed my desire to focus on and really think

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<sup>22</sup> Indeed, in an interview with Scott, published in *Prismatic Publics*, Kate Eichhorn asks explicitly about "the line between something like west-coast Canadian writer Fred Wah's prose poems and the type of prose tradition you're locating yourself in relation to?" (87), to which Scott replies, "Fred is actually one of the people in Canada who really understands my work and whose work I really admire," having "in common complex, conflicted backgrounds, and a kind of political idealism," though he remains "more committed to the space of poetry than I am" (88).

<sup>23</sup> As Lianne Moyes describes it in her "Discontinuity, Intertextuality, and Literary History," the prose tradition to which Eichhorn is referring here is that stretching from New York and San Francisco back through English Canada and, first of all, the feminist avant-garde in Quebec that she has, since the late 1970s, shared with Nicole Brossard and France Théoret, *entre autres*, to expatriates, like Gertrude Stein, Djuna Barnes, French writers like Collette and Marguerite Duras, and the Early Modern England that Virginia Woolf wrote into our rooms.

about the temporality of that poetics of imperfection that I find at work in (and pedagogical about) Scott's prose. I say 'confirmed' because, if the compulsion to name the dynamics there had first been sparked by the comparison with Marcotte that I mentioned earlier, it was reinforced now by the comparison with Fred Wah's *Waiting for Saskatchewan* and, specifically, by my workshop mate, Paul Danyluk's description of the elegiac form of that poet's "always deferred search for his father, for meaning, and for the self"; the consequent unhinging there of "any notion of singular subjectivity"; and the acceptance of deferral as "necessary action" emphasized in this connection between form and content (Danyluk, "Forming"). Admittedly, the opportunity to strengthen the names given here to the ways in which Scott's text is operating is not in itself very important, given how Scott expresses "a discomfort with these [identitary] terms" ("In Conversation" with Moyes 212). Indeed, the real significance of the relationship between narrative and addiction that such a poetics of imperfection and deferral is meant to identify comes not from the name itself but from the way it provides me grounds again for a comparison between the experimental forms of Scott's literary project and the institutional and pedagogical horizons of mine own, namely, collaborative practice.

For while there are legitimate grounds for questioning how successful a project can have been that leaves behind no well-published record of its activities for others to learn from—as indeed our TransCanada/TransQuebec (TCTQ) project did not—I would argue that this collaboration was still productive and felicitous in the sense, first, that it spawned a number of other working and affective relationships and projects that continue still today to bear fruit. Moreover, the project provided me another example of the fact that, from what we read there is much to learn about how to read. Or, as Erin Wunker and I argued at the

ACCUTE conference in Ottawa in 2009 — in one of those further collaborative practices felicitously born of the excitement generated by the TCTQ project — the texts to which we respond together have much, allegorically, to teach us about how to read and write, in this case, collaboratively (McGill, "Necessary"). Indeed, we argued that as the temporality of addiction can be deadly recursive, and as the narrative of *Heroine* in the end remains explicitly and productively open-ended, so must our reading of it be at the very least slow, and so in turn must reading it collaboratively mean accepting that we might have to read it in a sense 'twice slowly' and regardless of the risk to our young careers and individual projects that this temporality may involve.

I mean, reading *Heroine* allegorically in this sense provides me a way—a literary way, moreover—of participating in (which is not at all to say resolving) discussions about the stakes involved in the current institutional push (the rush?) to collaborate. As funding structures and research practices like SSHRC's MCRI program (Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada's Major Collaborative Research Initiative) gain in prominence and repute, it stands to reason that likewise does a young scholar's experience of collaboration, and by extension a proven ability to collaborate effectively, becomes increasingly important and valuable.<sup>24</sup> As the BRIDGES consortium of artists and scientists suggests, collaboration itself is "a skill to be identified, studied, and learned" (Pearce et.al 123). This ostensible and pragmatic, though still perhaps unacknowledged, imperative to

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<sup>24</sup> The recent closing of SSHRC's MCRI programs does not, I think, invalidate the point I am making here about the value and privilege of collaborative practice. Indeed, the apparently simultaneous opening up of its new "Partnered Research Training Initiatives," designed to bring together "institutions from the academic, public, private and/or not-for-profit sectors" arguably only makes the question of temporality I am raising here all the more urgent (cf. SSHRC, "Major Collaborative Research Initiatives" and "Partnered Research Training Initiatives").



engage in collaboration and gain that experience presents a particularly delicate problem for students, with which I suggest reading *Heroine* closely can help us engage. At the very least it may help us pose the question somewhat differently (Scott, *Heroine* 21, 51). For if it remains unclear how, in the years to come, the practice and products of collaboration are going to be evaluated by hiring and tenure track committees (Ede and Lundsford, "Collaboration"), the more immediate and pressing problem is simply that collaborating takes time (Hutcheon and Hutcheon 1371), indeed perhaps at least "twice" as much time away from one's own individual project (Cassidy et al., "Twice"). Indeed, as much as they can be enduringly fruitful, collaborations can mean (and for me did mean) putting off work on one's own project in different ways. Thus, while one of the presumed valuable outcomes of this turn toward more collaborative methodologies is said to reside in the promise of calling into question the conventional individualisms of academic research and writing, in the humanities especially (Hutcheon and Hutcheon 1371; Kaplan and Conrad Rose, "Strange Bedfellows"), the fact that such benefits remain as yet of mostly a promissory nature, and at best uncertain in their outcome or evaluation has lead scholars like Linda and Michael Hutcheon, no doubt rightly, to pass on warnings to students that it may for now be wiser for us to wait (1367). Nevertheless, and sage as that advise may be, the Hutcheons themselves have not for that matter foregone the opportunity to collaborate with students, even their own on occasion, however carefully, for the "intellectual dangers" of doing so "have perhaps been overstated" (1369).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> In their "A Convenience of Marriage: Collaboration and Interdisciplinarity," Linda and Micheal Hutcheon describe the reasoned and careful ways in which they collaborated and directed the work of what they called "Team Tristan," composed of themselves plus four graduate students (1369 ff). Indeed, they recall being demonstrably careful in this context, for example, by acknowledging the evident "status hierarchy involved in the teacher-student and employee-employer relationships" (1369), and then by conceiving of the research, as opposed to the writing, as rather cooperative or complementary than strictly collaborative (1370).

Only time will tell how all this uncertainty about the why and the when of collaboration will turn out, and which answers (if any) are the right ones. In the meantime though, it is comforting to be able to turn to Gail's writing for guidance in this matter, and conclude thereby that, given how the deferent and recursive temporality of the heroine in her bathtub, putting off her writing, is something I will argue of a necessary deferral, so might we say the same of the time consuming nature of collaborative practice (or, for that matter, of the time it has taken me to write this dissertation). If it is risky to have been so slow finally, that risk may well have been both necessary and valuable in the end, for just as Scott herself risked "failure in market terms" in order to pursue the kind of writing that her thinking compelled her towards (*Prismatic* 95), so might we say that *Heroine*, in this sense, supports the taking of academic risks—or so anyway, to me, it has appeared.

I won't, though, insist anymore on the applicability of these narrative forms to that disciplinary question of collaboration, because what interests me, as I've already said, is simply the possibility that reading fiction carefully can provide terms with which to engage, or "rub up against the 'real'" of literary practice and its methodologies (Scott, *Spaces* 78). Indeed, the only point I'm interested in making at the moment is that thinking allegorically, which is to say comparatively, and by way of a literary text, in this case about the risks involved in, as well as the promise of, literary studies generally, and of collaboration in particular, means that this project from beginning to end — from comparison, through the dissertation, to collaboration — is driven by methodological questions. Indeed, as Scott says of her own writing, so is my project likewise an "ongoing interrogation of method" and, just as for her "every novel," so for me every literary critical practice here remains, finally, "an exploration of method" (Scott, "Mrs. Beckett's" 89); or, if for Scott "how to write," then so for me how to

read "is always the question" (89). It is therefore to that question of method that I now finally turn.

## **On Walter Benjamin's Contribution to the Methodology of this Literary Materialism**

I'm told you raised your hand against yourself / Anticipating the butcher  
After eight years in exile, observing the rise of the enemy  
Then at last, brought up against an impassable barrier  
You passed, they say, a passable one.  
- Bertold Brecht "On the Suicide of the Refugee W.B."

I've already suggested that the short answer to that question – how? – is slowly; meaning that to read and learn to read well, finally, is to do so, as Nietzsche insisted, *lento* (in Miller, "Search for" 33). Learning to read Scott for me, like learning to write for her heroine, takes time because writing (and therefore learning to know) "is partly about constructing a subject" (Scott, "On the Edge" 18). Moreover, as Scott says in conversation with Kate Eichhorn, about trying to do the work that both "poets" and "novelists are doing" at once, that it "takes twice as much time" (*Prismatic* 95), so for me that process of writing about Scott's work and, simultaneously, creating X, that reading, writing, and teaching subject *supposé* savoir that I am become (cf. Markotic 42; Scott, *Spaces* 81), must and should not be rushed.

Taking the somewhat longer way around the same mountain of the question of method though – and thereby describing the theoretical, rather than anecdotal origins of my project – I turn now, and briefly, to the late Bill Readings' *University in Ruins*. For as Readings diagnoses there the ruins of the idea of nation and identity upon which are founded the modern university and the institutionalized study of literature, in particular, he asks the question of

"how," methodologically and pedagogically speaking, we are meant to live in these *de facto* ruins of the university without for that matter resorting either to nostalgia for a bygone age or to despair that all is therefore in vain (5, 19), that is, without either slavishly accepting or dumbly ignoring the urgency and even violence of the situation we abide in (151) or, as Scott writes, citing William Kentridge, in such a way as, simultaneously, to "keep optimism in check and nihilism at bay" ("Sutured" 108). Readings' *University in Ruins*, in this way, performs a "structural diagnosis of contemporary shifts in the University's function," of how its "wider social role [...] as an institution is now up for grabs" in ways that "intellectuals (who depend upon that institution for a living) cannot afford" he says "to ignore" (2). Readings describes, consequently, how "the university is becoming a different kind of institution, one that is no longer linked to the destiny of the nation-state by virtue of its role as producer, protector, and inculcator of an idea of national culture" (3). As such, he goes on to show that "the university no longer participates in the historical project for humanity that was the legacy of the Enlightenment : the historical project of culture" (5), that the "stakes of the university's functioning are no longer essentially ideological, because they are no longer tied to the self-reproduction of the nation-state" (14), such that we must now acknowledge the wholesale "reconception of the university," its transformation "from an ideological arm of the state into a bureaucratically organized and relatively autonomous consumer oriented corporation" (11) where "what exactly gets taught or produced as knowledge," finally, "matters less than the fact that it be excellently taught or researched" (13). Indeed, the university is in ruins.

Perhaps ironically, therefore, "these words excite me so much" for writing about *Heroine* and for learning to read professionally (*Spaces* 85), for it is precisely through such a mass of ideological debris piled up in the ruin that Readings calls "the university of

excellence" that I feel I am myself a-wander as a reader of Scott (and Ducharme) today. Indeed, like the narrator of Scott's *Main Brides*, Lydia, who in order "to be who she wants has to absorb selectively from the context... *like a collector*" (Mazjels, "Crosscurrents" 15; emphasis added), and like Ducharme's alter-ego, Roch Plante, an "*artiste familier des poubelles, chercheur de mots et chercheur de trésors ébloui par la multiplicité du réel*" (Forget-Goergeosco 15), who produces assemblages of objets "*arrachés à l'indifférence urbaine par la curiosité d'un promeneur*" (16) in which "*on voit la société évoluer par le biais de ce qu'elle rejetait à la rue*" (11), so do I aspire to make some beautiful "use," as Walter Benjamin would say (*Arcades* N1a,8), of the ruin of literary figures and pedagogical postures that I collect in the chapters below. In fact, as I'll describe in a moment, I've modeled my own methodological practice, most of all, on Benjamin's figure of the collector and on the practice of collecting he describes, in part because, as Scott says of how the sentence, like Benjamin's angel of history, "involves both a glancing back, a summary, and [...] a ride through the dynamic present" ("Sutured" 100), so do I feel a kinship of sorts with Benjamin's "angel of history," propelled forward into the future of an academic (or other than academic) career of reading and writing and teaching and learning by the mounting debris-piles of conflict ridden theoretical positions and pedagogical postures clamoring to be chosen and towards which I am turned still in this candidacy ("Theses" 257-8). I'll return, therefore, in a moment to the use I make of Benjamin's figure of the collector.

In the meantime, I note that no doubt, in part, because of Reading's untimely death, the relatively brief flurry of discussion and debate elicited by both the substance and the terms of his project was, just that, brief. Indeed, since the publication of an in memoriam issue at the *Oxford Literary Review* ("The University in Ruins"), an omnibus review, entre autres, of

Readings in *American Literary History* (Bérubé), an extended debate in *Critical Inquiry* between Dominick LaCapra and Nicholas Royle regarding the substance of Reading's work ("University in Ruins?"; "Yes, Yes"; "Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes"), and a special issue on "The University," more broadly, in the *Journal of Midwest Modern Language Association*, rare seem to have become references to Reading's work. The sense of crisis he describes and diagnoses, of course, endures and grows it seems even more insistent, and it certainly well-describes the historical moment in which I locate my own work here, as I've said. But, the particular set of terms and figures he deploys have, in the two decades since his death, more often than not, given way to others. Nevertheless, it is that very terminology that compels my reference to Readings' work here most of all, rather than just the happy accident that the used copy of his book that I'd found at a bazaar one day where I happened no doubt to be putting off my thesis work again, (which is where indeed I first came into contact with Readings) was inscribed to, but not it seemed for that matter read by, someone I then vaguely remembered having met but couldn't exactly recall; nor the fact, moreover, that reading his book made sense finally of the otherwise nameless photograph of Readings hanging in the large *littérature comparée* seminar room that the English department uses at *l'Université de Montréal* for its most populous meetings and graduate classes.<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, whatever their fate might have been had their author remained either to defend his words or let them pass into silence on his own account, my interest remains in the terms he used to describe how "the disciplinary structure" of the university is "*cracking*" (177;

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<sup>26</sup> This anecdote of course recalls a time prior to the recent merger of the two and other departments into a single administrative entity.

emphasis added throughout the paragraph); the figure of "the community of *dissensus*" that he offers as a mode of living "accountably" in the consequent ruins of the university, and the indefinite structure of "*dependency*" and addiction that he models that community upon (190); as well as his eagerness finally to take this loosening of disciplinary structures as an opportunity to install "disciplinarity" itself as a "*permanent question*" (177)—as Gerald Graff for example had hoped to achieve (*Professing* 15)—permanent because "teaching itself, like psychoanalysis, is an interminable process... structurally incomplete," or, as Marcotte will describe, *à l'imparfait* (Readings 159; cf also 165, 190). These topics and turns of phrase of Reading's have done much, indeed, to confirm and to strengthen, in this sense, and even legitimize the directions in which I had taken my reading of Scott towards the allegorical and, if for no other reason, I count Readings retrospectively among the list of generous teachers and guides that I have found at *l'Université de Montréal* and in the *Département de Littérature comparée* too, where Readings worked, where Dr. Eric Savoy's rigor and generosity have been both a welcome challenge and a lesson, for example, and where Jacques Cardinal's support of and excitement about my earliest readings of Ducharme were essential to the project that has since come to pass.

Most importantly though for my purposes here at the tail end of this introduction, the recurrence in Readings (and in this institutional and disciplinary context) of figures (cracks) collected in Scott's prose grounds, in turn, my turning finally to Walter Benjamin's work, where a similar set of metaphors provides me the means with which to describe more precisely the methodology I develop and deploy over the course of the following two chapters. I turn to Benjamin then, for several reasons, not the least of which is the important and evolving role he plays in the evolution of Scott's writing project, from the brief references to him in *Spaces like*

*Stairs* (106; and "In Conversation" with Moyes 226), to the almost intimate relationship her narrator, in *My Paris*, has with him and the French translation of his *Arcades Project*. There is, then, the fact that Benjamin's "historical materialist," the "historian influenced by Marx," who hopes to "fight for the crude and material things without which no refined and spiritual things could exist" (Benjamin, "Theses" 254; emphasis added), seems to serve as a model for Scott's narrator, Lydia, who writes in wait for that "smooth and gently moving" version of "History," "full of nuance, broad, accessible, instead of mean and categorical," where, she adds, "Of course, everyone would have to have the same (*material*) capacity for existence. For not getting murdered—" (*Main Brides* 199; emphasis added). Indeed, so completely has Scott internalized Benjamin in her own writing (as I in turn have internalized Scott) that Dianne Chisholm, in her reading of *My Paris* notes that "the task of the critic" can no longer be simply to "bring" such theory as Benjamin's to our "interpretation" of Scott's text (Chisholm 157). Instead, she says, what remains is the more properly theoretical or "philosophical task" of inquiring into how Scott's incorporation and use of Benjamin's work "affects and enhances our heavily mediated, radically atrophied perception of history" (157), or of the city or literature, as the case may be. Thus, what follows is a first introduction to this literary version of Walter Benjamin's historical materialist method, that is, to the means by which my reading, or incorporations of Scott's literary work, in particular, affects the capacity of my worried perceptions of literary practice itself.

I cannot, of course, but feel a sort of affinity for a man who spent in excess of 40 years



of his life's work on a decidedly, perhaps inevitably, interminable project;<sup>27</sup> a man who drifted through and thrived amidst the "ruin" of the "present" (Benjamin, *Arcades* H9a,6) and the detritus of nineteenth century industrial capitalism, in some of the same ways as I now feel I abide in the ruins of the university and of national identity; a man who nevertheless seeks to resist "the prognosticators of decline" (N1a,4), for decline installs a notion of (failed) linear progress into the conversation, which precisely Benjamin rejects in ways that are helpful to remember when confronted by claims, however well grounded, that we are, at present, living out another crisis in the Humanities, so called, as if, truthfully, we have not always already been in crisis mode, as Robert Scholes describes, and perhaps are constitutively so (724). Doing so seems timely, moreover, because Benjamin's project is not despairing for all that it is "born out of" the "despair" (Arendt, Introduction 39) arising from the knowledge that "the break in tradition and the loss of authority (of the aura) which occurred in his lifetime were irreparable" (38), just as Scott's *Heroine* is rather more productive and pedagogical than only paralyzed and paralyzing, for all that it manages to "write across the almost... hysterical... overdetermination of her gaps" and "through rather than beyond them" (*Spaces* 88) "without tipping the balance to psychosis" (*Spaces* 132). Indeed, Benjamin serves as a model for the reader of Scott that I am become here, not only because of how Benjamin wrote love "at last sight" letters to, and read cities like Berlin and Paris (Gilloch 56; Chisholm 163) as carefully as I read the literature of Montreal, including Scott, who "writes the city" and writes "in dialogue with the city" of Montreal (Scott, "Cusps" 64; "Face to Face" 24); nor only because

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<sup>27</sup> As Gilloch describes, not only did his *Arcades Project* remain unfinished at his death, but so did other of his projects, including the *Baudelaire* book and *Berlin* text, suggesting that the thing I feel a kind of kinship with in Benjamin is anything but simply an accident (cf. *Myth* 132 and 58, respectively).

of how he insisted, in ways I recognize, on the pedagogical and yet the still "dangerous" (Wolin 215) and "profane illumination" accessible through narcotics use (Tiederman 934); but, too, because when he took his own life at the violently, because arbitrarily impermeable borders of nation, in 1940 (Fittko, "Old Benjamin" 953), rather than give it and himself up to them, he did much (and in the most costly of ways) to help prepare the critique of the rigidities of national identity that I endeavor expressly to deliver in the first parts of chapter two.

What motivates my turning here to Benjamin most of all though, as I've already suggested, is the largely untested "methodological contribution" that his project has to offer also to disciplines "outside of visual and urban studies" (Pusca 239) and to the study, I argue, of literature most of all.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, just as Benjamin himself, in a number of ways, defines his 'historical' method in literary terms<sup>29</sup> – as a "surrealist," "literary montage" (Arendt, Introduction 47; Benjamin, *Arcades* N1a,8) – so do I propose to translate (N8.2) and transpose

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<sup>28</sup> In a recent omnibus review of for the journal of *International Political Sociology*, Pusca wrote of the untapped "methodological potential" of Benjamin's work in fields "outside visual and urban studies" (239). Although she speaks explicitly about the "methodological contribution" that Benjamin might make to disciplines like International Relations and Sociology, I would argue that the same applies, if not even more so, to literary studies. And yet, perhaps because his work has only relatively recently been translated into English, not a lot of progress has yet been made in this direction. Dianne Chisholm's reference to Benjamin, in her long and very detailed essay on Scott is a notable exception, which precisely is focused on, as she herself puts it, determining "how Scott's text uses Benjamin's theory/technique to 'see' contemporary urban reality" rather than on how Benjamin's theory helps us read Scott (157). Terry Eagleton's book on Benjamin, *Towards a Revolutionary Criticism*, would be another example. As to Benjamin's own use of literature and literary techniques, and so the possibility of adapting his historical methods back into literary studies, I will speak to that presently.

<sup>29</sup> Where Benjamin urges himself to "say something about the method of composition" of his *Arcades Project* (N1.3), he notes that it can be described as "literary montage" (N1a.8), a "sort of surrealist montage," the "work" of which is "tearing fragments out of their context and arranging them afresh in such a way that they illustrated one another and were able to prove their *raison d'être* in a free floating state" (Arendt, Introduction 47) and which I cannot help but think of as, to borrow Scott's phrase, "Paragraphs Blowing on a Line" (*Spaces* 77-104). Carrying over "the principle of montage into history. That is, to assemble large-scale constructions out of the smallest and most precisely cut components" (*Arcades* N2.6), Benjamin then notes, in ways that look forward to my reading of *Rubbish* in chapter one, "I shall purloin no valuables, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But *the rags, the refuse*—these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them" (N1a.8; emphasis added).

(N2a.4) some of what have now become known as his 'historical materialist' methods and forms back into the literary context from which in part they came. I would, then, describe this comparative, theoretical, and pedagogically driven project as a literary materialist reading too of Scott's prose, and of literature itself, and note that where there is a method in the sometimes seeming madness of long sentences, deferrals, and recursions of thought and citation that follows throughout here, I call that method benjaminian, and a materialism. Specifically, that methodological contribution, which Pusca promises, resides, I suggest, in the figure of the collector that Benjamin both theorizes and embodies, a figure that I would like now to spend a moment describing and then appropriating to my own project because, as Dianne Chisholm is right to say, "the key to reading Scott is the key to reading Benjamin," it requires "attention to the art of juxtaposing images" (181), which is another way of saying, the art of the collector.

In "Unpacking my Library," an essay that Benjamin refers to as his "talk about book collecting" (59), the "genuine collector" is given to speak, he says, not of his own "collection" (the things), but rather of "collecting" (the activity); not of the "the main sections and prize pieces" in his collection, but of the relationship that this activity presupposes between subject and object, "the collector and his collection" (60). It is a relationship that Benjamin describes as affective and tactile (*Arcades* H2,5; emphasis added throughout), even "intimate" ("Unpacking" 67), and which correspondingly "loses its meaning as it loses its personal" investments (67), just as I'll argue in chapter one that reading depends upon the intentions and efforts invested in the process. Thus, and just as Scott says of how language, in Montreal anyway, "hits you like mud in your eye" ("My Montreal" 5), the collector is "roused to assembly" and "raised to allegory" (*Arcades* H1a2, H1a4) by what he collects, and then speaks "of things as though they had struck" him (H1a,5). Thus, set amidst the "disorder of crates"

and "dust" and "piles of volumes" – as I am amidst my notebooks and folders and Dropboxes full of documents and PDF files – and so far from what he calls the "mild boredom of order" ("Unpacking" 59), the collector "shares" with us the "mood of anticipation" that his books "arouse" (59), the "thrill" of their "acquisition" (60), the "owner's feeling of responsibility toward his property" (66), the "passion" (66), and the fanaticism even (Eagleton 74) that I cannot help but recognize in my own relationship with the figures I've collected and belabored below and throughout. The collection, for the collector, is personal, as this project for me has become, no doubt inevitably. It is not so much that his books "come alive in him," but rather "he who lives in them," says the collector, nearly disappearing into the "dwelling" of his collection where he belongs ("Unpacking" 67), as I too likewise have disappeared into my own sort of bathtub state, like Scott's heroine, promising and promising but ever putting off the writing of my dissertation until, it seems, in the very end, where I sit down now at my own sort of "arborite table" (*Heroine* 143), "gathering material" (78) to "use... cut up, collage style" (*Spaces* 104), and reaching "for some plot" of sorts "that will gather all the threads together" (90) and lead me "out of the tub" I am sat in (95) "into historical space" (121), some "narrative way to give [...] meaning" to the study and practice of literature (81) from which, as I said, I can learn here to know. The pedagogical and even political practice of reading and writing that I have been narrating from the outset here is, in this benjaminian sense, markedly personal too.

The collector, Benjamin says elsewhere, is "guided" – as I am by my very 'close' reading of Scott's *Heroine* – less by abstract categories, "concepts and ideas" than by the "physical objects" themselves (Eduard Fuchs 250), by the "amazement" they arouse in him (*Arcades* N2,7), by "a sense of playfulness in how objects are arranged once they are collected," and by what Pusca calls "instinct," which she describes as "an ability to recognize

patterns" (239). To "write," said Scott, is to "relate" ("In Conversation" with Moyes 225), and the collector, indeed, is guided therefore by a very basic literary sensibility, what Aristotle called the "genius of metaphor," which is to say, by an "eye for resemblances" (*Poetics* 1459a 3-8). What is "Decisive in collecting" says Benjamin, as is inevitable when it comes to the practice of citation, is that the object "be detached from its original function in order to enter into the closest conceivable relation with things of the same kind" (*Arcades* H1a,2; emphasis added), and therefore that the collector be possessed of an ability to "bring things together that belong together" (H4a,1), which again is to say, to metaphorize (Ricoeur, *Métaphore* 33). For all these reasons, then, and for his requisite "flair" for "details" (Benjamin, "Unpacking" 63), or for his childlike ability to see old things in new ways, and his no longer childish ability to see with long experience into an object's distant past (61) – that is, for his "ability to see-as," says Jan Zwicky in her *Wisdom and Metaphor* (81) – the collector in Benjamin presents as a perfect figure for the close reader that I am and continue to become here. Indeed, the collector is a kind of reader in very much the same way as, Eagleton points out, "the storyteller is a kind of collector" (*Walter Benjamin* 61), collectively and collaboratively generating, preserving, and transforming the world and our discipline along with it, with care and intentionality, as the authors again of the Carnegie Initiative report describe the responsibilities of that "stewardship" that a PhD candidate is expected to embody (Golde 10-12). Benjamin even goes so far as to say that "collecting," in these ways, is "the primal phenomenon of study," that "the student" that I am "collects knowledge" (*Arcades* H4,3) which, of course, begs the question of what that knowledge is that the collector/reader collects, and so to that question I turn.

I mean, for the student of history that Benjamin is in his *Arcades Project*, his materialist history of the nineteenth century (N1a,6), of Paris its capital and of the Parisian

Arcades, its most melancholy "symbol" (Arendt, Introduction 21), in which he attempts "to discover new ways of dealing with the past" (38), which is to say, to "allow the truth content of the epoch to emerge through the veneer of its material content" (Wolin 210), the knowledge collected consists of objects and images from, citations of, and commentary about "the past," however "recognized by the present as one of its own concerns" (Benjamin, "Theses" 255) and, being telescoped (*Arcades* N7a,3), is made legible (N3,1). Knowledge, thus, rests in part in "the expressive character of the earliest industrial products, the earliest industrial architecture, the earliest machines, but also the earliest department stores, advertisements, and so on ... " (N1a,7). That, then, which is to be known is always already there, for example, in "the forms and mutations of the Paris arcades, from their beginning to their decline" (N2a,4), in very much the same way as Aristotle, again, suggests we always already know how to read (*Poetics* 1459a 3-8). Moreover, and in a way that obviously appeals to my sense of living in the ruin of the university, Benjamin describes how the historian-collector captures his "portrait of history in the most insignificant representations of reality, its scraps, as it were" (in Arendt, Introduction 11), in the "rags" and the "refuse of History" (*Arcades* N1a,8, N2,6-7), which he "allows, in the only way possible, to come into their own : by making use of them" (N1a.8), which means, here, collecting them into folders, called *konvolutes*, "larger or smaller assemblages – literally, bundles – of manuscripts or printed materials that belong together" (in Tiedemann xiv).<sup>30</sup> To know, therefore, and to write in turn is a matter of using – and, for Scott,

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<sup>30</sup> This then is one of the reasons why I spend so much time in chapter one closely reading the figure of a book as a landfill found accidentally in Rathje and Murphy's *Rubbish*, where reading is figured as a practice of collecting, trash no less. The other reason for the appeal of that particular figuration is that it would nicely have echoed my reading of Ducharme in chapter three and, specifically, Elizabeth Nardout-Lafarge's account of his narratives in her *Poétique du débris*, which she describes in terms of Ducharme's work as the collector and sculptor, Roch Plante.

relating and "narrating" ("In Conversation" with Moyes 225, 214) – that which is already there, an act of remembering so to speak or gathering up extant objects of historical or literary knowledge and reading them into a kind of comparative space (as in fact I propose to be doing here) where they are placed alongside one another and so, hopefully, made increasingly more legible (Benjamin, *Arcades* N3,1).

The student of literature that I am, then, in this explicitly literary rather than historical project, am seeking new ways, specifically literary ways, of dealing not with the past so much as with literature and literary studies; new ways of capturing a portrait of how literature *matters* in a collection of decidedly literary, rather than historical, *matters* (cf. Butler, *Bodies*). The process, though, and the stakes are largely the same. I mean, and putting Benjamin's phrases to good use, knowledge of the literary emerges through the veneer of literature's own material contents, through the "*stoffe der literatur*" as Blodgett put it (*Configuration* 138), what Scott's heroine called the "stuff of art" (*Heroine* 33; cf. also 107, 180), namely, the metaphors, scenes, and narratives that I have highlighted and gathered up here, as the heroine does the "allegro notes" in her diary "in preparation" for her novel (98; cf also 78). Indeed, in what follows, as already in this introduction, I endeavor to make use of a collection of figures for the literary (very broadly defined), which literature itself produces, scenes in which are staged practices of reading and writing, learning and belonging, and stories finally of that sort of violence and exclusion that are the effect, I argue, and the cause as well of a failure to learn to read and to write effectively or to take enough time to do so. Such a collection, as I've indicated, is drawn from contemporary narrative and non-narrative sources, in English and French, by Gail Scott and others, from Canada and Quebec and elsewhere, (indeed, in some instances, rather arbitrarily, or as occasion presented itself), and gathered around the three

simple keywords, bodies, stories, cities.

Specifically, I have in chapter one gathered together figures of books and of the practice of reading, for example, as often from actual 'how to...' guides to reading by Mortimer J. Adler and Ezra Pound, as might be expected of a literary thesis, as from books about rubbish and from medieval scholastic debates about the legibility of God's creation (cf. Curtius; Glacken). I have, too, and also in chapter one, collected representations of the very visceral and corporeal nature of books and of the practices of reading they suppose, from thinkers as various as Benjamin, of course, and Barbara Johnson, Patricia Smart, Georges Perec, Michel DeCerteau, and Daniel Coleman, as well as images of the literary/pedagogical city, and of the city of Montreal in particular, from which (as an alternative to the nation) I argue there is much and concretely to learn about what literary figures are and what the practice of figuration itself requires of a reader. In these ways, and throughout all of this theoretical first chapter, I seek to articulate and to frame, in different ways, the methods of my engagement with those big pedagogical questions that Scott's fictions, I suggest, both pose (*Heroine* 21, 152) and provide us, her readers, with the means, simultaneously, of addressing. For novels, Scott says, "raise big questions," which in part is why it takes her so long to write a new novel ("Cusps" 66); and, perhaps, that too is why it has taken me so long to respond in kind, for these are big questions I have framed.

I've already described how chapter two then proposes to learn, in turn, from *Heroine* directly about how to respond to and think through the big pedagogical and methodological questions (of difference) that the novel itself raises, by catching a ride so to speak on the "means of transportation" that that collection of cracks coursing through the novel effectively



provides,<sup>31</sup> and have noted how this collection of fissure-y figures grounds my comparison of *Heroïne* to other contemporary fictions by women in Quebec, including Anne Dandurand, Marie Gagnon, and Tess Fragoulis, and invites in turn my introjection of the discourse of addiction and the thematic of violence into debates surrounding the institution and pedagogy of (anglo)Quebec literature. However, regardless what particular literary or historical matters are being collected at any given moment below, all of them, finally, matter I suggest (to borrow from Judith Butler's helpful pun again) in very much the same way. I mean, what Benjamin calls dialectical images, "the central category" (Tiedemann 942) and "methodological cornerstone" of his *Arcades Project* (Wolin 213), and "the primal phenomenon," he says, of his historical method (*Arcades* N9a,4), I prefer to refer to, simply, as metaphors and figures, dramatic scenes and narratives.

By metaphors, scenes, and figures (of cracks and books, or of bodies and cities, reading and kicking habits) I mean, borrowing Benjamin's descriptions of the dialectical image, places "in language" (*Arcades* N2a,3), where "things put on their true – surrealist – face" (N3a,3) and as such bear "to the highest degree the imprint of the perilous critical moment on which all reading is founded" (N3,1) – what I describe in chapter one simply as a space or structure of difference – where reading takes place, I add, when thinking "comes to a standstill in a constellation saturated with tensions" (N10a,3) and in the cracks and fissures or caesuras "in the movement of thought" (N10a,3; cf. also "Theses" 262-3; Rochlitz 284). My whole project, in this sense, is designed to provide a series of such occasions to stop and think about the

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<sup>31</sup> In the "Récits d'espace" essay of his *Arts de Faire*, Michel DeCerteau recalls that "*Dans l'Athènes d'aujourd'hui, les transports en commun s'appellent métaphorai. Pour aller au travail ou rentrer à la maison, on prend une 'métaphore'—un bus ou un train*" (170).

study of literature and the practice of reading and writing and learning that Scott's work confronts me with, which is to say, an eclectic and varied collection of literary objects designed to compel, again, and document just such a moment's pause and rethinking of the literary. I mean, what I have gathered here is a series of "*images aux ambiguïtés révélatrices*" (Rochlitz 283-284) that, more than simply "transmit cultural information," are meant to "stimulate" also "the reader," myself first of all, "to reflection" basically about what it is that this doctoral candidacy in literary studies requires of me and what, moreover, it will enable me then to do (Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin* 116). What I submit, therefore, is a collection of "metaphorical statements" meant to be rather inviting than "binding" in their conclusions (Arendt, Introduction 13) or, as Gail put it, a series of "images, which in their contradictions, seem to point boisterously to movement towards some other meaning" (Scott, *Spaces* 81; cf also 94), for "the methodological objectives" of this literary materialism, like the "founding concept" of Benjamin's "historical materialism," finally, "is not progress but actualization" (*Arcades* N2.2; cf also N1a.8), a movement of thinking and writing, and a pausing to make it meaningful.<sup>32</sup>

Consistent with the epistemology embodied in this practice of collecting, therefore, felicity must be measured, I suggest, less by quotas of discovery than by vectors of recovery. I mean, while there is arguably much that is new and of value in my reading itself of Scott, Marcotte, Dandurand, Fragoulis, and Gagnon, the horizon of all that, for me at least, a teacher

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<sup>32</sup> Or, as Gail says in a recent interview with Lianne Moyes at the back of the *Open Letter* special issue on her work, which it is worth quoting at length here for the way it rings with the intent of Benjamin's images (and because I only very lately learned of its publication): "It's time to democratize the novel... If one builds sentences such that the reader isn't totally hooked on the narrative, sentences which give pause in the way they relate to each other, via parataxis or grammatical torquing, for example, the apce opens for the thoughtfulness of the reader. That's what I'm trying to do" ("Architectures" 133-134).

of language and literacy in South Korea, who is now committed to using literature in that context as a pedagogy (as I'll describe in the conclusion), is my recovery thereby of a sense of what reading and writing means, requires, and can do. Modeled on the gesture common to many advanced literary studies, of returning to the realm of living memory a long forgotten writer or literary period or practice, I mean in what follows to recover my sense of what literature has to teach, and how that is best learned which I, and perhaps we, culturally speaking, have lost in our collective immersion in what Walter J Ong calls the "second Orality" of our electronic age (*Orality*), amidst "the multidimensioned 'continuous partial attention' culture of the internet?" (Wolf 22), and in the various incessant crises of the humanities and ruin of the university that seem native to our present, global, and technological moment. Thus, the "metaphorical statements" produced in the course of this reading and writing about *Heroine* are meant to "expose the sensual substructure" of an admittedly rather abstract field of study, as Arendt says of Benjamin's project (Introduction 13) and "return discourse" about literature and literacy "to its sensuous roots," as Eagleton likewise described (*Walter Benjamin* 150), "give material form to the invisible" affect of reading and writing (Arendt, Introduction 14), and "render it capable of being experienced" (14), finally, by a generation of students who are increasingly presumed to read rather video and the internet than books and stories, when they read at all, though presumably to much the same ends.

This comparative, theoretical and materialist project, therefore, may well be described, finally, as an erotics too of reading and literary study. The phrase, of course, comes from Susan Sontag's polemical "Against Interpretation," an essay in which she diagnoses "the principal affliction of modern life" as that "steady loss of sharpness" or dulling of our "sensory faculties" that is the increasingly evident "result" of how our "culture" is "based on excess

(and) overproduction" (13), a culture of "interpretation," she calls it, that "takes the sensory experience of a work of art [and of our daily lives, in turn,] for granted" (13). Thus, Sontag calls for an "erotics of art," which is to say, a "vocabulary of forms," those "explicit, complex, discussable" movements of sense, those technologies of composition, framing and making of art objects, a vocabulary that therefore can be "descriptive rather than prescriptive" and so can allow us to pay more "attention" to or to more effectively "reveal the sensuous surface of art" (13; emphasis added). My materialist, embodied, urban reading of the literary project, in that sense, is a response to that call to take up the task to "recover our senses" of what literary studies do and how and to what ends, to "learn to see more" and read more, and more effectively to "make our experience, of [reading], more not less real," by showing "how it is" and "that it is," instead of trying to discover only what a particular text means, so that the time it takes to read and learn to read well, and the risks it involves are become indeed all the more worth all the while (14; emphasis added).

# Chapter one – Staging my Literary Materialism through the World as a Book, the Reading Body, and the Pedagogical City

We are all of us learning to read all the time  
- I.A. Richards, *How to Read* (20)

Every theoretical effect is rooted in practice.  
- Pierre Macherey, "In a Materialist Way" (140)

Anyway - returning to divan.  
And lifting heavy volume of B's *Paris Capitale du XIXe...*  
A person could wander here for months.  
- Gail Scott, *My Paris* (18)

## The Problem of/with Literacy, and the Staging of Literary Materialism

I tried in the introductory chapter to give some several different accounts of that sense of crisis, broadly conceived, against which is set this *bodies learning to read stories in cities* project of mine. I will, again, in what follows and in chapter two speak to those economic and technological conjunctures compelling my ongoing reflections about the nature, ends, and means of (these particularly doctoral) literary studies, and I will return also to the realm of relative anecdote in conclusion to account for the very personal sense of vocational crisis with which, I think, it is incumbent upon any new or aspirant teacher to expressly engage. In the meantime, I would like here to frame these decidedly literary and idiosyncratically academic problems within a broader and perhaps even more urgent context, namely, the question (and problem) of literacy because, as the personal is to the political, you might say, so is literature

to literacy intimately bound.

Literacy, colloquially speaking, refers to the ability to read and is defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as "the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials" ("All About Literacy in Canada"; "Adult Literacy"). By extension, we speak also of computer literacy, Internet literacy, and financial literacy, among others, referring to a range of related abilities and a measure of consequent self-determination within a series of different contexts. Literacy skills, in this sense, are of crucial importance to achieving success in this age and economy of information that is ours. As the Canadian Literacy and Learning Network's series of *factsheets* illustrate, basic and better than basic literacy skills are of vital importance in the area of health care, justice, and citizenship, as well as employment and education.<sup>33</sup> As Chris Hedges put it perhaps more strongly, in his *Empire of Illusion*, literacy refers to the capacity to examine, compare, connect, decipher, and remember (47-48) the factual matters of the world in which we live and, by extension, it refers to the power to master "the art of entertainment," to "create a narrative" by means of which to organize our world (48), and to manipulate the "images" that are the "means" of achieving our purposes, whatever they may be (15). Thus, and perhaps even more so than the *knowledge* that Michel Foucault famously traces the wide ranging diffusion of, *literacy is power* (*Discipline and Punish*).

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<sup>33</sup> "Without literacy there can be no justice"; "Literacy is a key determinant of health"; "Literacy is not just a tool; it is a necessity for citizenship" (Canadian Literacy Factsheets, "Justice," "Health," "Citizenship"). Interestingly, given the terms of my reading of Mortimer J. Adler and Ezra Pound below, and for all its good intentions, that series of publications makes virtually no reference to the role of pleasure in relation to reading and literacy, other than in the "families" factsheet, where it is noted that "Family literacy programs emphasize the *enjoyment* of literacy for both parents and children, while also influencing broader growth and development in society as a whole" (Canadian Literacy, "Families"; emphasis added).

Nevertheless, and for all that very uncontroversial importance, it is distressing, and frankly shocking to me, as a candidate for an advanced degree in literary studies, to read about how legion are the signs that "Though many believe Canada is well-equipped on the literacy front, the fact is that nearly half of all adults have low literacy levels, meaning they are ill-prepared for the current demands of our rapidly changing world" ("Illiteracy in Canada."). Indeed, according to Statistics Canada's *International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS)* report of 2003, "42% of Canadian adults between the ages of 16 and 65 have low literacy skills" ("All About Literacy"), which is to say they are "below the level needed to participate effectively in today's society" (Canadian Literacy, "Older Adults"). This means that nearly half of all Canadians may be unable to read and understand bank statements, phone bills, medical prescriptions, or ingredients lists on food packaging enough to know how it applies to their own health and security ("The Adult Literacy Issue"). Michael Holquist describes Low literacy levels (LLL), citing similar United States' Department of Education reports, as "a term often used to describe people who do not merely read with difficulty but whose ways of reading differ significantly from those of the truly literate. Those with low literacy," he explains, "cannot glance at a text and get the gist of the message" (570). Instead, "they decode a text word by word, often lingering over multisyllabic terms," in the process forget what had already been decoded, missing "essential information" and so become "quickly discouraged" (570). In fact, only as little as 13 percent of Americans are said to be possessed of "reading proficiency," meaning that they are able "to perform such tasks as 'comparing viewpoints in two editorials'" (571), which is very far indeed from doctoral level reading skills in question here, and yet not unrelated. As Hedges again puts the drama of the situation, "We are a culture that has been denied, or has passively given up, the linguistic and

intellectual tools to cope with complexity, to separate illusion from reality" (44).<sup>34</sup> Having given up, or been robbed of the "tools" that literacy represents, we are "reduced he says to the level and dependency of children" (45) or, as I will describe in chapter two, to the state of addiction, which is to say, the condition of people whose "governing habit is the relinquishment of power, competence and responsibility" (53). Indeed, this is a problem.

What is, though, particularly unsettling about this, as a doctoral candidate in literary studies and to the teacher in me most of all, is the idea that such so-called crisis levels of illiteracy today may, in the final analysis, be inevitable; that, while the crisis is "*loin d'être marginal, il est traité comme tel dans les priorités gouvernementales*," says Maryse Perreault (in Roulot-Ganzmann). That "something so essential can [seem] so *unnatural* makes us uneasy," Holquist explains, and rightfully so (570; emphasis added). Literacy, he says, "is not natural" (569), in the sense that unlike our hearts and lungs, or our ability to see and hear, "language is made" (570). It "must be achieved" (571), which suggests that we may more often than not simply fail to do so. This begs, in turn, the question, which I've taken as mine here in this project as a whole, because it is also the question raised for me by the narrative in *Heroine*: what it is that makes the difference between the one and the other, between literacy and our cultural lack of it, between our learning to and failing to learn to read? Or, as I'll put the same question in chapter two, what is it finally that gets Scott's heroine up and out of her tub in the end and writing, where she might have continued to defer doing so, as she has all along and might, all the more easily, have continued indeed indefinitely? Where precisely

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<sup>34</sup> Indeed, Hedges writes that "Nearly a third of the nation's population," speaking of the United States, is "illiterate or barely literate," and he goes on to note that "it is not much better beyond our borders," where in Canada, for example, an "estimated 42 percent of the whole" population is either "illiterate or semi-literate" (44).



does the act of (writing) reading come from, and is there anything about that moment that is teachable?

This sense of crisis, or anxiety as Holquist prefers, is the horizon against which I set my reading of Scott's *Heroine*, like an invitation to think in different (and hopefully useful) ways about what reading and learning to read means and involves and produces. Before though getting on with that reading itself and its project, custom dictates that I lay out, first of all, the theoretical and methodological apparatus that supports and, in a sense, makes possible that practice of literary criticism that I am calling, here, a literary materialist project. Thus, I want first to articulate and illustrate the materialist assumptions at work already in chapter two and according to which a decidedly more concrete sense of what the literary is and literacy means is to be got, I argue, rather from a close reading of the literature itself than abstractly in advance and in theory. However, this sort of theoretical moment, erected by convention in advance of a close reading of a literary fiction, whereby the former enables the latter, in a sense, or frames it, legitimates and makes it legible in a way that it wasn't presumably before or wouldn't be on its own is complicated, to say the least, by the theoretical nature of the fiction in question here. As Diane Chisholm rightly argues, again, Scott's prose always already "incorporates and performs the theory we might bring to it" (Chisholm, "Paris, Mon Amour" 157). Chisholm, as I discussed in the introduction, above, is referring to the relationship between Scott's text and Walter Benjamin's, such that theory, broadly conceived as an intellectual posture or a way of reading and writing, must be understood as taking place at virtually every turn in Scott's text, in regular and ongoing ways, and so too, I have already described, is my own close reading theoretically inclined throughout and essentially towards the theoretical.

Moreover, I have described how Scott's work is so apt a choice of corpus here for the ways in which her fiction is about the whence and the wherefrom of the promise and the power of metaphor and the ability to read and write, and therefore not only raises but provides too the means of engaging with such theoretical, pedagogical, and methodological questions as I have been describing. I have also suggested, and in fact chapter one here is all about, how the theoretical apparatus, or literary materialism that this chapter one is staging here, like the methodology that I employ throughout, as I said, is made up of and shaped by the literary. I mean, inverting Marshall McLuhan's aptest and very productive dictum, that the *message* of the work here—namely, the provenance and power of the possibility of being metaphorical—is also its very *medium*, or the method by which it is to be produced and conveyed. As "the medium is the message," McLuhan noted (*Understanding*), so is my message also my medium, namely, metaphor and narrative. Thus, my introduction, earlier, of the model of Benjamin's figure of the collector, as well as his account of those dialectical images collected in the course of his materialist history, becomes all the more important here as my staging of that literary materialism depends upon and is organized around a set of figures, first, of the world as a book, of the intersection and contiguity of bodies and stories, and of stories in turn and cities. The narrative of that collection, in turn, through its three main sections, on *stories*, *bodies*, and *cities*, will alight upon a further collection of themes—including utility, risk, time, labor, and pleasure—that, like a cast of characters, will each have a role to play in the recursive drama of learning to read being staged here.

What follows then is a narrative during the course of which I will have occasion to speak briefly to the theoretical conversation about the epistemological function of metaphor and of literary forms generally; the ancient, rhetorical antecedents (and arguably the future) of

institutionalized literary studies; the so-called 'sensual revolution' that follows on the heels of the 'linguistic turn' in the humanities and social sciences; and the likewise recent (as well as long-standing) interest in the city among students and producers of the literary. Thus, while the earlier sections on the figure and embodied nature of literary practice and pedagogy invite and make legible the literary materialist assumptions that I developed in the course of my reading of *Heroine*, the later sections, on the literary and pedagogical city, are designed to provide for an increasingly detailed and legible map of what I call the space of difference where we are when we (learn to) read in materialist ways; that space in which the heroine at the outset is stuck, I will argue, and out into and through which in the end she steps. Thus, all of these figures, themes, and spaces, finally, raise and pose in different ways the question framed and figured in *Heroine* itself, as I said, that story of a woman putting off and then getting on with a practice of writing, about where the writing-subject-creating power of it (literacy) comes from, suddenly and at long last, what it looks like, what effects it engenders, and whether (most of all) it can be taught and fostered, for example, in my English as a foreign yet teachable language classes in South Korea.

## ***Rubbish, and the Book of the World***

Believe me, I have proved it; you will find more in the woods than in books;  
trees and stones will teach you what no other teacher can.  
- Bernard de Clairvaux, in William Mills, "Metaphorical Vision" (240)

I start then with William Rathje and Cullen Murphy's *Rubbish: the Archeology of Garbage*, in part, as I've said, to mark the still haunting absence of my chapter on Ducharme who, as the ambulant collector of detritus, Roch Plante, makes collage-sculptures out of what he finds discarded, and whose novels consequently are shaped by what Élisabeth Nardout-

Lafarge describes as a *Poétique du débris*. In part, too, I start with *Rubbish* in memory of Bill Reading's diagnosis of the *ruin* of the university which, by extension, suggests something like the *rubbish* of literary studies. Mostly, though, I just love the productive nature of the irony of finding a sign of the shape and the value of books and of reading, literally, in a landfill because, as Benjamin rightly noted, "there is no document of culture which is not at the same time a document of barbarism" ("Eduard Fuchs" 233) and so, in turn, is the opposite also true, that a landfill can have much of worth to say about the value of literacy and literature.<sup>35</sup>

*Rubbish*, then, describes that, being "among humanity's most prodigious, physical legacies" (4) and, notwithstanding the fact of its being defined by our having thrown it away, *thinking* it worthless, garbage remains of value for all that it has potentially to teach us about ourselves who discard it. Garbage, in this way, is said to be as valuable a source of information to the garbologist as it is a source of profit for the commodities traders who buy and sell it,<sup>36</sup> to which I add, in what follows, that Rathje and Murphy's rhetorical use of books

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<sup>35</sup> I also cannot pass up the opportunity to remark on the degree of relative accident determining the nature and extent of my corpus, generally, including the fact that if I had chosen instead to study at McGill, or elsewhere, I would not therefore have had the pleasure of working with Lianne Moyes, perhaps the most persistent editor and advocate of Gail Scott's work, and so I would very likely not have chosen *Heroine* to accompany my reading of Ducharme. Without chance, I not have found Bill Reading's book in a church basement bazaar or, in this case, come into contact with *Rubbish* without being the avid book lover and collector that I am such that my friend Carl leaving me his collection to care for when he went off on his year long travels in India and then, upon his return, allowing me to keep the one book (*Rubbish*) I had so thoroughly read and so made my own.

<sup>36</sup> I'm thinking here of the litter of old, monster sized televisions that are slowly all being replaced by plasma, high definition flat screens and that wind up therefore on the sidewalk on garbage day, or before, anyway long enough to be cut open and relieved of the wealth of heavy metals inside. I'm thinking also of those front yards in Chinese villages photographed by Edward Burtynsky, for his *Manufactured Landscapes* series, where piles of discarded green circuit boards are mined for their wealth of reusable metals. Indeed, says Chris Carroll, "people are [as] proficient at making trash" as others are proficient at recovering valuable resources from it, though often not without a number of significant, human and environmental costs associated with these kind of recovery efforts; especially where these are taking place in (being exported to) the developing world. See also the Burtynsky series, in the same show, on the Bangladeshi ship breaking beaches. Such sorts of recovered profits and recovery costs are the subject of this project as a whole in a manner of speaking, and of this chapter in particular.

and literary practices in the development of their arguments is a valuable resource to the student of literature too that I am become. Indeed, they argue that the "artifacts" that archeologists unearth, study, and eventually display in museums everywhere are often only so many admittedly very old and uncannily well preserved bits of someone else's trash, "remnants of behavior of the people who used them" (10). Present day landfills, therefore, may likewise "represent *valuable lodes*," literally truck *loads* and boat *loads* "of information that may, when mined and interpreted" by the garbologists who use "real" archeological means to "investigate human behavior 'from the back end', as it were" (14). Garbage, in that sense, can serve, they argue, in the production of "valuable insights," not only "into the nature of some past society . . . but into the nature of our own" (4; emphasis added). Thus, while the Fresh Kills Landfill on Staten Island in New York City, for example, provides members of the Garbage Project (operating out of the University of Arizona since 1973) with a rich fount of information and understanding about modern American society, their description, in turn, of such landfills and garbologies can provide the student of literature with a wealth of information and understanding about the methods and objects (or means and ends) of literary studies.

What interests me here then about *Rubbish* is the way in which the brute, "physical" facticity (12) of a landfill is figured in specifically *literary* terms, that is, as a "*sign* of human presence," an "increasingly frequent and informative *marker*" of our passage through and place in time and in space—which "compliments (and often substitutes for) [...] the *written word*" (Rathje 11; emphasis added). Garbage appears here as *legible*, not only in the literal sense that bits of labels on jars remain intact still so many years hence, or that the newspapers found in piles have not yet returned to the state of pre-legible pulp from whence they came

but, indeed, legible in the metaphorical sense also that "the sheer volume of the garbage that we create and must dispose of will make our society *an open book*" (11; emphasis added). What interests me, of course, is not the syntactical suggestion that societies are *literally* open books. The two are not indeed one and the same thing, for it is only the latter, the books, that I can pick up off the shelf and rest in my hand, on my lap, or on my desk and look forward and back through or write on in the margins of, or copy out parts of, or look up from, and then close and either treasure, sell, or hurl across the room in frustration as the case may be, or consecutively.<sup>37</sup> Society, on the other hand, is at once less tangible, and more so, more imposing, made as it is of shared or dominant hopes and laws and fears, as well as of stone and steel and glass and garbage, of bodies, buildings, means of transportation and places like parks to rest in. Books and societies are not the same and yet—or so the authors of *Rubbish* contend, I think usefully—there remains, in the midst of and against the background of such material differences, something "in" the differential "structure" of each that *corresponds*, or is "equivalent" to something in the other (Grosz, "The Time").<sup>38</sup> There is, they suggest, some mark of *resemblance*, to use Aristotle's word again, and some grounds for comparison

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<sup>37</sup> In response to an interview question about the importance in her writing of a *rapport d'adresse*, Gail Scott describes how, "when I sit down and read what I call a 'straight novel', it doesn't leave any room for me to intervene at all. There are no spaces, there are few mysteries; someone is talking to me without pausing and giving me a chance to say anything. It bores me," she says, "and it makes me feel angry," and I can imagine Gail hurling the book across the room then. I'm not sure where the image comes from of that hurling. I have never been able to find it again, though I don't think I invented it. I did though later find Aimee Wall, in her review of Kate Zambreno's *Heroines*, "so compelled to save a heroine in a book that it makes you want to throw a book across the room." (Wall np), which is all to the same good.

<sup>38</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, in her essay on "The Time of Violence," recalls Derrida asking, not "how violence is *like* writing, but rather, what is it *in* violence, what operative element *in* violence . . . is *equivalent* to the trace" (136; emphasis added). Similarly, the question for me here is not whether the landfill and the *literary* are identical to one another, so much as what, *metaphorically speaking*, "in" the one and "in" the other can be seen to be "equivalent" (136). I cite Grosz at length here for the way it looks forward to the thematics of violence awaiting us in chapter two.

between landfills and story books, some point of contact or contiguity that I find it useful to stop and reflect upon here, and that something I suggest is utility.

Society, Rathje and Murphy suggest, is *like* an open book, and municipal dumps are *like* so many pages in which are told (or can be read) "tales" about ourselves that, likely, "we as yet do not suspect" and which, nevertheless, will in "the future" provide us with a "key to the past" and could provide us, even now, with a "key" to our own present (11). Landfills provide us, as Walter Benjamin said of stories, with "counsel," "something *useful*," some "proposal concerning the continuation of a story which is just unfolding," some answer to the question 'what do we do now?' ("The Storyteller" 86; emphasis added). Landfills are, as stories are, useful, though, only to the extent that we (readers, garbologists) are able and willing to ask the question in the first place, "to tell the story so far" (86), or as Rathje and Murphy put it, so long as we are ready to do what it takes to "*make*" of our society an open book (11). Indeed, if stories are like landfills useful, then that resemblance and that utility depend, Rathje and Murphy's figure suggests, as Benjamin does too, upon a level of investment (call it a practice of reading) which it is the business of this project to interrogate and translate into pedagogy, and so I'll come back to this thematic of investment again throughout.

Books, then, (and stories as I call them in the title of the project as a whole), depending on how we use them, can be as useful as landfills surely are and literacy obviously is. Jean-Claude Lauzon's cult classic *Léolo*, for instance, illustrates how books can be useful, in different ways, where Réjean Ducharme's first novel, *L'Avalée des avalés*, which serves in the film to steady a shaky kitchen table upon which the mama (Ginette Renaud) is rolling the dough for her pies, and then *useful* later in a whole different sense as the boy who eats at that kitchen table, but feels he belongs rather elsewhere, in some other family, finds it and starts to

read.<sup>39</sup> Thus, this project is designed to account for the utility being ascribed here to the literary, and it does so by way of a careful collection and close reading of such and similar literary figures as we find in *Rubbish*. I should note though, and will elaborate below, that working with metaphors in this way is not without its challenges, in part because there are so many similar examples that it is hard to know just when to stop collecting. Indeed, the figurative use of books and literature is common in a way that only an industrial culture producing such amounts of disposable everything could understand, and particularly so in the wake of the so called 'linguistic turn' where, following Lévi-Strauss, Saussurian linguistics began in the 60s to be applied to almost every aspect of cultural production other than only language, including cities (Howes 1). Or, as Valentine Cunningham notes in the course of making his argument about the belatedness of reading and the "inescapability of [having to provide] instructions to readers about how to pursue this activity," that "literature heavily bombards the reader with scenes of reading" (Cunningham 5-6). Rathje and Murphy's image of society *as an open book*, in this sense, is only one of the more recent instances of a very old and ongoing rhetorical tradition – a tradition which, as Cunningham suggests, is going to be very instructive here (6).<sup>40</sup>

Indeed, the metaphor of the world as a book was "fundamental" to Christian societies,

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<sup>39</sup> *Léolo*, written and directed by Jean Claude Lauzon, is the magical and troubling story of a boy trapped on the cusp of two very different worlds, the one where he lives in relative poverty with his very, to say the least, peculiar family in 1950s Montreal, and the other, fueled by his reading of Ducharme's *L'Avalée*, a very much more satisfying one governed by his very revolutionary imagination. While that image of the utility of a book here is, well, useful, it serves mostly, and as I mentioned in the introduction, as one of a number of place markers for that absent chapter on Ducharme's work here.

<sup>40</sup> "The metaphor of the book of nature," a variation of which we find in *Rubbish*, "is at least as old as the Babylonians," notes William J. Mills (239), citing Ernst Robert Curtius' *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, who discusses the "book of nature" image at length (319-326), as does Clarence J. Glacken's *Traces on the Rhodian Shore* (203-205). The same figure is likewise, though in a geographical studies context, discussed in Livingstone and Harrison's "Meaning through Metaphor," and Yi-Fu Tuan's "Sign and Metaphor".



especially in the Middle Ages, and no doubt because, as the Apostle John put it, "in the beginning was the *word*" (in Glacken 17; emphasis added). St. Augustine, therefore, could speak of the "great book . . . of created things," and the poet and pamphleteer, Francis Quarles could write of how "The *world's a book* in folio, printed all / With God's great works in letter capital . . ." (in Curtius 323; emphasis added). That use of books as figures for the world in which we live and read and write have served, moreover, for many different, even conflicting purposes. Mills, for example, describes how the use of this world as a book figure in Paul's Roman Epistles "is concerned with the question of the extent to which pagans are to be blamed for their departure from true religion," which "clearly" they have had constant access to in the divinely invested world of "things that are made" (240). St. Augustine, on the other hand, uses the same figure, not to blame or exclude but to welcome rather and forgive "certain philosophers, most notably Plato," for their paganism, who needn't be condemned given that God could be known "through [their] knowing his creation," which clearly they had done (Mills 240). John Chrysostom drew similarly "equalitarian" conclusions from that figure in his homilies, such that the word of God is said to be made available not only to those who can buy books and read them but also to the illiterate (who could not read printed text), the poor (who could not purchase any such) and the foreigner (who does not know the language in which such texts are written). Thus, the classicist, Glacken, in describing the role that such figures played in the Renaissance battle between the church and the scientific community for control over school curriculums, remarks that in the seventeenth century "one read the book of nature not [any more] to find out about something else [i.e. God, the creator of nature], but to learn [rather] about nature itself" (Glacken 204-205; in Curtius 321). My own literary materialism, here, marks a further turn in this history of the use of literary figures, and of the figure

particularly of literature. I mean, where geographers, for instance, continue to refer to the ways in which books and the literary have served as so many (figurative) means of telling the history of our developing "attitudes towards the *environment* over the past two thousand years" (Mills 238; emphasis added), I take that geographer's figures of the environment as a book as a means of understanding not geography or the environment but the spaces and practice of reading.

The point, therefore, is methodological, namely, that regardless of what they are being used as figures for (whether of god, of nature, or the city), the use of a book as a figure can serve me as means of learning about literacy and the literary because, I contend, if Benjamin was right to say that "the expression 'the book of nature' indicates that one can read the real like a text" (*Arcades* N4,2), it also means that by way of such figurative books, we learn not only about the world being figured, but also about the practice of figuration. As Réjean Ducharme's anti-heroine, Bérénice Einberg put it, if the world is a text, then *un livre* is likewise *un monde* (*L'Avalée* 107). I mean, the different terms of the metaphor of world as a text, or landfill as a story book—the tenor and vehicle of the figure (Richards), the frame and focus (Black)—are interchangeable, reversible, dialectical. Indeed, the "grammatical structure of many metaphors allows for the *transfer of features in two directions*" (Levin 764), from both A to B and then B back to A again.<sup>41</sup> The figure, for example, "*the brook smiled*" can just

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<sup>41</sup> Note that the point here is not to enter into the debate being reported on by the authors of the *New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, in this case, between Samuel R. Levin and John Searle, nor more importantly to limit my understanding of metaphor to the reductive notion that metaphor involves the *transfer of a name* from one thing to another (cf. Ricoeur, *Rule 12*). What interests me instead is the multi-directionality being referred to, such that, in *La Québécoise*, as Régine Robin's narrator pauses to note the distance between the setting she'd imagined for her heroine and the reality into which she has in fact been put, she comments on the failure of the monuments of the city to represent her heroine's place and consoles herself by remembering how "*les symboles ont une histoire [et] peuvent inverser leurs signification*" (134-5).

as well be taken to be saying something about brooks (that, like a smile, they are pleasant to watch or to happen upon) as something about smiles (that, like a brook, there is a sort of liquidity to them, that they have a course to run, and can be poisoned, etc.). Or, while Graeme Gilloch describes how "in Benjamin's work the city is transformed into a text," he then goes on to note that the "counterpart to this metamorphosis (this metaphor) is that the text itself becomes 'urban'" (Gilloch 181). Thus, if in Benjamin's *Arcades Project* one encounters "the city-as-text," it is important also to see how likewise we find there "the text-as-city" (Gilloch 182). Metaphor, in this way, is not what Benjamin called a *One-Way Street*.

There is, I suggest, nothing gratuitous or accidental about this outburst of references to Benjamin in the midst of the central methodological claims that my project is making here. As I described in the introductory chapter, not only is Benjamin's place in a dissertation about Gail Scott's work almost inevitable, but his surfacing precisely in this methodological interlude, and with such a series of methodological *mots-justes*, makes a whole other kind of sense given the "contribution" (Pusca) that his project makes, in this case, regarding the dialectical, double, and therefore productive nature of the metaphors (images) here collected.

## **Method: The Epistemological Function of Figure**

The question of metaphor, though, is a large one, and larger by far than I have the time or space here to fully engage. For to pretend to do so would require that we return to read closely through Plato's dependence on metaphor even in the midst of his condemning the poets to exile from his *Republic* for the power of the tools they wield (cf. *Phaedrus* 267b; *Gorgias* 449a-458c; *The Republic*); and cf. Derrida, "La Pharmacie de Platon"). We would, too, have to read carefully through the relatively privileged position that Aristotle then accords

metaphor, by way of its place in the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*, as Paul Ricoeur does, whereby elocution is set up alongside argumentation and composition, and then rhetoric, in turn, which contains all three, remains on the same level as both physics and logic (Ricoeur, *Métaphore* 64). We would have to go through the long history a) of the "amputation" of the reason rhetoric is said to be akin to the business of philosophy and b) the "restriction" of what remains to little more than a "cataloguing of figures of speech," on through c) the record of rhetoric's by then inevitable disappearance in the mid-nineteenth century from university curriculums (Ricoeur, *Rule* 13), which Eagleton notes, interestingly, corresponds with the birth of literary studies proper (*How to Read* 12). Only then could we properly be said to arrive at the present conjuncture, and the intervention of philosophical and theoretical new rhetorics into literary studies, by way of I.A. Richards, Max Black, Paul Ricoeur, and Paul DeMan, *entre autres*, all of whom argue in different ways for a renewed attention to what DeMan calls the "epistemological function of rhetoric" ("Epistemology" 27).

It is not my intention, therefore, to rehearse here and rewrite, or otherwise intervene in the telling of a history that is already and amply well "surveyed" for instance in Paul Ricoeur's comprehensive *La Métaphore vive* (cf. also Levin 760-766). Nevertheless, and given the important methodological role played by metaphor in this dissertation, it is crucial that I do take a moment to locate myself and this project in relation at least to three of the most recurrent questions addressed by rhetorical theory, namely, questions about a) the relationship between metaphor proper and the other forms of figurative language collected under that rubric, b) the relationship between figurative (or decorative) language as such and its other, more properly literal uses of language, and c) the possibility, most important of all, that metaphor is indeed much more than only the decorative (which is to say paraphrasable,

discardable) practice of language that it is often made out to be. Instead, I will insist, again, and hope to illustrate that metaphors can be and are here to be taken "literally" (Arendt, Introduction 15) as "conveying cognition" (14), in this case, about the discipline and practice of literature and the role that the literary/rhetorical once played and must play still on the margins of literature, politics, and pedagogy.

The first point to make then is to note the ambiguous status of metaphor as both genus and species of figurative forms of speech. As Ricoeur puts it in his discussion of Aristotle's definition, "*le même terme désigne tantôt le genre (le phénomène de transposition, c'est à dire la figure comme telle), tantôt une espèce (ce qu'on appellera plus tard le trope de la ressemblance)*" (Ricoeur, *Métaphore* 24; emphasis added). Similarly, at the outset of his introductory *Metaphor*, Terence Hawkes attempts to distinguish between "the various forms of 'transference' called *figures of speech* or *tropes*" (2), and he describes a number of different "'turnings' of language away from literal meanings towards [the] figurative" (2) – including *simile*, *synecdoche*, *metonymy* (3, 4) and symbol (67) – about which, he notes, that "it would be possible greatly to extend and complicate the list of these categories," which is precisely what "traditional rhetoric" had done before its relevance was extinguished completely from the curriculum (4), though "it is doubtful," he concludes, "whether much is gained" from such complication (4). Indeed, so much of the "mystery" surrounding the number and exact meaning of every item on such a list of kinds of metaphor, he says, "seems to disappear once the *basic formal and linguistic principle of transference* is seen either to animate them all or be what they describe" (4; emphasis added).

Thus, and for the purposes of this project, metaphor should be taken in this broadest sense of the term to refer to the genus itself of transference, that *basic formal principle of*

*transference*—literally, the *meta-phorein-ing*, or *carry-ing across*, or *movement* of figures of thought and speech and style in general—rather than only to that one particular species, the *trope of resemblance*, by means of which one thing (a book) is said to be ‘like’ another (society, for example), however more directly so, which is to say, without the intervening presence of the ‘like’ that is characteristic of what are more properly called similes than metaphors. Indeed, metaphor refers here to any form of language that poses or posits, and organizes some relation between two words, two ideas, or two things : A and B, love and roses, the world and the stage, books and society. Metaphor refers to the pair of terms that constitute it, the "two ideas" that are got in the "one" place, to borrow the formulation from Samuel Johnson (in Richards 93), the "two thoughts in one" that make of it an "essentially discursive phenomena" (Ricoeur, "Metaphorical Process" 147), both the "thing" and the foreign "name" it borrows from that something "else" to which it properly "belongs" (Aristotle, *Poetics* 1457b 6-9). That pair of terms has been called many things over the course of this long, theoretical conversation, including "tenor" and "vehicle" (Richards), "frame (word)" and "focus (sentence)" (Black), or the logical subject and its predicate (Ricoeur, "Metaphorical Process" 143), to take only three of the most felicitous. However, what interests me here is less the particular nomenclature used than the *structure* itself of remaining *differences* between the two terms being named.

I mean, while the species, metaphor, is categorized as a figure of identity, the broader and more flexible understanding of the metaphorical that interests me here involves both that point of identity, called the "ground" of the metaphor (Richards 118), and the range or space of differences that remain between its two terms. "We must not with the 18th century," says Richards, "suppose that the interactions of tenor and vehicle are to be confined to their

*resemblances*," for "the peculiar modification of the tenor which the vehicle brings about is even *more the work of their unlikenesses* than of their likenesses" (Richards 127). Beyond then the question of whether the differences or identity between a figure's two terms are relatively more or less important to its function, what I retain most of all from Richards is that there is a role for both, as Jan Zwicky writes, for "strictly speaking, 'x is y' is not a metaphorical claim unless 'x is not y' is true" (3). To engage with a metaphor, in this broader, genetic sense, is to engage with a "simultaneous assertion of interpenetration [sameness] and distinctness [difference]" (Zwicky 22). It is to engage, "simultaneously, [with] similarities and dissimilarities" (4), such that, as Ricoeur goes on to say, a "tension between sameness and difference characterizes the logical structure of likeness" (Ricoeur, "Metaphorical Process" 146). By metaphor I mean the whole of that logical structure, which I prefer to call *of difference* than *of identity*, and if I had to give a name to the theory of metaphor that most of all animates this project I would borrow it from what some have called an "interaction theory" (Black). However, because I am less interested in nomenclatures (theories) than I am in practices, it is useful to conclude this first stop on our coursing through the expanse of the theory of metaphor by noting the spatial character of this admittedly broad, genetic reference to the structure and principle of difference that metaphor here implies. Indeed, metaphor is a testament to how "all genuine understanding," says Zwicky, is "fundamentally *spatial* in organization" (2; emphasis added), and it is precisely for its provision of just such a sort of *space* or *stage* for the activity and practice of thinking through the question of the literary that the collection of metaphors I've gathered here is meant to be of use.

Clearly, then, my sense of the metaphorical is broad for, even though the metaphors I actually read closely through in what follows tend to be of that most evident 'A is B'

species—i.e. the world is a book, *un livre est un monde*—my sense of the metaphorical as such extends very much farther indeed to include, on the one hand, the syntactical and semantic relationships between two words or two etymons and, on the other, the much larger range of identities and differences operating in the space between texts placed in comparison, languages in translation, media in competition, and disciplines working in collaboration. This staging here is broad indeed. However, as much as such an inclusive and flexible definition of metaphor may prove useful to a project that intends to draw from a reading of particular figures, in *Heroine* first of all, conclusions and insights about the practice of reading generally, such a broad and sweeping definition is risky too, can just as quickly become something of a trap and, as such, threaten to drown the project as a whole in a bog of progress inhibiting ambiguity and slipperiness, which is to say, methodologically speaking, that I find myself at times, here too, in very much the same situation, again, in which we find the heroine of Scott's first novel, at the outset, stuck in her bathtub (state) of inaction and at risk of drowning in "confusion" (*Spaces* 47).

I mean, I remain necessarily sympathetic to any claim that all language is inherently metaphorical; that, in the history of any word (however old, plainspoken and hard-heartedly literal) is a point where some etymon or other jumps ship or moves in from across the border separating the proper from impropriety, which DeMan notes remains impossibly hard to police (DeMan, "Epistemology" 17). On the subject of whether the literal and the figurative can ever be properly distinguished one from the other, I am comforted to find that studies show "little evidence that adult comprehension of literal and metaphorical usage involve different psychological processes" (Levin 766). Similarly, I am seduced by suggestions like Gadamer's that there may well be a level of metaphoricity at work in even the very centre of logical



thought, at the root of every form of classification, a hypothesis that, Ricoeur notes, "*ruine l'opposition du propre et du figuré, de l'ordinaire et de l'étranger, de l'ordre et de la transgression*" (*Métaphore* 33). At the same time, and crucially, and though there may not often be a "reliable way to determine, in a given case, whether an utterance is metaphorical or not" (Zwicky 15), or where the border is between the metaphorical and the non-metaphorical resides, my own admittedly broad sense of the metaphorical requires that such difference not be washed away completely by my ascriptions of identity between language as such and metaphor. As Zwicky puts it, "the existence of a metaphor is dependent on the existence of a non-metaphorical way of looking at things" (Zwicky 14). "Metaphorical language depends on non-metaphorical language the way communities of plants and animals depend on supplies of fresh water. Or better: the way the art of healing depends on the presence of injury and disease" (Zwicky 30). Thus, and like the heroine in her tub who, trapped by the "double bind of femininity" and the "metaphor of literary paternity" that Guilbert and Gubar amply describe (66, 9), such that, as I'll discuss in chapter two, she is unable to start writing until the very end, nevertheless, and "through" those contradictions, so do I avoid remaining mired in the cross-currents of these theoretical debates and to write instead on through this methodological detour, back to the actual figures I've been collecting, by the force of the conviction, or recollection finally that metaphor remains today, as it was for Aristotle, a "verb" (Ricoeur, *Rule* 25), an activity, ongoing and in process rather than a thing, complete and wholly circumscribable as either this or that. In the end, what matters to me is less the identity of metaphor (as opposed to its others, both literal and figurative), and much more its "process" (Ricoeur, *Rule* 25), namely, the process of learning to know from and about the literary. As I have already described, then, knowing and learning how, in this context, to metaphorize well

(by which broadly speaking I mean to read and write well) is simultaneously the subject of this dissertation and its method too.

Getting back, therefore, to where this whole theoretical detour originated, and to the notion that metaphors, and a reading of metaphors (literature) could serve as a method of acquiring information and theoretical understanding about anything at all runs right up against a series of assumptions embedded in all the questions we've discussed so far; assumptions that suggest it is in fact exactly otherwise with metaphors. Indeed, there is a "strong line in western philosophy," reaching as far back as Plato, "which has denied to metaphors and their study any philosophical seriousness" (T. Cohen 1), any "capacity to contain or transmit knowledge," "direct connection with facts," or even "genuine meaning" (3). It is a tradition, often represented by Plato and John Locke, who consider metaphors to be, rather "frivolous and inessential, if not dangerous and logically perverse" (3); rather "a hindrance," it is said, than "a help to any serious cognitive pursuit" (Berggren 237), something of a "perennial problem," a "recognized source of embarrassment," and "fault in discourses that seek to inform and instruct" (DeMan, "Epistemology" 13). From this point of view, metaphorical speech is taken to represent a sort of "excessive power" used to "seduce and mislead" (13), which we must "be free from" (11), learn to "control" (11), "delimit" or otherwise "circumscribe" (11). Certainly, it would not do, therefore, to presume to use metaphors as means of producing and acquiring a doctoral level of knowledge.

And yet, as I said, that is precisely what I have elected to do here, in my reading of *Heroine*: to work with metaphors as if from them there were in fact something to be gained. I do so in good company, moreover, given DeMan's insistence, in his essay on the "figural of language" (11) and the "rhetorical dimension" (12) or "tropological structure of discourse"

(20), etc., that however we might wish it to be otherwise – and he cites John Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding* as an exemplary instance, indeed, as the most "eloquent denunciation of rhetoric" available ("Epistemology" 13) – "we cannot be freed from it altogether" (14). He suggests, as others have also, that such figurality "pertains to the very possibility of writing" (11) and that there is no way of "policing the boundaries that separate the name of one entity from the name of another," as I noted earlier, for "tropes are travelers, smugglers of stolen goods" (17).<sup>42</sup> Not only therefore is it "futile to try to repress the rhetorical structure of texts" (27), but neither can rhetoric ever truly "be isolated from its epistemological function" (27). Rhetoric is, DeMan goes so far as to conclude, "an epistemological discipline" (28), a way of knowing, to which I add only that this project takes such conclusions as founding assumptions to be tested against (or, alongside) Scott's *bons mots* about narrative being a way of learning to know.

Far from assuming then that it is possible to distinguish, definitively, one use of language designed to "inform and instruct" from others designed "to please and delight" (T. Cohen 2), or to confirm that metaphor in turn is "somehow detachable from language" (Hawkes 35ff), that it is possible, even desirable to have language use devoid of metaphor (Hawkes 15), I consider that metaphor (which is to say, language that may also please and delight) is essential, even critical to the business of informing and instructing. Nor again am I alone in acting, thus, in response to "Plato's denigration of art," on the assumption that, far from lacking "any direct relation to knowing," art is possibly its central "implement" (T.

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<sup>42</sup> Hence, in part, the appeal of Simon Harel's *Braconnages Identitaires*, for his deployment of that same sort of crafty and creative but ultimately illicit logic in the context of identity and national literature, which we'll have plenty of occasion to think about in chapter two.

Cohen 5). Like Max Black who argues for the "cognitive status" of metaphor (in T. Cohen 3), or Ricoeur who, on the question of the "semantics of metaphor ... invests metaphors with meaning" (in T. Cohen 4), I hope to show in what follows that we should all the more urgently learn to "read in a properly rhetorical manner" (27), or in comparison, which is to say, "not in terms of explicit statements but in terms of rhetorical motions," back and forthings between statements of difference (14) and "denotatively," says Scott (*Spare* 17), and "with an interest to what's between sentences" ("The Conversationalist"). This way of reading and these assumptions about learning (and eventually teaching) that they enable are what I mean when I describe the literary materialism I am staging here.

## **An Imperfect Collection of Literary Figures**

In what follows, then, I think through the question of what literature and literacy means in the same materialist ways in which, for example, Benjamin thought about the nineteenth century, that is, "in images" (Wolin 213), or "metaphorically" and "poetically" (Arendt, Introduction 13-14); here, by way of a collection of figures (of books, bodies, and cities) taken "seriously" (Squibbs), "literally" (Arendt, Introduction 15), and according them, as Vico put it, "their full native propriety" (in Mills 238), which is to say, an "epistemological role" (Mills 237).

For example, I find in the claim, by the Renaissance physician, Paracelsus, that "the *whole earth is a book* or a library 'in which the pages are turned with our feet' . . . 'pilgrimly'" (in Curtius 322), an implicit, if only latent further claim that, not only is the physical world as legible as books are, if somewhat differently, but that the practice of reading, of making legible, inversely, may well be seen, metaphorically speaking, as an instance of some

particular way of moving about and through discursive space. This neologic ‘pilgrimly’ of Paracelsus’ should not of course be taken to mean that reading is a bi-pedal sort of practice, a means of moving about on two feet – though we can of course read and walk at the same time, if with caution. Rather, reading can be taken (however out of context) as characterized by and contingent upon the *devotion* of a *pilgrim*, from the Latin, *peregrinous*, meaning a *traveler*, a *stranger*, someone who moves along *intentionally* and *purposefully* or, as the critic and poet, Stephen Collis puts it, "not disinterestedly" (Collis 21). Though the figure of the earth as a book may originally have been intended, I noted earlier, as one part of an ongoing argument against medieval scholasticism and for the idea that learning is got from books only as much as from some relatively direct experience of nature too, my interest in that metaphor here resides elsewhere. Indeed, what I find useful especially is that reference to *interest*, or *intention*, or *devotion* that functions as the point of identity, that something simultaneously *in* pilgrimage and *in* reading that makes the figure legible to me, that is, the *ground* of the figure of reading as (differences notwithstanding) a pilgrim’s sort of progress.<sup>43</sup>

Paracelsus’ figure, then, is legible and useful insofar as it compares to, recalls, and calls into question the literary critic, Matthew Arnold’s classic account of reading, for example, as ideally *disinterested*. In his "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," Arnold argued, famously, that "the business of the critical power" is "to see the object (of criticism) *as it really is*" (261) with "disinterestedness" (270). It is "simply to know," *disinterestedly*, "the best that is known and thought in the world" (270), that is, "without the

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<sup>43</sup> The emphases here are meant, of course, to recall again Grosz’s discussion of Derrida in her "The Time of Violence."

intrusion of any other considerations whatever" (268) and "irrespective of practice and politics and everything else of the kind" (268). Reading Arnold all these years later, of course, one wants to know how it can even be possible to read without interests, intentions, or what Paracelsus' figure suggests might be called *devotion*. Stephen Collis, for one, does a wonderful job of showing how there is nothing, or very little at all, beyond the promise of and call to disinterestedness in Arnold's own essay, an essay notably that serves as the introduction to the poet-Arnold's first ever collection, not of poetry, but indeed of criticism, and is therefore fundamentally self-interested. Collis explains how, having just "given up poetry" for criticism (13), the critic-Arnold would, of course, be *interested* in any account whatsoever (his own in this case) of how criticism is not, as it seemed to him to be, "a baneful and injurious employment" (259). Of course Arnold wants his new-chosen profession to have purpose and value and meaning, naturally.

Still, many have followed Arnold along on this *path of greater disinterest*, a path that is "at least as old as Plato" (Collis 13) and leading straight to the anxiously influential Harold Bloom (16). All that, Collis insists, does not change the fact that "most literary criticism is based," inevitably, if not explicitly "on calculations of interest" (14). Valentine Cunningham's so-called post-theory *manifesto*, for example, is committed both historically and theoretically to the idea that "Reading always comes after theory" (Cunningham 3), that it is, always, "inevitably belated" (4), always "posterior work" (4), in the sense that "readers arrive at the book laden with presuppositional baggage," what Cunningham polemically calls *Theory* and what he might have called *interest* or a *pilgrim's devotion*. Dis-interest, consequently, that "common fantasy of the independent, the natural reader, of men and women quite alone with the text, making sense of it on their own unaided efforts," "unschooled," and "*uncontaminated*

*by givens and presuppositions*, by prejudices and doctrines, especially not [by] anything that might be called theory, or [especially] Theory," or "interests," practical and otherwise (5; emphasis added) – all such supposed disinterest is a myth. Indeed, Cunningham notes, "to get on with reading a work, we have (already) to know how to" do so, must already have learned how to "proceed with it" (4). Readers must come "prepared" to the practice of reading (5), must take up what Daniel Coleman calls the "posture of reading," which he describes as always come before the practice of reading itself (*In Bed* 7). As "no language" has ever been "neutral" (Brand), neither is any reader "innocent" (Cunningham 5), or disinterested, and least of all was Matthew Arnold.

Thus, (and here we come back to the medieval Paracelsus's figure and its legibility), Stephen Collis shows how for the poet and critic Phyllis Webb, "reading" is an experience not of the "repression" of interests but, indeed, of "*devotion*" (Collis 16). Devotion here means, as far as Webb, the poet, is concerned, that the "proper response to a poem is another poem" (in Collis 12). The *proper* of literary criticism, that is, is *impropriety*. It is "to appropriate," Webb says, *to make it* someone else's poem, *one's own*; but only "if such appropriation is as much a *devoted* response," a *making oneself its own* or *opening oneself up to* the poem in turn (Collis 16). To appropriate, which is the business of criticism here, is to "make this [poem] one's own and (simultaneously) *to belong to* this as its own" (12; emphasis added); "to be as much appropriated as appropriating" (19). Reading and criticism are taken here to represent an engagement *as if* with one's "kin" (16), a commitment to a "shared response-ability" (17), a practice of entering into a "space" of common and contested interests (17), into a "commons" even (21), an "economy ... marked by interest [and] enthusiasm" or otherwise (14). These "words," too, "excite me so much" for my readings of reading here, as Scott again says

(*Spaces* 85), making sense as they do of the commons I feel I share at times with Scott's heroine in her bathtub state and of the ways in which I've taken my reading so personally and then taken, consequently, so damn long to finish. And that is the point, actually, that while Collis' *Phyllis Webb and the Common Good* figures the impossibility of Arnold's disinterest in terms of the bonds of kinship, what I retain most of all from his reading of Webb's "poetics of response" is how, as in Paracelsus' image, reading is figured as an act of *devotion*, a sort of pilgrim's progress and a practice, consequently, that is not, as a pilgrimage is not, without risk (Collis 17).

Indeed, reading is, as a pilgrimage was, risky. In one section of his "look back on the history of travel," for example, called *The End of Elsewhere*, in which he recounts his encounter with those places where "the tourist ruts have been plowed the deepest" (4), Taras Grescoe describes the pilgrimage route through northern Spain, "the Camino de Santiago de Compostela" (5), as a "medieval pilgrimage" whose "reputation" was of "an exacting and *perilous* path of penitence" (25; emphasis added). Indeed, he recalls feeling "like a pilgrim," fueled by "an overwhelming connection with all those who, over the ages, had *risks*d losing home, family, and life itself to follow wild rumors of some marvelous place at the edge of the earth" (14). Reading, too, can be dangerous, says Daniel Coleman in his account of the practice of reading in spiritual, political, and even erotic terms. It is spiritual, he explains, in the particular sense that "spirituality (is) not just an inner feeling or a psychic state, not merely inner work or the process of interior discernment," but "the shape and structure we give to the basic human longing . . . to be meaningfully connected" (*In Bed* 9). In that "longing," he adds, there is "an erotic" aspect that must be acknowledged (92). As such, "the desire to read in the first instance is simply outward-reaching energy . . . [that] flies in the face of solipsism, the



myth of autonomy and self-completeness" (14), which we've just seen an instance of in Arnold. It is the outcome moreover of a longing for that "Experience of fusion, [which] like all erotic experience is startling and profound" but "can also however be *dangerous*" (16; emphasis added). Reading, "like all eroticism," "can vitalize, but it can also *burn*," for "Sometimes the fusion of selves becomes a *confusion* of selves" (16; emphasis added). Indeed, "there are people who have been damaged by what they read," even readers of that ostensible "good book," the Bible, including "midwives" burned at the stake in its name, "black men and homosexuals" lynched, and "first nations people" imprisoned in its pedagogies (15-17; emphasis added). Or, as Robert Jensen explains, compellingly, by way of a logic he applies equally well to the question of race and of porn, even the straight white males, rather purveyors of than explicitly targeted by what Coleman calls the "sadism, hatred and prejudice" (17) of racism and pornography, are damaged by the images and textualities that they themselves both produce and consume.

Anticipating the turn towards the 'body' that this chapter will take in a moment, I note that Coleman shows, in this sense, how "books leave gestures in the body" (12). They "become us" as they are "absorbed into the very fibre, bone, blood and tendons of our being" and, as such, "shape what we see, how we hear, what we perceive through touch or taste or smell" (98). When we read we "risk vulnerability and openness to the unfamiliar and unknown" (58). Reading "positions us in relation to the world around us, to others" (26). The riskiness involved here is rather evident, of course, when confronting such books as "we must admit, are major purveyors of commodification" (27), says Coleman of Harlequin Romances and self-help books, purveyors of the idea that everything and everyone is salable, or should be, and compelling us thereby to "live in constant distraction . . . dissatisfaction and endlessly

deferred fulfillment" (26). As such, "Some texts should be feared or distrusted" (37). In other cases, it is not the books themselves but the way we engage with (or consume) them that can make reading risky. Indeed, sometimes "readers so lose track of their actual lives" amidst the action of some engrossing fiction or other, that our real life relations suffer from the lack of attention and from atrophy (16). Reading, in this sense, can function not only as a key to unlocking such new realms of *experience and education* as the pragmatist John Dewey wrote about, but (deploying an image that will also play a big role in chapter two) as a "wall" too "to keep the world out" (in Coleman, *In Bed* 46), displacing, disembodiment, and alienating us from each other (50), in many ways like drugs and addiction can do. Reading can "get in the way of growth," but only as much as it can also stimulate and enhance it (45), and the question that this project asks, again, is what exactly makes that difference. How (by what pedagogical means) can the risk of reading, if never actually removed, be rather worked through than thought only paralyzing; and that, again, is precisely the question that *Heroine* "rubs" us all up against (*Spaces* 79).

I will, throughout, return to this question of risk, of the seemingly violent affects that reading is associated with, of the different stakes involved in how and when we read or learn to, or fail to, and particularly so in chapter two through what we might describe as Gail Scott's career long interrogation of the risks and returns of writing and being read; the risks, for example, that follow from her decision to give up on a successful career as a young journalist to become instead a writer of experimental prose (*Prismatic* 95), or the risks her heroine faces, first, as she leaves her home town for the big French city and, then again, as she steps out of the bathtub (or the cafe) and back into its murderous, literary spaces. Real as they are, though, the risks involved in reading and learning to read in this early, post-literate 21st century

information age are well worth, i think, the while they require considering the risks involved in failing to, as I've already described; how much more Scott's heroine would have risked, arguably, had she stayed, as her mother did, in her hometown or bathtub in the end as at the outset (*Heroine* 132). I'll come back, as I said, to these and other specific narratives of risk and reward, and stay for now with my growing collection of figures of reading and writing in order to draw from these another set of usefully pedagogical and methodological themes to carry forward into (or, which I have carried out from) my reading of Scott, in particular, and of literary studies generally.

To take another example then of the utility of that sort of *world as a book* figure that I am collecting here, my interest inhabits not the mimeticism of Montaigne's description, in his *Essais*, of "*ce grand monde*" which he sees as "*le miroire où il nous faut regarder pour nous connaitre de bon biais*," but the way he goes on to add that "*je veux que ce soit le livre de mon écolier*" (in Curtius 322; emphasis added). What interests me, indeed, is the indication, not only that the practice of reading he imagines is explicitly interested – "*je veux ...*" – but that it is an interested practice precisely because of how the book of the world is a school book, precisely, one from which there is something we stand to learn, though the question remains (open still) regarding *what*, exactly, that lesson's contents are, and *how*, in turn, these are conveyed.

Galileo's claim, likewise, that the "*great book of the universe . . . lies before our eyes*" is not of interest for the role it played in contemporary debates about the scholastic curriculum (in Curtius 324), as I've already noted, but for the question it begs about *how* we learn to read. Indeed, Galileo insisted that if from reading we stand to learn something, then we must in turn, and first of all, learn to read, for "*we cannot read if we have not learned the script in which*

[the great book] is written" (in Curtius 324). Galileo, then, does not only raise that pedagogical question that I have taken here as mine own – the question of what and how we learn to read – but confirms also, and ahead of time, that which technological advances in neuro-imaging have only recently been able to show for certain, namely, that the human brain is far from being hard wired with the genetic capacity to read (as our seeing and hearing is), so that reading remains something we must learn to do. As Holquist and Marianne Wolf too suggested earlier, "we were never born to read" (Wolf 3), for "unlike its component parts such as vision and speech, which are genetically organized, reading has no direct genetic program passing it on to future generations" (Wolf 11). Thus, the methodological question remains – *how?* – to which we respond by way of Edward Young's figure of Shakespeare as "not a scholar" but a master nonetheless of both "the *book of nature* and that of mankind" (in Curtius 323; emphasis added). For if there is, in this sense, more than only one book available to our reading selves – not only the book of nature, but a book also of culture too, and many more of each besides – then learning to read, and learning from reading, must at some point depend upon some investment of what I've been calling interest or agency, some act of volition and will at the very least to choose (first of all) what and which book to read and learn from.

These pedagogical and methodological questions, and those thematics of interest and agency, utility and risk, that I've drawn from my collection so far, they are all so many themes and topics to which I return at length in what follows. They are elements, fragments, (literary) objects collected together in response to the question, the pedagogical and methodological question of the literary, of how to read. As we return now to Rathje and Murphy's figure of a landfill as a book and of reading as a sort of garbology, it is important to recognize, however, and insist upon the fact that, if reading is something we have to learn to do (because while it

may not be natural, it is valuable or useful still); and if that necessity begs in turn the methodological question of how we learn to read – by what act of which agency or will, and from whence – does learning come to pass; it is important, therefore, to remember the caveat embedded in Jacob Grimm's version of the world as a book image, that "One may call natural poetry life itself in pure action, a *living book*," he said, "full of true history, which one may begin to read and understand at any page, but which *one has never done reading* or understanding" (in Curtius 325; emphasis added). Indeed, these interested and pedagogical questions about the literary and literacy, like my practice of collecting figures of books and practices of reading, and like the practice itself of reading figures of any sort, Grimm suggests, will remain in the end open still and unanswered questions, or *à l'imparfait* as Gilles Marcotte will say (*Roman*).

## **Rubbish Reprise: or, the Rhetoric of Reading**

I will deal with each aspect of this question by fragments, by unconnected pieces, because the passing from one area of knowledge to another fans the pleasure and ardor of reading.

- Jahiz, *The Book of Animals*; in Alberto Manguel, *The City of Words* (1)

My feeling of pleasure is worth analyzing.

- Daniel Coleman, *In Bed with the Word* (106)

I turn back then to that image in *Rubbish of society as an open book*, landfills as so many pages of fiction, and garbology as a practice of reading because I find there a representation, as promised, of the utility of literary practice, that is, of how the *literary* is, as *literacy* surely is, to state the obvious, useful. To Rathje and Murphy, the literary is useful, first of all, for the ways in which it serves a mimetic function in the sense that a book, like a city dump, acts as a "mirror" (11), reflecting who we are as a society and how we behave. It is useful, in that sense, and valuable therefore for *what* it represents (in this case, society), for

how it *contains* something to communicate, some subject matter; how it is full, they say, of "the power to inform" (11). The mimetic, of course, as Ducharme's Bérénice likewise insists, is only the first, and not even the most important part of the answer here to the question of utility. Indeed, in her account of a recently acquired love of reading, Bérénice describes how the value of a book has come to reside for her (as the value of a landfill resides for the garbologists), not only in *what* it contains, *what* information it conveys, or how it *informs*, but in how moreover it has the power also to *form*, to give shape to, and *deform*, *transform*, or *reform* as the case may be, or compel and constrain the possibility of acting otherwise, *free*-ly, as the graffiti says on the wall behind Scott in her author's photo from the 1987 edition of *Heroine* :

*"Je ne cherche pas à me souvenir de ce qui se passe dans un livre," Bérénice says. "Tout ce que je demande à un livre, c'est de m'inspirer ainsi de l'énergie et du courage, de me dire ainsi qu'il y a plus de vie que je ne peux en prendre, de me rappeler ainsi l'urgence d'agir. Si presque tous les mots de cette nuit ont passé sur mes yeux comme l'eau de la mer sur les flancs d'un navire, les rares mots que j'ai retenus ont gravés dans mon esprit une marque indélébile"* (Ducharme 107-108).

Bérénice here wants, not so much to accumulate information, as in to comprehend, but to apprehend rather the stories she reads. She cares, not for the words themselves, or what they say, what subject-matter they contain, but for how they subject her, rather, make her suffer or endure, though with pleasure (to *éprouver*), a delicious feeling of inebriation and of (open) space. What she wants is to be moved by the gust of a grand impatience and a magnificent desire, to be *told* that there is much more to life than can be had, and so, to be *reminded* of the urgency of acting (lest it should otherwise have become too late). What is important here to Bérénice is not the reference of the words, what they say, but what they mean, their force, their *affect*. What interests her, and what interests Rathje and Murphy finally, is the effect that their practice can have, the way, again, that "books leave gestures in the body" (Brand, *A Map*

191), and what interests me, in all this, of course is how exactly such *leaving* happens.

This notion of affect then is another, and a very important, one of those very broad themes, simultaneously contemporary and ancient, that (as I suggested above) my project here prefers to raise and engage with by way of a reading, rather, of literary texts and figures (and Scott's most of all) than of a body of relatively theoretical references, like Brian Massumi (*Parables of the Virtual*), Eve K. Sedgwick (*Shame and its Sisters*). I mean, affect theory as such refers to a sweeping range of cultural work touching on a wide array of disciplinary interests that engages with the feelings and sensations in the body in ways that remain open to the cultural, technological, and political resonances these produce and reflect (or refract). Affect theory, in this sense, can arguably be seen as a contemporary version of (or call to return to) a project that literary studies proper were born of and replaced, namely, rhetoric. As Cicero put it, the classical rhetorical function of language use and study (what we now call English) was not only to instruct, but to delight and move also; indeed, to instruct by way of delight (Dixon, *Rhetoric* 51). I might even suggest, therefore, that my reading of Scott participates in the so-called revival of the ancient study of rhetoric taking place in composition departments most of all (Connors et.al.), and in literature proper too (Scholes 734; Deman, "Return to Philology" 25-26; Eagleton, *How to Read* 11). Certainly, that is how I understand my response to the ways in which Gail's writing endeavors for example to articulate a new kind of heroine, however, but only really succeeds to the extent that it admits of its own decidedly ancient (non-modern) forms (Scott, *Spaces* 123).

Certainly, Scott's writing as a whole can be understood as speaking to and engaging with this world of affect, and it is this level of engagement which I hope to translate into my own understanding of the practice and learning of literacy and literature. "Writing a novel,"

Scott says, "is profoundly about *affect* on some level. I think that's why it's still around. The thing that makes a novel work is that, at some point, if you succeed with your project, you *touch* some kind of button or nerve that is so incredible, that nobody has touched before. That's when you write a really good novel. You *touch* something. And it is about affect as a screen for all the social and political and cultural and personal and geographical particles, captured somehow in syntax, which is music" ("In Conversation" with Moyes 209). Language, she describes, in her virtual walking tour of Montreal, is not only "a vehicle of communication," it "hits you like mud in the eye," material, concrete, gestural or jousteral, even musical. It is something to "fight over," she says, or indeed to fight with ("My Montreal" 5), which anticipates and in some way compels my interrogation in chapter two of the intersections of learning and violence. Likewise, although he uses somewhat different terms, Daniel Coleman refers to the affective in his description of how "reading does *a painful and a positive* thing at once: how it creates, he says, the isolated individual who extracts herself from the group," and how "that isolation is not as alienated as it looks, for reading is also a connection to others, an imaginative connection to the writer and to other readers by means of the tracks the writer has left on the page. And in this double process there lies the potential for the reader to be *changed* by what he or she reads" (*In Bed* 57; emphasis added).<sup>44</sup>

Documenting, better understanding, and so predicting that sort of change, I suggest, and eventually the violence of it, its addictive quality and its pedagogy is the horizon and aspiration of these, my materialist literary studies, which I am introducing, at this point, by

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<sup>44</sup> Coleman says elsewhere too that, "Although it would be easy to dismiss this activity as mere escapism as simply taking a break from the daily grind of reality, I want to argue that by learning to follow a melody you would never have invented on your own by comprehending a concept or imagining a world you had never heard of before, you are changed" (*In Bed* 83).



way of the figure provided in Rathje and Murphy's *Rubbish*.

Says Marianne Wolf, in her "story and science of the reading brain" called *Proust and the Squid*, that kind of change, or affect is very literally physiological. Referring to the way her own discourse "strays" from her main topic, as mine does incessantly from Rathje and Murphy's image, only then to return to it, she notes how "we stray often when we are reading" (Wolf 16), and that this sort of discontinuity is the source of what she calls the "generative," as opposed to the "literal" quality at the heart of literary practice "whereby," she adds, citing Darwin, "endless forms evolve from finite principles" (16). Indeed, beyond the merely literal, or mimetic function, a "generative capacity of reading parallels the fundamental plasticity in the circuit wiring of our brains" that allows us, indeed "invites, us to reach beyond the specific content of what we read" (17). Reading is possessed of a "generative nature," she says, citing Proust, that "contains a paradox," that is not unlike that cited by Coleman a moment ago, whereby "the goal of reading is to go beyond the authors' ideas to thoughts [and actions] that are increasingly autonomous, *transformative*, and ultimately independent of the written text. From the child's first, halting attempts to decipher letters, the experience of reading is *not so much an end in itself* as it is *our best vehicle to a transformed mind*, and, literally and figuratively, to a *changed brain*" (Wolf 17-18; emphasis added). Affect.

Rathje and Murphy's image of the mimetic function of the literary, by comparison, may at first glance seem to be rather conventional, limited, even timid. However, as J.L. Austin "disowns or dismantles 'performativity,' as the name of a distinct and bounded category of utterances that might be opposed to the merely 'constative' or descriptive, noting that 'every genuine speech act is both,'" that "there is finally no yes/no distinction between performative and nonperformative utterances," Eve K. Sedgwick describes (*Touching* 3-5), so is the use of

books and stories as figured in *Rubbish* meant to do more than only inform. Indeed, Rathje and Murphy's providing information about the methods, objects and conclusions of the garbologists' practice serves, ultimately, to compel us, their readers, not only to learn about, but also to take responsibility for (and eventually change) the way, as a society, we consume and produce waste. *The experience they provide us of reading society is not so much meant to be an end in itself*, in that sense, to borrow Wolf's phrasing here, *as it is our best vehicle to transforming that society about which we read and in which we live*. I mean, Rathje and Murphy seem to feel, and indeed are compelled to write by the feeling that we do not really read the "tales" that our mountains of trash have to tell about those who produced them, and that when in fact we do read them, we may not be inclined much to "recognize" those stories as our own (11), as if reality has indeed become such a fiction as to be simply dismissed and as easily silenced as a channel is on TV when changed. Their *Rubbish*, then, and these figures of the literary that it mobilizes are intended to provide, "not only behavioral insights but practical benefits also" (16), not only to "help define us, but to help *change* that definition also" (55). Their intent is, indeed, much more than merely mimetic.

Regardless though of the extent of such intentions, it is for the glimpse they provide into the conditions of the possibility of those informative and transformative powers being ascribed to books and reading here that the time I am spending with Rathje and Murphy is, finally, worth the while. I mean, on the one hand, where their account of garbology suggests that a book, like a landfill, can serve as a "mirror" – however, a "broken" mirror (11) – it is only in our investment of a particular kind of "painstaking effort" in the project that it becomes, in a sense, legible (11). We have, again, to *make of society* an open book if it's to attain legibility. Reading, they suggest, requires, as garbology does, the investment of some form of labour,

some effort. Recalling the figure of Benjamin's collector from earlier, or Scott's sense that to write is "to 'relate' things" ("In a Conversation" with Moyes 225), *Rubbish* suggests that you have to work hard to fit the "billions of fragments that may reveal little in and of themselves" (11) into ever more meaningful, "broader patterns" of sense until "the links between artifacts and behaviors, can be discerned" (19). That investment of effort, in turn, and crucially, would not obtain were it not for the expectation too of what they call a kind of "quiet excitement" (4), what others have called a measure of "enjoyment" (Jauss), a sort of *pleasure* or *jouissance* of the text in question here (Barthes, *Le Plaisir*). I mean, utility is necessarily, but not exclusively, a function of effort here. Indeed, in order "to understand garbage, you have to touch it, to feel it, to sort it, to smell it . . . to pick through hundreds of tons of it . . . sort and weigh and measure . . . (and) confront the sticky green mountains" of it (9), "you need thick gloves and a mask and some booster shots" (10). You have got to invest in the process to make something useful and valuable out of a pile of trash – as of a book, then, too – and the only motivation for doing so is that in the end there may remain some "yield in knowledge about people and their behavior, as well as about garbage itself" to "offset the grim working conditions" (10). Suggesting that knowledge is just as crucially a pleasure as it is, we know, a form of power – or that pleasure is knowledge in more than only the biblical sense – "this conviction" that some investment of effort should return some cash of knowledge "prompts Garbage Project researchers to look upon the steaming detritus of daily existence with (a kind of) *quiet excitement*" (4; emphasis added). You really got to work at it, and moreover *be excited* about doing so, *Rubbish* suggests, if anything useful is to be made of a practice of reading.

Now all this may seem an obvious, even a very banal conclusion to spend so much time

here coming to, that the profit of a practice of reading is contingent upon the investment of some amount of labour and the expectation of some form pleasure or excitement in return and, in a sense, it is. Nor do Rathje and Murphy provide any more detail about what precisely the labour and the pleasure, and so the utility and pedagogy, of literature may be beyond the analogy derived from the effort and excitement and the purpose of a garbologist's practice, which makes sense, given that theirs is not a literary or pedagogical project. And yet, what interests me in their representation of the roles of both labour and pleasure in relation to the value of garbage, and in the ways in turn they allow me to deploy these same terms in my own account of reading, is the fact that this (admittedly implicit) account of the literary differs from, and is yet fuller still and more inclusive I will argue, than that provided by some actual how to guides to reading, for example, by that great books curriculum advocate and reformist pedagogue, Mortimer J. Adler, or by the modernist poet and critic Ezra Pound, towards whom I turn briefly now.

### ***How to Read: Adler***

Knowledge and interest are ultimately inseparable.  
- Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination* (82)

Adler's *How to Read a Book: a Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading* is, as the cover design proclaims on its "completely revised and updated" 1972 edition, "a rare phenomenon, a living classic." Indeed, for a time, Adler's was "one of the most famous and influential of a whole series of similar books, pamphlets, and textbooks designed to teach the 'art' of reading" (McGann 103). It has, though, since become one of those books that, to my mind, you see everywhere in the bargain bin of used books stores and in church bazaars, but never new or open and actually being read. It has never appeared on any course syllabus I have seen or

might have taken (nor would I wish it upon anyone), and the only reason I own it and have read it is that a friend had had it on her own bookshelves for ages (from someone else in turn who had given it to her), had never yet used it, nor planned to, and so had given it to me following a long talk about this thesis project, as if I really needed yet another reference to integrate into this part of my corpus. Jerome McGann noted, in the early 1990s, that "it has been out of print for some time now" (103), and so I was very surprised indeed to see huge piles of it on display tables in South Korea's largest big-box bookstore chain, Kyobo Books, suggesting that it has not finally been put out of its misery, much I suggest to the misery in turn of the language learners here taken in by its dust-jacket promises. As McGann put it, in a way moreover that is not intended to be flattering either to Adler or to academia, it is an insistently "academic" text (103), "a four-hundred page tome written in a style that is at once clear, ponderous, and inexorable" such that "For all its title of 'How to', Adler's book resembles a series of academic lectures" (104-5). The product, he explains, of an anxiety related to that crisis of illiteracy that I described at the outset, and of a commitment to provide solutions, Adler's guide fails, though, precisely where Rathje and Murphy's *Rubbish* succeeds, and with far fewer pages needed in the process.

Briefly, Adler's guide opens in Aristotelian fashion with, and over the course of the next 300 pages develops (and then collapses) a series of distinctions between different *reasons* for reading, different *levels* of reading, and different *kinds* of reading materials. He notes, for example, the difference between reading for *entertainment*, for *information*, and for *understanding* (8-10), and he relates each of these, one to the other, hierarchically, on a scale of more to less valuable according to how each is more or less *active* or effortful: "the more active the reading the better" (5). As *Rubbish* too suggested, and as every teacher will no doubt

urge students to keep in mind, a reader must work at a practice of reading to make some value, some profit of it, for "a book is like nature or the world," in the sense that "when you question it, it answers you only to the extent that you do the work of thinking and analysis yourself" (Adler 15).

That rightful privileging of labour and effort, however, only sets up Adler's estimation that reading *for entertainment* – as opposed to reading *for information* or *understanding* – because it remains by far the "least demanding" sort of practice, he says, and requires the "least amount of effort," is therefore dismissed at the outset of Adler's guide as by far the least valuable (10). Indeed, Adler says, rather explicitly, that we might altogether forgo asking about the pleasure of reading in a book addressed, as this one is, to readers "whose main purpose in reading [is] to gain increased understanding" (3, 10). Thus, it would seem, the first thing we learn about how to read, well, in this most privileged of senses is to "not be much concerned with reading for entertainment" (10). Adler, typically, does not go quite so far as to say that understanding is a practice of *no pleasure*, that reading must *not* be fun. In fact, he says pretty much the opposite on at least a couple of occasions.<sup>45</sup> But, one begins at length to suspect that, given how little he does in fact say about the pleasure of reading and its relation to understanding, he might just as well have said directly that, when it comes to reading, understanding and pleasure are mutually exclusive because that, anyway, would have had the virtue of clarity.

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<sup>45</sup> Adler refers to what he calls the "appeal" of different forms of writing, and he insists that it is imperative, in order to read well, not to "resist" that appeal: "let it act on us" he says, let it "move us"; let us "make ourselves open to it" (205). Similarly, he will describe reading as a kind of movement back and forth between "what *interests* and what *puzzles*" (124; emphasis added). Interest and appeal here are taken to be cognate with pleasure and entertainment.

Moreover, having just demonstrated that the privileged criteria for determining the valuable from the valueless kind of reading practice is *activity*, Adler then begins (after only 15 of 300 some pages) to move away from his account of the different *interests in* or *reasons for* reading and into an account of different *kinds of readers* and *kinds of books* instead. To borrow a distinction from Eve Sedgwick, what starts out in Adler as a distinction between different *activities, practices* or *interests* – between the labour of enjoying, acquiring, and understanding, or comparing – has been reduced to a question of *identities*.<sup>46</sup> What had started as a question of *how*, quickly becomes a question of *what* and *who*. Thus, privileging *products* (books and readers) over *practices*, and *identities* over their *interests*, Adler's argument seems to suggest finally that greater value, which is to say greater understanding comes, after all, not from the greater amount of activity, as he had just been advocating, but from the reading of one kind of book or reader (person) as opposed to another. I argue, then, that Adler's guide is *unhelpful* and *confusing* in this respect – indeed, it is a failure – in the sense that after as many as two hundred pages in which he has been insisting upon such rigid and hierarchical distinctions, Adler in the end attempts now to collapse the one set of terms into the other. He tries to resolve into some form of identity or continuity that kind of difference that he's been so insistent upon erecting and maintaining all this time. This is *unhelpful* and *confusing*, not because there is no "connection between" reading fiction and non-fiction, between reading for entertainment and for understanding; not because there is no "underlying fact" (192) to ground the relationships that Adler tries, in the end, to account for; but precisely because there are

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<sup>46</sup> I will discuss this distinction from Sedgwick's thinking through the logic and figure of addiction and reading of *Madame Bovary*, when it recurs in chapter two below.

connections and he has all along been missing the opportunities available to him to make them clearer.

Indeed, there are connections between the excitement and the effort invested in a practice of reading, for entertainment and for understanding, both fiction and non-fiction, at advanced and elementary levels of ability, and it is precisely the job of a good guidebook, it seems to me, to lead the traveler (here the student / high school level reader) towards some new and relatively foreign place where those relationships can be accounted for and made increasingly coherent, or anyway legible. It is the job of a guidebook to do so, moreover, from some familiar point of departure and in some familiar kind of language – else, why bring a guidebook at all, if not to help negotiate the "shock and puzzlement" of the ostensibly foreign in the medium of the already known? Adler's "guide" in this sense fails to live up to its generic promise, for having spent too much time itemizing the differences and distances between fiction and nonfiction, elementary and advanced readers, or the several different reasons for reading, he runs out of the kind of time that would be required to articulate the connections obtaining nevertheless between them except, he admits, by figurative means. He has run out of the time required to "undertake" what he calls an "extensive analysis of *esthetic appreciation*," except hurriedly, as an afterthought, or figuratively, by way of "negation" and "analogy" (204; emphasis added).

Far be it from me of course to suggest that there is anything wrong with or misplaced in this decision itself to proceed by figurative means, that is, by way of metaphor in the broad sense of that term described above. The problem here is that he is forced in the end to rush, that he cannot therefore take the kind of time that needed, I will argue in chapter two and in conclusion, to make of narrative and figurative means *a way of learning to know*. Indeed, the



elaborate analogies Adler develops in the last third of his book between fiction and nonfiction fail, not because they are figurative, but because they are ill-prepared for and hurried. Indeed, in order for his analogy to function effectively as a guide from one to the other set of terms, it seems to me, each must first of all be given its own due and, precisely, Adler has spent no significant amount of time describing what reading for pleasure might mean, or what really happens at the elementary levels of reading ability.

The guidebook fails insofar as it does not, in that sense, make pedagogical use of the resources its users are already possessed of, which is to say, their ability to read at an elementary level and (presumably) for pleasure. It fails, in that sense, to heed what I have referred to as Aristotle's warning about the ways in which "the genius of metaphor" – that is, the ability to read, to metaphorize – "cannot be learned from others," for we always already possess it (in Ricoeur, *Rule 25*). That failure, moreover, is regrettable given how Adler himself says in the course of his account of the later (interpretive) stages of analytical reading, for "you proceed," he says, "from what you do understand to the gradual elucidation of what is at first relatively unintelligible" (125; emphasis added).<sup>47</sup> And yet this is precisely what Adler's guide book does not do. Having spent so much time on the right hand set of his analogical terms (understanding, advanced levels, reading nonfiction), and virtually dismissed those on the left (entertainment, elementary, fiction) until the very end, it is as if he had collected a whole series of beautiful images and descriptions of the places (practices) to which his guide is supposed to lead its readers, while the names of these places themselves, and his

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<sup>47</sup> Ezra Pound, to whose *ABC of Reading* we will be turning, presently, makes very much the same point when he notes, in his discussion of the virtues of Chinese ideograms, that they are effective for how they are built of, "based on what is known" (*ABC of Reading* 22).

instructions for actually getting us there, were published separately, in untraceable footnotes, or are in some other way out of reach of the traveler traveling (and traving) – the kind of guidebook, therefore, that you might as well leave at home.

Which is not to say it has been of no use whatsoever. Indeed, the generic failure of his guidebook can be read as productive one, insofar as it suggests, generally speaking, that learning, and learning to read in particular, is all about making connections, that reading is a manner of metaphorizing just as, again, to write is "to 'relate' things" (Scott, "In Conversation" with Moyes 225), namely, entertainment and understanding, effort and excitement, knowledge and pleasure. It suggests, moreover, that our ongoing failure to connect the labour of reading and understanding to the question of pleasure (and displeasure likewise) may have much in fact and causally to do with the various crises of literacy and literature that it was meant in the first place to solve. Certainly, Marianne Wolf would say so, for though remarkable advances in neuroimaging have yet to make the fact that we learn to read any less "miraculous" (Wolf 112), one thing that has become increasingly clear to researchers, she insists, is that something like desire, pleasure, entertainment is a non-negligible part of the process of reading (and of learning to read) well. As the authors of *Rubbish* also implied, "every teacher knows," Wolf adds, that "an *emotional engagement* is often the tipping point between leaping into the reading life or remaining in a childhood bog" (Wolf 132; emphasis added).<sup>48</sup> Or, as the "well-known educational psychologist, Michael Pressley, contends, [...] the two greatest aids to

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<sup>48</sup> I want to mark this image of *the bog of illiteracy* that we risk remaining stuck in where we fail to admit of and teach also the pleasure of learning to read, because in many ways the same image recurs in chapter two, in the figure of that bathtub state where the heroine languishes for much of the novel, at risk of "drowning in confusion" (*Spaces* 47), which is not in turn unrelated to that emblematic *Slough of Despond* in John Bunyan's allegory *The Pilgrim's Progress*, into which the character Christian sinks under the weight of his sins and his sense of guilt for them.

fluent (reading) comprehension are explicit instruction by a child's teachers in major content areas and the *child's own desire*" (Wolf 139; emphasis added).<sup>49</sup> Even Adler himself says as much, in the moments immediately preceding and following his insistence upon the mysterious, "almost magical" quality of our "discovery of meaning in symbols," of how "no one really knows ... how this (learning to read) happens" (25), he notes that the goal of a reader learning to master elementary abilities is he says to be able to read both "independently and *with enthusiasm*," and that "reading, besides being something one does at school, is something also one can do on one's own, *for fun*, to *satisfy* curiosity, or even to 'expand one's horizons'" (25; emphasis added).

What that relationship is, exactly, between reading for "satisfaction," on the one hand, and for the expansion of "one's horizons," on the other – between reading for entertainment and understanding – Adler does not say, as Rathje and Murphy likewise do not. Nevertheless, and regardless of what it does say explicitly to the contrary, Adler's book as a whole (and in spite of itself) can be taken as suggesting that, if a body must learn the pleasure of reading in order to learn to master even elementary levels of ability, it stands to reason (anyway Adler has given no convincing reasons to defend his claims to the contrary) *that* pleasure must continue to play a crucial (which is to say an irrepressible) role at even the most advanced levels of reading ability too. I mean, just as Adler seems right to warn parents and teachers

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<sup>49</sup> Wolf adds that most research suggests that "the three major jobs of the reading brain are recognizing patterns, planning strategy, and *feeling*. Any image of the fluent, comprehending reader shows this clearly through the growing activation of the limbic system – the seat of our emotional life – and its connections to cognition," for the limbic region of the brain, which "underlies our ability to *feel pleasure, disgust, horror, and elation* in response to what we read, also *helps us to prioritize and give value* to whatever we read." Indeed, "on the basis of this *affective contribution*, our attention and comprehension processes become either stirred or remain inert" (Wolf 140-41; emphasis added).

against rushing a child who is not yet ready into the reading life, for fear that the resulting frustration (or dis-pleasure) may carry over in turn into later schooling and adult life (94), so does it seem fair to conclude, by implication, that a measure of pleasure (whatever, again, that means) must remain a condition to achieving a mastery of higher levels of reading ability, lest its absence become an obstacle.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, Adler suggests explicitly that the ideal (the idea) he is hoping to introject into the conversation "is to be able to read" not only faster but "at different speeds" (both with speed and slowly) and, moreover, to be "able to know when each is appropriate" (39). "Every book should be read," he says, "no more slowly than it deserves, and no more quickly than you can read it with *satisfaction and comprehension*" (43; emphasis added). In fact, so numerous are these suggestions to the contrary that one begins to wonder if what Adler describes as the perceived crisis of literacy skills may actually be an effect of precisely the sort of strategies (exclusions) that Adler has designed ostensibly to overcome that crisis.

Certainly, that is what I take his text to be suggesting, however against the grain of its own ostensible claims, that precisely because fiction "primarily pleases rather than teaches" (204) – that is, for the very reason that Adler dismisses entertainment from his account here, because of his assumption that the one (entertainment) is only ever present in the absence of the other (understanding) – how much greater an occasion to learn or understand more therefore might reading fiction, or for entertainment provide? For if we learn, as he says, from what we are challenged by (8-10), and learn the most from whatever challenges the most, therefore, by his very own logic, how much more have we to learn from fiction, what we

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<sup>50</sup> See also Marianne Wolf's discussion of David Elkin's *The Hurried Child* (94).

might be likely to read for the pleasure of it, given how challenged we become, "how tongue-tied we get when asked (and are unable) to say what we like about a novel ... what caused the pleasure" (204). Again, if you "enrich your pleasure by knowing intimately the sources of your delight" (212), then the inverse should likewise be true: that knowledge (and understanding) is enriched (even dependent upon) a measure of enjoyment, and the question that remains, in the wake of this (mis)reading of Adler's guide, as it remained in the wake of our reading of Rathje and Murphy's *Rubbish*, is: how?

It also confirms, I suggest, what Julia Creet describes as the need, in a decidedly more literary context, to reintroduce the pleasure of reading and writing into our pedagogies, which we have lost she says in the wake of theory. Indeed, in her contribution to the recent *ESC* : *Reader's Forum* called, "Why Do I Have to Write like That?", she asks explicitly about "how then to reintroduce the *pleasures* of reading and writing without losing the insights of all that theory" (Creet 27) – as if the two indeed were mutually exclusive :

"We have crippled a generation of writers," Creet explains, "with our insistence that critical prose and narrative prose," Adler's fiction and nonfiction, for example, "have nothing in common, that critical prose takes narrative as its object, but never to heart. We have taught," she says, our students "to loath language instead of love it; we have discouraged them from the *pleasures* of reading and writing and then wondered why they write and read like that. We have made our students suspicious of textual *pleasures* and then have become despondent about their inarticulateness and smug about our own declaring with absolute certainty that academic rigor is the only way to right our slipping standards, that we are in the business of *discipline not creativity*" (26; emphasis added).

Thus, in the end, and in answer to that question – how? – Creet suggests that we must, somehow, relearn to trust, because we need, narrative (25); must accept the fact that "theory too is a narrative" and "that every genre (even the most carefully wrought critical work) is deeply imbricated with the poetics of other prose forms" (27). Indeed, and as a testament to that need for and imbrication of fiction and theory, so-called, enjoyment and effort, or more

and less elementary and advanced levels of ability, I have placed the keyword, *bodies*, at the very front of the title of this project as a whole, to give voice to what the collection of figures I have collected here suggests.

However, before getting on to those – and then to the figures of the city, and to my reading of *Heroine* in turn – I want to recollect some of the themes elicited in this materialist collecting of and trusting in narrative forms and figures thus far gone, and do so by way of a quick reading of Ezra Pound's own how to guide to the art of reading called, *ABC of Reading*. Specifically, I want to highlight the remarkably similar and similarly productive failure to follow through on Pound's promises there, as we have just read about in Adler, in order to show that the epistemological force of literary forms that I am engaged with here, in this materialist way, is just as strong in the expressly literary context provided by Pound as it has proved to be in the relatively non-fictional space provided by *Rubbish*.

### ***How to Read: Pound***

Every age makes its own guidebooks ... and the old one are used for wastepaper.  
- Herman Melville. in Richard Lehan, *The City in Literature* (175)

Jerome McGann's comparative reading of Adler's guidebook alongside Ezra Pound's "How to Read" pamphlet, published in 1928, and then the *ABC of Reading* it eventually was rewritten into, was really a pleasure to find as I struggled with Adler through what had become a much larger and more distracting part of this chapter than that which presently remains. A pleasure, first, because I was therefore no longer alone in the frustration I felt at what seemed so much more a "series of academic lectures" (105), "ponderous, and inexorable" (104-5) in the assumptions being made there, than the "how to guide" that it promises to be. Of course, I loved the sound of the "aggressively anti-academic" (103) style ascribed to Pound's guide by

McGann, and I readily identified with the "constructivist" (104), "spatial" (108) model of reading and learning ostensibly to be discerned there, in comparison, as well as with the pedagogy implied by Pound's insistence that "you can't teach literature" (87), namely, that "if [someone] wish to be a good critic he will have to go look for himself" ("How to" 169), "go read" (*ABC* 89), start with what you actually see (31), because "prosody and melody are attained by the listening ear, not by an index of nomenclatures, or by learning that such and such a foot is called a spondee" (206). Indeed, here were all those thematics of agency, labor, and the epistemological function of fiction itself, that I had come to hold dear, all apparently wrapped up in one place, and from a poet's non academic pen no less!

Similarly, I was excited to hear that, in his construction of a "curriculum" ("How" 188) of reading through the "History of English Literature" (183) meant to allow students to learn to read, so to speak, by reading, Pound was careful not "to *force* [his own specialist] kind of reading on the general reader," for he seemed to recognize that "nothing could dry up the *interest* of a young student more quickly than telling him he must, should or ought to BE INTERESTED in such pages" (170; *italics* added). What comforted me here, of course, was the place that interest (pleasure) took up in the shaping of his pedagogy, as well as how explicit he was about the fact that learning to read well and better is necessarily a comparative practice (*ABC* 17), regardless that "very few people," Pound said, seem to "know what they mean by the term, or approach it with a considered conscious method" (157), and particularly so because of the ways, as I've already suggested and will return to at length, reading well and learning to read better "takes time," time "to get the maximum charge of verbal meaning" (*ABC* 46). Indeed, I was excited to have found in Pound a guide to reading that offered directly so much of what I had had to dig out of Adler's guide against the grain of its explicit

directives.

And yet, as I read back through Pound himself, from McGann's reading of him, I found him in many ways to be less different from Adler than McGann had lead me to believe, that there were, in fact, a series of significant continuities between them that McGann's too rigid comparison failed to make any use of, or even to notice, and which have, nevertheless, become crucial to my project here for how they make the material/physical nature of the practice of reading all that much more legible. Indeed, what I found was that, like Adler, Pound seems to slip, unconsciously, or anyway despite his stated interest in methods, means, actions, and practices, towards a relatively rigid schema of identities and nouns, categories of readers, "definable sorts of people" (167), and "kinds" of poetry (170). This habit is interesting, first of all, because it shows how slipping into identities is a risk that any attempt to engage with a "question of acts" must remain susceptible of and careful about, as Sedgwick again points out ("Epidemics" 130). It is interesting, though, also because it makes the actions that Pound's guide does alight upon (the practice of comparison, notably) all the more apparent. I mean, what I retain most of all in Pound is not his account of the "masters" of literary production, their identity, or their relation to the so called "inventors," "diluters" or "*belles-lettrists*" that populate his "schema" of writers, from whom readers are invited to learn apparently ("How" 167), but his often more subtle reference to acts, rather, and the verbs that he uses to describe how the masters manage to "charge" language so efficiently and expeditiously "with meaning" (167), how they "*assimilate and co-ordinate* a large number of preceding inventions . . . *accumulate . . . digest* a vast mass of subject-matter, *apply* a number of known modes of expression, and succeed in *pervading* the whole with some special quality or some special character of *their own*" (167; emphasis added), all of which is, in some ways,



a very good description of my materialism here. Having already noted how important the figure of the reader as collector is to the methodological apparatus of my project I, therefore, am only too happy to highlight another, similar instance of its writerly cognate.

But the point, though, is to just go ahead and collect all those sorts of "*mouvements de cœur*" that are Pound's answer to the question of how poetry gets itself so charged with meaning (179); those figures of readers "licking" at the good taste which a writer has put onto the page (180); those images of how writing well is a matter of "pouring" something into consciousness (180), or that writing badly is a way of being "clumsy" in attempting to do so (187). Indeed, the point here has been to collect all those figures for what McGann calls the "physicality" (105) and "materiality" (114) of the literary and textual practices recommended in Pound's *ABC of Reading*, I want to suggest, *as methodology*. Indeed, Pound wanted his "introduction to the study" of literature (87), his "primer" or "first book on" reading (104) to "be a pleasure to read" (11) and to "save" its readers "from boredom" (11) and a rejection of "the pernicious idea that a good book must be of necessity a dull one" (13). Likewise, I have wanted, in the close readings I've collected here so far, of Pound and Adler, of *Rubbish*, and of the plethora of figures of the world of the book, to map out the intersections, broadly speaking, that they figure for of the first two of my three main keywords, namely, bodies and stories, and so do I turn therefore to that reading of the body now directly.

## The Sensual Turn

. . . make legible the work of the body.  
- Lianne Moyes, Introduction, *Tessera* (11)

The senses are in their practice theoreticians.  
- Karl Marx, in Davis Howes, Introduction (7)

Reading in these ways for signs and the effect of the materiality and physicality of literacy and literary practice marks this project of mine as one turn among many in what is referred to as the "sensual revolution" in the humanities and social sciences (Howes 1). In his introduction to *The Empire of the Senses*, David Howes describes how *the sensual revolution* testifies to the exhaustion or the limits of an earlier moment, *the linguistic turn*, "which gained prominence in the 1960s" and "dominated much of late twentieth century thought" in its attention to "Language games. Culture as discourse. World as text. Empire of signs," which is to say, to the very productive idea that "all human thought and endeavor can be understood as structured by, and analogous to, language, so [that] one may best look to linguistics for models of philosophical and social interpretation" (1). That *linguistic turn* is often associated with the idea, in Barthes and Ricoeur (and in the first and third parts of this very chapter of mine here too), that "the world (and action in the world)" is "itself a text" (in Howes 1), even that there is, as Derrida insisted, no "*hors texte*" (*Grammatologie* 227). The *sensual revolution*, on the other hand, what Jennifer Blair describes as the "affective turn," begins as revolutions do in a moment of crisis, which Julia Creet has just described, and then a recognition that we cannot, as Adler endeavored, co-ordinate, or render mutually exclusive pleasure and utility, our affective and bodily processes from the labour and product of thinking and learning (Blair, "Resistance" 12, 14).

Specifically, says Howes, it is born of our collective recognition of the "sensorial poverty of contemporary theory" (1) and of our consequent desire, evident for example in Michel Serres' book, *Les Cinq sens*, to "remake or redeem the body . . . from the condition of

addiction, or subordination to the word-become-flesh" (in Howes 318).<sup>51</sup> The body, Howes explains, has become overly "language-bound" (2), and the project (my reading of Scott included) has much to do with finding ways to become better able to think of language and culture (and politics and pedagogy) in turn as increasingly *body-bound* rather, even *body-binding*. "Embodiment," in this sense, has become an important "paradigm in the production of knowledge in the human and social sciences" (Howes 143), in spite of how the "body has remained," explains Elizabeth Grosz, "a conceptual blind spot in both mainstream Western philosophical thought and in contemporary feminist theory" (*Volatile* vii). Nevertheless, I suggest, if literary studies can, as we've just seen in Adler and will see again, and like philosophy, has "devoted itself above all to the denial of its own practice," and if to that denial, moreover, "we may allow a certain degree of permanence" (Macherey, "In a Materialist Way" 153), there has at the same time and, perhaps consequently, been something of a renewed and ongoing interest and "attention to the human body" in literary studies, Elaine Scarry noted in her introduction to the collection *Literature and the Body* (vii), what Perry Anderson calls "a sudden zest, a new appetite, for the concrete" (in Scarry, *Literature* vii). Certainly, this literary materialism of mine here participates in the turning of this sort of attention.

Focusing, thus, on the relation between bodies and stories is not, however, just "a matter of playing up the body and the senses through evocative accounts of corporeal life" in literary practice, as Howes again cautions, but a matter, instead, of tracing through the

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<sup>51</sup> Again, the reference here to the condition of addiction looks forward to my discussion of the logic, temporality, and pedagogy of addiction in chapter two.

literature the ways in which the reading body shapes and is shaped by the practice and study of language (Howes 4). It is not a matter only of adding "one more potential field of study, alongside, say gender, colonialism or material culture," but of recognizing instead the ways in which the body, or more specifically "the senses are the media through which we experience and make sense of gender, colonialism and material culture" (4). If "narrative is a way of learning to know," as Gail compels us to consider, then I would add here that narrative is able to do so only by virtue of my body actually using it. Certainly, that is what I mean to suggest, in what follows, by my collection of such a number of the "implicit conceptions of the body" (Grosz, *Volatile* ix) as are everywhere "to be found at the heart" of fiction and literary practice (Howes 134), a collection of bodies figuring for, what Scarry called, that "locus of materiality" where language is finally "reconnected" to the world (*Literature* xxi) in what Macherey calls a *materialist way*. I mean, if Barbara Godard is right in arguing that "writing and reading produce effects of the real having real effects on bodies, biological and political," and if fiction, in turn, "is a mode of intervening to realign the real" ("La ville en vol" 67), then I want likewise to argue that my collection of fictions of bodies reading and writing, critically and theoretically, necessarily and for pleasure as well as for profit, and not without risk, can provide the terms in which to better understand (and *to learn to know*, as Gail put it) the logic and temporality of such sorts of real, material effects. I mean, if the heroine's pages on which she's written pain in curved letters do indeed change the context of the room in which she resides (*Heroine* 180), as I'll discuss at length in chapter two, then I want here to articulate a set of terms drawn from a collection of literary figures that will help to describe how exactly that happens and how to make that moment teachable.

Alan Corbin, in his discussion of the challenges faced by the historian seeking, for

example, to discern and analyze the hierarchies and balance of senses defining a particular moment in time, and who is like everyone else a "prisoner of language," which is to say, unable to escape into some supposed realm of unadulterated historical presence, warns of how the "use of metaphor sets traps for the careless analysts" who must therefore take great care not simply to take "literally metaphorical" statements (135). Taking metaphor "literally," though, is precisely what the student of literary materialism that I am and have become, with the help and guidance of Benjamin's *historical* materialist (Arendt, Introduction 15), is intent upon doing, namely, to "think poetically" (4). Actually, as Corbin suggests, that for me is the easy part. The challenge, in this literary context, is otherwise and two-fold, namely, to know, first of all, how and when to stop adding ever more figures to the this ever increasing and perpetually self-reorganizing collection, which is both the trap and pleasure of collecting generally (Benjamin, "Unpacking" 66). The challenge then is to find some way, what Scott calls a "device" or a "frame" for all these gathered items (*Spaces* 80, 122), some *narrative* by means by which to *learn to know*, so to speak, in this materialist way, from such a collection of figures as I have gathered here of the intersection of bodies and stories (in cities).

Thus, and again, from Scott's practice of writing both from and towards, or "back and forth over ... all kinds of cusps" (*Prismatic* 97) where, for example, "the everyday, the political, and the cultural meet, risking syntax, positing and dissolving meaning and subjectivity" (*Spaces* 10), and where "writing" therefore and the "body" intersect (*Spaces* 102); and from how she writes, explicitly, in response to all those violent ways in which the actual bodies of women and others are written off and shot into silent submission, if not to death, in both literary and historical cities, I am provided with the means (and a method) by which to engage with the *body* learning to read *stories* in the *city*. I mean, my staging of a

literary materialism here takes the shape of a narrative every bit as much and as meaningfully, I suggest, as it is also of course an argument. Specifically, it presumes to re-tell the same story that Scott's *Heroine* tells – which we will be discussing at length in chapter two – about the time it takes and the investments required of a body learning to write (and so to read and learn or to be), and it poses in the course of doing so the same questions that Scott raises about the public, contingent, slow, and costly ways in which, only, words have the power to convert into acts (Scarry xi) or to "change," as the heroine describes, "the context of the room" (*Heroine* 180). What follows then is a narrative, incidentally, that starts, as narratives here often do, with Walter Benjamin.

## The Necessarily Reading Body

As if lips and eyes and nose were another kind of language.  
- Gail Scott, *Heroine* (162)

In his deservedly oft-cited essay on "The Storyteller: Reflections on the works of Nicolai Leskov," Benjamin describes storytelling, clearly, as something that bodies do, moving back and forth through space and time, and not without some level of interest or investment of labor, which is to say, some form of agency, what later I will call heroism. "The figure of the storyteller," he says, "gets its full *corporeality*" only in the person of "someone who has come from afar" or someone "who has stayed at home, making an honest living," respectively, the sailor and the resident tiller of the soil. As such, "if peasants and seamen were past masters of storytelling, the artisan class was its university," for there "was combined *the lore of faraway places* such as a much-traveled man brings home, with *the lore of the past*, as it best reveals itself to natives of a place" (84-85; emphasis added). The echoing here of such

cognate figures as Michel DeCerteau's "lecteurs voyageurs" (251), or Emily Dickinson's "no frigate like a book" (in McGann 119) is striking, and it makes me wonder how (doubtless only by a kind of misfortune?) I have yet to alight upon, to complete my collection, such similar figures as the long-laboring *reader* and the book as some kind of tilling-tool.<sup>52</sup> Regardless, Benjamin's representation here of the arguably collaborative and communal (social and political), because embodied, nature of the practice of storytelling (99) is useful, because surprisingly similar, in logic and scope, to the practice of theory described and discussed both by Barbara Johnson ("Women") and Wlad Godzich ("Foreward"), which if nothing else should go a long way to undermining the conventionally strict division of labour between fiction and theory that I have been picking at throughout here. Indeed, if some degree of corporeality can more easily be allowed to the storyteller than to the theorist, then the sharing of fiction's physicality with theory in what follows should, logically, invite an extension of the rigor and seriousness of theory, in turn, back upon narrative, indeed, just as Julia Creet was still calling for only just a moment ago.

Thus, in a lecture on "Women and Allegory," Barbara Johnson cites at length an etymological tale told by Wlad Godzich, in his foreward to Paul DeMan's *Resistance to Theory*, about the nature of the ancient Greek practice of theory. Indeed, she writes, theory in this sense "comes from the Greek verb *theorein*, to look at, to contemplate, to survey" (xiv). Far however from designating "a private act carried out by a cogitating philosopher" alone in her study, *theorein* refers to "a very public" act, she says, "with important social

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<sup>52</sup> See also Dollier de Casson's figure of his book as a "*vaisseau*," and Derrida, who notes that "*naviguer*," which is to say reading, is "*un travail qui pourtant ne produit rien*" (in Michaud 52-53).

consequences," the nature of which are precisely what both Johnson and Godzich insist in different ways upon in their respective re-tellings. "The Greeks," Johnson recalls,

designated certain individuals, chosen on the basis of their probity and their general standing in the polity, to act as legates [representatives] on certain formal occasions in *other* city states or in matters of considerable political importance [at home]. These individuals bore the title of *theoros*, and collectively constituted a *theoria* . . . were summoned on special occasions to attest the occurrence of some event, to witness its happenstance, and to then *verbally* certify its having taken place. . . . To be sure, other individuals in the city could *see and tell* [what had happened], but their telling was no more than a claim that they had seen something, and it needed some authority to adjudicate the validity of such. . . . The individual citizen, indeed even women, slaves, and children were capable of . . . perception, but these perceptions had no social *standing* ("Women" 53-54; emphasis added).

While Godzich's interest in this tale, specifically, is to highlight the very public and political status of theoretical practice, and Johnson's is to insist upon the very contingent nature of that power and position by way of the markedly gendered forms of exclusion and entitlement characteristic of the foundation of such (political and theoretical) authority, what interests me most of all is simply the physicality involved in this representation of the gender and politics of practice of theory for how, simultaneously, it allows for the extension of similar sorts of authority and power as theory benefits from, to fiction, while it figures, simultaneously, for the highly contingent (fictional?) nature of every political or epistemological authority whatsoever.

Thus, like Benjamin's storyteller, the theorist (reader) is represented by the document of our body's haptic sense of "physical comportment and perambulation" (Fisher 18), of "movement, balance, position in space" (Moyes, "The Senses" 7), that is, by a kinesthetic imperative to move back and forth in *space* (between the familiar and the foreign), presumably on foot or by some conveyance controlled and produced by the hand, to see and listen and hear, and then to move again back and forth in *time* (between the act of witness itself and the



eventual bearing of it) to speak of what the eyes and ears have taken in by the labour of her hands and feet. Indeed, it seems remarkable (though in the end not very surprising) that the very same structures and forms of physicality and difference (distance) should serve as figures for the practice both of theory here and of fiction there, because unlike the storyteller's physicality (which seems all the easier to admit of somehow), this representation of the corporeality of the practice of theory is rare indeed. In fact, such a degree of physicality is much more likely to be repressed by the "dichotomies that organize 'western civilization'," including body and mind, sense and intellect, thinking and feeling (Howes 6-7). Johnson, in this sense, writes that amidst such a series of "binary oppositions" as "conceptual and sensual" or "abstract and concrete," theory would normally be understood as the very "other of the image," the concrete, the body ("Women" 53).

Indeed, her lectures as such are occasioned by the decided rarity of such "a pictorial representation of theory" as is offered on the logo of the Bucknell lecture series in literary theory (at which she had come to speak). The figure, taken from the ceiling of the library of the Royal Academy of Art, depicts 'Theory' as female – as 'Touch' is too in allegorical representations of the senses, for example, like Charles Joseph Traviès' lithograph, *Les cinq sens* (J. Fisher 23). This figure was all the more surprising, Johnson recalls, as "the gender stereotype that should follow" from those conventional structures of Western thinking "would make theory male" ("Women" 53). What interests me here is precisely that presumed other-than-embodiedness of theory masquerading as masculinity, that supposed non-physicality that is, arguably, responsible for the veritable deluge of what Johnson would call "embodiments for theory" (53) on display in Valentine Cunningham's aptly named *post-theory manifesto* for close reading, in which he praises and calls for more "readerly *tact*," or touching, that "missing

element in theory's misconstruing" (155-156; emphasis added). "How could we not notice," Cunningham asks, filled with a sort of excitement that could only be physical, "how far writing," and I would add reading too, of whatever theoretical or simply narrative sort, "is so totally taken up with the body that it is from end to end a great somatic stunt, a theatre of bodies on display, a battlefield of the wounded, mutilated and dying, an anatomy theatre, a great dissecting table of the cut-open, probed, tented, haruspicated body" (42). Other-than-embodied indeed!

All such figurations of physicality, of course, serve Cunningham's rhetorical purpose, namely, to animate and empower his call for more 'close reading' of texts (167), more "readerly *tact*" (86), some "good or better critical tactility" (104-105), in lieu of all "the dogmatism of theory's stock notions" that he hopes we are now moving beyond (118). If, personally, I share the position he takes in the push and pull between theory and close reading, what interests me is the language of Cunningham's suggestion that what remains "after theory" is the body (127), "to get your hands on the places (and people) that the map only sketchily implies [. . .] theory's maps" which, "like any map, will always need supplementing by the reading equivalent of walking down the street yourself, opening doors, getting inside, having the hands on contacts and experiences . . ." (132). I will return, in the third part of this first chapter, to this analogy between literary and urban spaces and practices, between reading and walking down a city street, and will spend the great bulk of the second half of chapter two elaborating on the notion, first, that reading and understanding is a process of getting hooked, says Cunningham (49), on words and of text getting into you, becoming you (148), affecting you (156), and on the consequent notion, then, that reading, whether for pleasure or for knowledge (153), takes time (151).

What I would though here to attend to is the idea that theory is "microstatic" (134), as Cunningham puts it, that "it speaks with a small mouth" (136), which is to say that while we usually think of theoretical practice (reading) in rather more abstract than physical terms, as Johnson, Grosz, and Howes in different ways have pointed out – none of which should be taken to mean that theory (reading) does not for that matter speak, that it has no mouth, that it is passive. Indeed, while Cunningham, on the one hand, is compelling in his diagnosis of a failure of sorts caused by the smallness of theory's mouth, by the fact that we repress figures of theory's physicality or, as I noted earlier, repress the embodied nature of literacy practices and effects generally, and that such incessant abstraction is, at least to some extent, connected to the various crises of literacy and literary studies that I have spoken of now on a couple of different occasions, on the other hand, there remains a sense in which this sort of repression, along with the crises it can be seen to engender, may actually be rather more natural and necessary than an exception finally. Indeed, perhaps things are just as they should be in that respect, and that as much as the *theoros* may well have a body, it is not supposed to be, for all that, too much in view lest therefore it beg the question of the basis, indeed the contingency of theory's authority and, consequently, of the state approved denial of authority to everybody else.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps, after all, the body of theory is meant to have been, as Michael Holquist argues that literacy necessarily is and remains, a "scandal." Perhaps these figures of the bodies of storyteller and *theoros* allow us to see, in a different way, that literature has always been, and inevitably is, in crisis (Graff, *Professing*; Scholes, "Presidential"). Certainly, the full-frontal

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<sup>53</sup> Indeed, I hope, in the introduction above, to have marked my anxiety about this very question of authority where I discussed the highly-cited sources of my nascent doctoral authority.

figure of the literary critic left us by Patricia Smart (which is only yet another version of the figure of the reader being characterized here generally) suggests that indeed the relationship between bodies and stories is, however natural and inevitable still, and necessarily so, shameful or risky which, again, might explain in part why this project of mine has taken so long to come finally to pass.

Thus, the award-winning critic and translator, Patricia Smart's "*Lire au féminin*," written like Cunningham's manifesto in the wake of, or *after theory* – "*maintenant que nous avons fait le tour de la 'théorie' et que nous vivons encore dans une société où le pouvoir écrase les plus faibles?*" (43) – seeks to reintroduce "*le questionnement des valeurs*" (42), "*de poser de nouveau à la littérature la question du 'comment vivre?' et aussi du 'comment survivre?' que nous avons mise*," she says, "*de côté avec l'arrivée de la modernité et du post-modernisme*" (42), asks about "*notre fonction en tant que critiques, . . . notre responsabilité*" (43). In that context, which I take to be mine too, Smart describes reading as anything but "*une activité passive*" (40). "*Il n'en est rien*," Smart insists, as Adler likewise did. Speaking of critical practice in terms, instead, of "*disponibilité, de vide, et de fusion*," noting that "*on n'arrive à ce point de fusion avec l'œuvre qu'après un long travail de déchiffrement*" (40; emphasis added), and likening the task of the literary critic to that career as a detective or a mathematician that she had, at one time, considered committing herself to, Smart describes the pleasures of reading, which she judges to be greater than those she had once found in numbers, given "*cette façon qu'ont les significations littéraires de déborder le texte pour rejoindre la vie – ma vie – mais aussi la culture et l'histoire dans un sens plus large*" (41). What is of particular interest to me in this, her arguably materialist and increasingly familiar account of critical reading as simultaneously active and passive, both a labour and a pleasure, is the figure

she provides of her (critical) reading body in the process.

What interests me is the scene of "*gêne*," the shame that opens the essay, as she reflects on the task she's been given by the organizers of the conference she is addressing. Smart, here, describes how embarrassed she feels to find herself asked to speak about literary criticism, "*de parler de la critique littéraire*," rather than, as is her wont, simply to practice or do literary criticism, "*de faire de la critique en parlant des œuvres*" (39). Notice that the distinction here is not one between two categorically different practices. Indeed, in both cases – *parler de la critique* and *parler de la littérature* – it is a matter of doing and speaking about something, namely, *about criticism* on the one hand and *about literature* on the other. The distinction rather is between two different objects, two separate stages upon which the same (kind of) performance is given. The act itself of reading (or speaking) critically remains structurally unchanged. Only the stage, the text, the ground upon which that performance is played has been altered, and the affect of that change of scene she admits, usefully, is embarrassment. That embarrassment though comes not from suddenly being asked to do something that she might be unused to doing or may not be good at doing, but from "exposing," rather, and showing something (notably of herself) that is always *per force* there in the doing but which normally remains, by implication, hidden: "*j'ai le sentiment de m'exposer, de me livrer à une activité presque impudique, quand j'enlève le masque sécurisant derrière lequel je me cache en écrivant sur les œuvres*" (39; emphasis added). Indeed, the critic, reader, whether or not she speaks of it or shows it off on stage, has a body.

Following the logic described in Shoshanna Felman's *La folie et la chose littéraire*, Smart's sense of shame may well be inevitable, as natural as that sense of crisis and contingency I referred to a moment ago, and even productive. Thus, if "*parler de la folie*, c'est

toujours, en fait, *dénier la folie*," and if "(se) représenter la folie c'est toujours (qu'on le sache ou non, qu'on le veuille ou non) se jouer la *scène* de la dénégation de *sa propre folie*" (Felman 347; emphasis in original), Smart's discussion of critical practice here seems to suggest that *doing criticism means necessarily denying the role of the body that does so*. It appears inevitable, in that sense – but what does it actually mean? – that *doing criticism necessarily implies denying the role of the body that reads*. Is it true, does taking these figures of reading bodies literally mean acknowledging, that to write about literature (which is to say, to practice literary criticism) always in some way involves denying the fact that I am writing, that is, staging the disappearance of my own writing body? Does criticism, and by extension reading indeed always require of "le ou la critique" to "*laisser parler l'œuvre*," to deny or dispel her own interests in the process (40)? Does that ability to translate "*son expérience de la lecture en mots*" depend finally upon "*l'état de vide et de disponibilité dans lequel le critique accepte d'entrer*," that she place her own "*identité entre parenthèses pour être le véhicule par lequel certaines œuvres littéraires acquerront plus de résonance . . . dans la culture*" (40)? Would this not be to say that literary criticism (reading) is indeed "*une activité féminine par excellence*" (40)? Is this why allowing my own body, its voice, and its failures and fears, to be so present in this project (as I did in introduction) feels like such a risk, so unprofessional at times, as to cause me to come out so slowly with it? Is this too why my really reading (which is to say writing about) *Heroine* has taken so long?

Regardless, though, of how we answer that question of the appropriate forms of presence or absence demanded of a good reader – whether as Cunningham rightly suggests more present, or as Smart does much less – it is clear, in the images provided by George Perec, Nicole Shukin, Michel DeCerteau, and Daniel Coleman to follow, that the body has

much indeed to say about and do with the question of reading and, first of all, its necessary, compulsory nature. Indeed, and bracketing for a moment the question of how actually we read or should and learn to, learning to read and reading appears here as eminently necessary.

Thus, the French novelist, filmmaker and essayist, Georges Perec argues, in his contribution to the January 1976 issue of the journal *Esprit*, that in order to think about what it means to read, we must think about the body; or, as his editor writes, summing up, "*tout commence dans l'acte de lire, avec le corps*" (Perec 60). Perec himself describes his essay, "Lire : esquisse socio-physiologique," as a collection of "notes," and facts – however "banal" seeming and too obvious to mention, and thus, generally, passed over in "silence" – having less, he says, to do with so many "*savoirs (déjà) constitués*" than with "*l'histoire de notre corps*" and of "*la culture qui a modelé nos gestes et nos postures,*" that pedagogy "*qui a façonné nos actes moteurs au moins autant que nos actes mentaux*" (9). His essay is a "sketch," he says, not of "*le message saisi,*" but of "*la saisie du message*"; not of "*ce qui est lu*" but of "*ce qui se passe quand on lit*" (10), that "*précise activité du corps,*" or "*mise en jeu de certains muscles, diverses organisations posturales, des décisions séquentielles, des choix temporels, tout [cet] ensemble de stratégies insérées dans le continuum de la vie sociale*" that is called reading (10).

Briefly, Perec describes how we read, of course, with our eyes, though, not, as might be expected, smoothly along the even lines of print and down the solid blocks of paragraph on a page (11). He recalls that we read, even silently, with throat and tongue and lips in action, if only potentially, and with our ears (straining) to hear what we pronounce as we go (13). The blind, of course, read with their hands, Perec continues, but so do we all use our hands and arms and fingers when we read to hold a book or turn the pages, or to throw a book away even

that bores and angers us, pick up another to compare it with, or scribble annotations down in the margins or on a paper nearby, and to cut, finally, the next fold of the folioed pages where those still exist (Perec 13-14). Indeed, the whole body reads, he says, in concert with the medieval Englishman, Orderi Vitalis, who insisted that "in the physical act of *writing* [. . .] 'the whole body labors'" (in Ong 94).

Perec, then, goes on to draw up a whole "*posturologie*" of reading bodies—sitting, whether straight backed at a desk, or comfortably in a reading chair, with our feet up, or curled beneath; standing up, walking around, or lying down, on our back, our sides, or our bellies (14-15)—and that "*posturologie*," in turn, calls for what he describes as a "*typologie des situations de lecture*" (17). The point of all this, he adds, which is also the point of collecting all these figures of reading bodies here, is that such an enumeration of postures and situations could "*préfigurer une description globale des activités urbaines aujourd'hui*" (17). I will, as I have mentioned, attend in part three of this chapter to this recurring intersection of literary and urban space, and to the questions about when and how we read that such an analogy allows us to engage. For now, though, I want to note that, whether we read while we are waiting (17), eating (18), bathing (18), shitting (18), or before going to (or in order to get to) sleep; whether we read while commuting to work on the bus, or ideally on the metro (19), at work, instead of working, or while on vacation, what is perhaps the most striking aspect of all these distinctions between different reasons for reading, whether for work ultimately or for leisure – reasons which we recognize as variations of that distinction between reading for understanding, information, and entertainment seen earlier in Adler – is how the distinctions almost immediately (and again) break down, though notably without any of the attendant anxieties we saw symptoms of in Adler. As Perec himself puts it,



"Ce qui me frappe le plus dans les manières de lire : non pas que la lecture soit considérée comme une activité de loisir, mais que, d'une manière générale, elle ne puisse exister seule; il faut qu'elle soit insérée dans une autre nécessité . . . chaque fois ce 'lire pour lire' se rattache à une activité studieuse, à quelque chose qui est de l'ordre du travail ou du métier, de l'ordre en tout cas de la nécessité" (16 ; emphasis added).

What I'd like to emphasize in all this is that the figure of the reading body – all its postures, positions, and places of practice, its labors and pleasures – all of it boils down for me to an image of necessity, namely, the necessity of reading (and of learning to read), which begs again the question in turn of how this learning (and reading) happens, and which posing and engaging with such pedagogical questions is, again, what I hope from the outset to have gained from the occasion of my reading closely *Heroine*.

I have, of course, from the outset framed this literary materialist project in the context of the very non-controversial need for those basic, and better than basic literacy skills that actually less than half, and as few as 13% of the population in North America in fact possess while the information society and economy that is increasingly ours makes that ability to read, broadly speaking, all the more essential. Such economic and other ultimately self-interested motivations defining the kind of 'necessity' in relation to which I am interrogating the nature and practice of reading here is, however, only the most obvious aspect of that question of necessity that Perec raises so clearly. Indeed, in her recent contribution to an *ESC : Reader's Forum* called, "Why do I have to read like that?", Nicole Shukin provides another, much less obvious, and so more troubling perspective on that necessity, and she does so moreover, and interestingly, in a much more obviously literary, disciplinary context, and as a "challenge [to] the bourgeois image of reading as pleasure, escape from reality, or leisure" (14), which in an earlier and related *Reader's Forum*, Kit Dobson described as the very "bait" that beckons us into literary studies in the first place (Dobson 14). Like Dobson, who describes the "bait-and-

switch' methods of graduate programs" and recalls how he was (and we are) "promised the possibility of intellectual inquiry and pleasurable reading," only to discover then "the *necessity* of conforming to our rigid codes of academic conduct" (14; emphasis added), Shukin seeks "to bring reading pleasure into focus as hidden labour, increasingly *necessary* to the realization of capital" with a capital-C (23; emphasis added). She notes that "if historically it was considered a luxury to escape from economic reality into reading, the terrain of capitalism has changed to such an extent that it now might be more accurate to say that it would be a luxury to escape from reading into a space in time of leisure that is not productive of capital" (Shukin 25). I mean, however easy it is to agree that it is in each our own economic, health, and political interest to develop better than those most basic literacy skills which no more than a quarter of us North Americans apparently now possess, Shukin is describing here a whole different order of necessity and a much more complicated other source of compelling interests altogether.

Indeed, what she is attempting to point out, importantly, is the fact that, if it is clearly in every citizen's interest that we be able effectively to read, simultaneously, reading has become a form of forced and unremunerated labour that we are often not even aware of being engaged in (not to say drowning in, as Scott's heroine arguably is at the outset of her narrative). The "protracted romanticization of reading inside the Academy as a subversive practice and pleasure," Shukin writes, "constitutes an institutional disavowal of the historical correlation of reading and relations of production, a denial of the ways that the recreational time of reading has been subsumed into the workings of late capitalism and of what might be called the political economy of reading" (23). She insists, in this sense, on the ways in which the framing of reading as a pleasure contributes to the extension of "the capitalist work day into the 'free' time of leisure and social life" (25) as well as the fact that "as my academic

working day stretched across every hour of waking life" (26), consequently, the need to read effectively "vampirizes one's sensual and intellectual energies instead of replenishing them, as the romantic image of reading pleasure would have it" (24). Thus, she writes, if it is one thing to "acknowledge" that "reading is labor," those "myths of purity, which remain normative in our profession," of a "disinterested discipline which labours in the service of cultural knowledges distinct from economic ends," obscure the further and important recognition of the fact "that our discipline is now immanent to a market economy and, more specifically, to a knowledge or information economy" (24) and that "our profession's taken for granted and bare imperative to *keep reading*" functions as a "biopolitical pressure which produces reading subjects and populations who unwittingly labour for capital in and through the seeming leisure time of their reading" (24). Indeed, we read for our own as well as for interests that may, much more often than not, be dramatically other than, and even contrary to our own.

A good example, I think, of the almost dystopian levels of disciplinary necessity being evoked here can be seen in an early episode of the recent British television drama, *Black Mirror* (Lyn), about a recognizably immanent future society in which the imperative to 'read' (here figured as 'to watch') is pushed to its most logical and terrifying conclusions. Without explaining exactly whence such conditions arose, which is not to say that it is impossible or even difficult to suppose, the story is set in a time when the bulk of a certain class of person's day is spent on stationary bicycles, in front of television screens, accruing "credits" in return for the electrical energy being produced by the turbines that such bikes have been converted to. The drama of the story is built, in part, of the ways in which every 'citizen' at every moment is compelled to engage with, or consume, media that can be described as intelligent only to the extent that it knows when an individual may even be looking away, for example,

from a given advertisement, or covering his eyes. These citizen/consumers, so to speak, are given of course the option to not watch, or at the very least to silence the blaring audio-track emerging from behind the screens of which the very walls of the rooms they reside in are made. However, opting out in this way costs individuals those "merits" that are otherwise needed for food, even toothpaste, whereas going ahead and watching the ad when prompted instead actually generates income. We haven't of course arrived at that degree of discipline or bio political pressure but, before we do, therefore, Shukin is right to highlight the "importance of turning the institutional prescription to read itself into an object of critical attention" (27), in order the better to understand, not only what reading actually means and requires, or how I learn to do so, which is expressly what my own literary materialism here is designed to ask, but also why, and to what conflicting purposes, or in who else's interest, do we have now and increasingly to read.

It is for this reason that the figures of bodies reading in the "*Lire : un braconnage*" section, in particular, of Michel DeCerteau's *Arts de Faire*, represent such an important means of learning here to know about how reading serves, not only as that biopolitical sort of disciplinary technique described by Shukin, but as what DeCerteau calls an "anti-discipline" too (xl). Thus, his argument opens with the claim that reading itself needs increasingly to become an object of intervention (rather than only our means of interrogating something else) in a society that is "*de plus en plus écrite*," and in which, therefore, "*on peut souvent substituer au binôme production-consommation son équivalent et révélateur général, le binôme écriture-lecture*" (243). As both Adler and *Rubbish* did too, in different ways, DeCerteau rejects notions of the reader/consumer's *de facto* passivity; the idea that "*la circulation des médias*" presupposes only "*la fixation des consommateurs*" (240); that "*il n'y a pas de créativité chez*

*les consommateurs*" (242) because "*l'initiative ne se loge que dans les laboratoires techniques*" (242); and that "*l'efficace de la production*" could only ever imply "*l'inertie de la consommation*" (242). Thus, he writes against the notion that "*le public, lecteur n'est autre que modelé par les produits qu'on lui impose*" (240), that a reader is only ever "*imprimé par et comme le texte qui lui est imposé*" (242), that she could only ever become "*semblable*" to the text she assimilates, and that such a consuming or assimilating (reading) of a text may never at the same time mean, as Phyllis Webb insisted it does, "*rendre semblable' à ce qu'on est, le faire sien, se l'approprier ou réapproprier*" (241).

Instead, and recalling that crucial moment in Franz Fanon's account of the power of (de)colonizing violence (*Damnés* 49), DeCerteau insists upon the activities and practices by means of which readers, far from being only "*informé, traité, marqué*" by the text of history, have "*un rôle historique*" to play (242), "*le pouvoir ... de refaire l'histoire*" (243).<sup>54</sup> Indeed, DeCerteau's project as a whole, is designed to "*exhumer les modèles d'actions caractéristiques des usagers*" – users of any text whatsoever – about whom "*on cache, sous le nom pudique de consommateurs, le statut de dominés*" (xxxvi), and then to highlight, amidst the "*opérations*" of these "*usagers, supposés voués à la passivité et à la discipline*" (xxxv), "*une production, qualifiée de 'consommation'*" (xxxvii). Such a mode or means of production, moreover, does not, he argues, cease to exist for all that it tends to get drowned out and silenced by the rush

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<sup>54</sup> Fanon's work plays an important role in that reading of Ducharme that I haven't the time to include here. Indeed, the logic of decolonizing violence articulated by Fanon in his *Les Damnés de la terre* provides a useful model for the operation and function of Bérénice's narrative forms, to which I referred in the introduction. Not unfamiliar to the insight, from Foucault, that violence is not only repressive but indeed productive, the reference to Fanon here recalls, first, that absent chapter three and, then, looking forward to that not unrelated logic of de(con)struction that I'll describe as operant in *Heroine* below, that logic of violence at the heart, I will argue, of the power of literacy to produce or inhibit the re-production of new writing and reading subjects.

and the wash of, what Scott calls those many "straight" forms of culture that don't "leave any room for me to intervene" ("On the Edge" 19), those totalitarian forms that allow for no space in which to inscribe what we, "*consommateurs*" might make of them (DeCerteau xxxvii). Rejecting such a constricting ideology, DeCerteau's work, in fact, is meant to provide us the means or opportunity to "*découvrir une activité créatrice là où elle a été dénuée*" (242), to "*s'intérogner sur les cheminements propres de la lecture là même où elle est mariée à l'écriture*" (244), which is precisely what I too mean to be doing here, two different things at the same time, namely, reading and writing about literature and literacy, and in the process becoming a reader and writer myself.

DeCerteau's articulation of such an argument is important here, in particular, for a couple of reasons, including, again, the fact that the power and possibility represented by this anti-disciplinary conception of reading is located, as I said, in (figures of) the body reading: "*dans le corps lui-même, apparemment docile et silencieux*" (253), that "*orchestration sauvage du corps*" that has, he adds, become "*depuis trois siècles qu'un geste de l'oeil*" (253). He explains, moreover, that whereas "*autrefois le lecteur était acteur du texte*," who had to read aloud to hear, for he could not see, the individual words on the pages that arguments and ideas are made of, today, that same active body "*se retire du texte*," as noted earlier, and "*s'en détache*" (254), that is, has withdrawn into the relative passivity of what I will call, in chapter two, a bathtub state of addiction and silence. No longer "*accompagné d'une articulation vocale (ni d'une) mandication musculaire*" (253), reading happens so much more speedily now, clearly, and yet with all that many fewer occasions to intervene, which engenders in turn less of a habit of intervention and more of that sort of passivity that Scott's heroine, I argue,

shows to be a problem.<sup>55</sup>

Furthermore, DeCerteau's anchoring of his argument about the act and anti-discipline of reading in figures of the body is important because, as I said, it provides a very concrete and material focus to ideas and effects that can easily slip into relative abstraction. DeCerteau is important to me, moreover, for the question of temporality that his figures of the body reading raise. I mean, he identifies this ostensible "*retrait du corps*," finally, as "*une expérience moderne*" (253), which is to say that the desire to step out of that condition of withdrawal, like the heroine does from her bathtub in the end, to look beyond that "*autonomie de l'oeil qui suspend les complicités du corps avec le texte*" (254), and understand reading instead as "*un art*" indeed "*qui n'est pas de passivité*" (L), requires that we travel first back in time and return to or re-invest in relatively ancient forms of knowing and literary practice, including, as I noted earlier, rhetorical studies. This is important to me, most of all though, because the temporality of those anti-disciplinary "*savoirs très anciens*" that, DeCerteau recalls, "*les grecs désignaient par la mètis*" (xlvii), as a result of which "*l'intelligence est indissociable des combats et des plaisirs quotidiens qu'elle articule*" (xlvii), which leads in turn to "*une politisation des pratiques quotidiennes*" (xlvii) that is very much in continuity with the heroine's reaching back, in Scott's words, towards an "earlier," specifically Delphic "meaning of the word" *heroine* (*Spaces* 123). Indeed, chapter two is all about the power and affect of that recursive gesture and temporality. Thus, just like that ancient Greek "notion of a cyclical ascension, and descent (in contrast to the dominant pattern of linear rise to climax in

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<sup>55</sup> It is in this context that I locate the value of Scott's experiments with prose, as Sherry Simon put it, the ways in which the "idiom" she constructs by inflecting her English with French, "slows down the rhythm of recognition" (*Translating* 125).

patriarchal drama)," that "notion" of heroism that, only, allows Scott's heroine in the end to escape the double bind that would otherwise drown her in silence and, instead, "be both grandiose and humble, miserable and angry, not to mention any other contradiction without shame" (*Spaces* 123), so DeCerteau's account here of reading as a *braconnage* and a *savoir métis* is essential to my staging of this literary materialism for how it positions the labour (and pleasure) of reading at the intersection of the private, the political, and the epistemological.

I have referred to such an intersection as simultaneously risky and generative, just as I've already quoted at some length from Daniel Coleman's marvellous reading of the "spirituality and cultural politics" of reading – and I will return at length in chapter two to those sorts of cusps that Gail writes both towards and out through – so I will be brief here on this final stop in this tour of my collection of figures of bodies reading and writing. Indeed, framed by the story he tells of his older brother who, at age six, on just his second day in boarding school, decided that, rather than go on with the rest of the boys to class after breakfast in the noisy cafeteria, he would instead go back to bed where swaddled in the sheets and blankets his mother had sent along with him from home, and with the King James Bible open on his lap (though he had not yet learned actually to read) – "in bed," in that sense, with the proverbial "word" of the title – he could have himself a bit of that kind of devotional morning "quiet time" he had watched his parents practice every day before being not untraumatically separated from them and sent off to school (*In Bed* 7), thus, Coleman reflects upon how, though "many of us will naturally think of the words on the page and the messages we derive from them as fundamental to the act of reading," more important is the fact that, "before the practice of reading comes the posture of the reader," a posture that is both physical and cultural or intellectual and spiritual too, what I call pedagogical.



Coleman, in this way, writes about how "reading is important because of what it does, how it *positions* us in relation to the world around us, to others . . ." (26; emphasis added) and then adds that one can "read" anything at all only "once one has learned the *posture* and practice of the reader" (30; emphasis added). On my way, here, towards identifying and articulating, in different ways, the extent of that *right posture* and the means by which it is to be learned, the thing that strikes me, first, in Coleman's book is the litter of moments in which books and reading are accounted for in terms of our physical form, seen to "bump into each other in a way that I want to explore" (75), or when the "word" is figured as "a kind of food, a necessary sustenance" fuelling and forming the bodies that we, readers are (97). I mean, then, to take literally Coleman's descriptions of how "we digest the word so that it gets chewed up and absorbed into the very fibre, bone, blood, and tendons of our being . . . becomes absorbed, reconstituted into muscle, brain cells, saliva, hair follicles" (98), this "incarnational thinking" that Coleman is engaged in here, the way he says that the books we read "become fused into the viscera of our bodies" and shape "what we see, how we hear, what we perceive through touch or taste or smell" (98). What interest me is the temporality, again, embodied in that kind of thinking, whereby the "object of eating the book is pleasure, rumination, and sustenance" and, so, "like contemplation, it is not rushed through but savoured and digested – tasted all the way through" (98). "As Carthusian Guigo II suggested in his outline of *lectio divina*, or sacred reading, spiritually nourishing reading is slow. It proceeds gradually . . . overlaps, returns, spends time ruminating . . . chews . . . does [not] swallow whole" (100). What I retain then is the temporality of how "books, when understood," he says, "*hold* their readers in a *certain* way" (73; emphasis added), namely, "in a way that gestures towards certainty as a goal, but *defers it, delays it* . . . reaches towards naming something but can't quite yet" (77; emphasis

added). It is that so-called "nobility" of reading being figured here that I find most useful,<sup>56</sup> that deferent temporality that is as central to both my experience of reading *Heroine* and the drama being narrated there, as it is key to both Coleman's overall project and my own, namely, "to defamiliarize a wonderfully powerful process that we can take too much for granted," he says, and "to encourage all of us to re-think our relationship to reading and to renovate our reading habits, which can be deadened by over-familiarity" (124). For, precisely, to defamiliarize and so rethink the practice of reading and the 'progress' of our learning to read is just what I would intend for the literary form of materialist practice that I am a-staging here.

Indeed, inspired by what Elaine Scarry called a collective regret "at the very weightlessness and inconsequentiality of conversations about literature" (Scarry xxi), by what earlier I referred to as the loss of sharpness to our physical senses motivating Sontag's call for an *Erotics of Art*, and by the loss of our sense in turn of what reading requires and returns that is attendant upon the various forms of social and institutional crisis that the whole of this chapter one has been about collecting instances and articulations of, the literary sort of materialism that I am staging here is designed to intervene against and defamiliarize that wash of ideas, so to speak, those forms of identitary thinking that would leave us stuck in the very kind of bathtub state in which we find the heroine paralyzed and silenced at the outset of her narrative. I mean, my materialism is moved by an "interventionist impulse" (Scarry xi) against what Marie-Louise Pratt, for example, describes as "the traditional assumption that literature exists by opposition to other uses of language," or that the "subject-matter [of literary studies]

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<sup>56</sup> To be able, Coleman says, to "stand before life's great mysteries" with a "nobility of soul" requires a willingness "for a higher reason to carry a great tension for a long period of time, not acquiescing to the temptation to prematurely resolve things" (*In Bed* 109).

is autonomous and self-defined" (*Toward* vii-viii), that it is "possessed of intrinsic linguistic properties which distinguish it from all other kinds of discourse" (xii). Thus, in *Toward a Speech-act Theory of Literary Discourse*, Pratt describes the "larger discussion" taking place "in both linguistics and literary studies" and, specifically, in "the movement from intrinsic to reader-based criticism," or "from syntax-based, meaning-independent to semantics based context-dependent linguistics" (viii), about that "poetic vs non-poetic (or "ordinary," or "everyday," or "practical") language opposition" (xii) that does not have "any factual basis" (6), and she insists, for all that it underlies "all language based, intrinsic, formalist criticism of this [the 20th] century, from Russian Formalist, Prague school poetics, Anglo-American structuralism, [and] French literary semiotics" (xii), and going "back at least to Romanticism and probably to the rise of scientific language in seventeenth century" (xi), and ultimately to Aristotle's *Poetics* (xii), that kind of assumption remains untested (xii) and as such is "one of the greatest sources of confusion and error in poetic aesthetics" (xi), for it "vitiat[e]s nearly all attempts to develop a satisfying theory of literature" and literary learning (xii), which is what this project, in its idiosyncratic ways, is designed expressly to do. It is even, Pratt suggests, fatal—as Douglas Ivison and Justin Edwards too describe in the urban context to which I am about to turn (*Downtown Canada* 8), and as Robert Jensen likewise argues in relation to both race and porn (*The Heart of Whiteness; Pornography*)—for any "definition of literature which impoverishes and misrepresents non-literature equally impoverishes and misrepresents literature" (Pratt, *Toward* 96).

Indeed, "the claim," as both Adler and Arnold in different ways endeavored to defend, "that this dissociation of literature from all other realms of human activity had empirical justification and could thus serve as the basis of a 'scientific' theory of literature," serves

instead "to build a whole range of ideological assumptions into literary studies in a way that never has to be made explicit. It is a claim that frees the critic from any obligation to refer to the poet's values, society's values, or his own [so that he] may therefore *prescribe* under the guise of *describing*" (xviii; emphasis). This, of course, is a problem, Pratt insists, for the very simple reason that the concept, practice and institution of literature all have "values built into [them]" (xviii). Pratt's intervention, then, as mine does after her, begins with the insistence that "literary discourse must be viewed as a *use* rather than a *kind* of language" (xiii), that "literature is a linguistic activity which cannot be understood apart from the context in which it occurs and the people who participate in it" (viii), so that we must therefore learn (and develop a language of necessity by means of which) to "talk about literature in the same terms we use to talk about all other things people do," and do "with language" when we read and write and learn (vii).<sup>57</sup> Indeed, what is required, Pratt insists, echoing Sontag, is "a descriptive apparatus (or set of terms) which can adequately account for so many different *kinds of uses*" (xii), Sontag's "vocabulary of forms" that can be "descriptive rather than prescriptive" (*Against* 13). I've already argued, as Elaine Scarry describes, that through an increase in "attention" paid "to the human body," its "many capacities and attributes," and its "voice" (*Literature* vii), and by way of my collection of literary figures of bodies and stories so far, my materialist practice of reading here seeks to better understand the relationship "between language and the material world" (vii), how "language is reconnected to the world through the body" (xxi). Indeed, as we

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<sup>57</sup> Pierre Macherey, in his preference for doing "Philosophy in a Materialist Way," allows me to describe again how literary studies, in the sense that interests me here, are like philosophy, "always and everywhere in a state of practice" (146), its "movements" being always "already under way" (147) and "the paths it follows" forever traversing "every domain of social practice" (153), and therefore is much less "a doctrine," "a theory," or "a body of knowledge" than "a manner of intervention" and a "position" (137).

can see in the work she collected in *Literature and the Body*, materialism refers to an ability or desire to capture the "continuity between the materiality of the world and the (supposed) immateriality of language," to carry "the substance of the world into language" as well as "the insubstantiality of language back into the world" (xiv, xv), and to register not only the power of language "to absorb the artifacts of culture" (vii) or "the contours and weight of the material world" (xi) into itself, but to "enter, act on, and alter the material world" as well (xi). A literary materialism, in that sense, is a method meant to bear witness to the fact that "words" have the capacity to "convert into acts" (xi), or "alter the contours of the room" (Scott, *Heroine* 180), and allow us moreover to observe "the ways in which this can be done" (Scarry xx).

What I would like to do, then, is turn to the city and to the spaces of urban difference in which, increasingly, so many of us read (or not) and need to (and) learn to. This third part of the three that constitute my first chapter, and this search through the city for a descriptive vocabulary equal to its object, in this case, the practice of literature that Gail is engaged in and teaches, makes it clear that while there are many more expressly theoretical avenues down which I might nominally have taken this project there is, finally, little need to do so where the city itself, as the body is too, already plenty theoretical enough. As the young Karl Marx noted that "the senses are 'in their practice theoreticians'" (in Howes, Introduction 7), and so indeed is the body of urban writing that I have elected to work with, too, a fiction-theoretical text.

### ***Arrivé en ville : Crisis in/of Canadian Literature***

Question may be raised why we choose precisely the past of the city  
to compare with the past of the mind  
- Sigmund Freud, in Burton Pike, *Images of the City* (18)

Many, then, and various have been such warnings about a crisis looming, or upon us

outright, in society and its universities, the humanities and in literary studies. Even Canadian Literature is beset by some sense of crisis. As Smaro Kamboureli recalls in the preface to *Trans.Can.Lit: Literature, Nation, Institution*, the *TransCanada* project was founded on the assumption that "CanLit has reached a certain deadendedness," that it has become, or remains still, "at once a troubled and troubling sign" (Kamboureli ix). Indeed, in the wake of globalization, writes Diana Brydon, "literature, Canada, and the notion of national literature have become problematic concepts" ("Metamorphoses" 5). This is no surprise, Steven Slemon explains, considering that "the pressures of globalization have changed Canada's 'cultural geography' and 'global politics,' that a new 'multicultural formation' has unraveled 'the nation's coherence,' and that Canadian literary studies are now at a 'turning point,' one 'that necessitates a complete rethinking of the disciplinary and institutional frameworks within which Canadian literature is produced, disseminated, studied and imagined'" (Slemon, "TransCanada" 75). Slemon goes even further though, stating that "the major challenge now facing the discipline of literary critical practice in Canada – and this includes Canadianists – is not disciplinary reformation but disciplinary survival" (82), which will depend, he argues, in part upon "a form of institutional avowal" ("TransCanada" 75), that is, on the possibility of thinking about the institution of literary studies, not as "an obstacle" that we need to "navigate around," but as something to "use," to work "through" (75). As Richard Cavell puts it, now that "all our attempts to theorize national in cultural terms and culture in national terms," now that the "national project seems to have failed" ("World Famous" 88), in the sense that it can no longer, if ever it actually was able "to be responsive to its constituents" adds Siemerling ("Trans-Scan" 134), what remains is to "imagine" the study of Canadian Literature "outside the fraught categories of 'Canadian' and 'Literature'," which is to say, as an "institutional" and

an "economic phenomenon," and "investing it thus as a *material* cultural study" (Cavell, "World Famous" 90; emphasis added), or form of materialist practice. Thus, the *TransCanada* project as a whole, including my small part of it, stands as an attempt to develop "new terms of engagement with CanLit" (Kamboureli x) around which to organize the "large-scale reconsiderations of the pedagogical and curricular challenges facing Canadianists" (xii), which the present conjuncture in many ways is marked by and calls for.

Winifred Siemerling, for his part, having already described how Canadian Literature has "probed the conjunction of literature and 'nation' relentlessly since its beginnings" (cf. "Rereading the Nation"), argues that the time has now come, not to do without nation as much as to develop a perspective that "sees national borders as phenomenon to study, rather than as an a priori delimiters of a field of study" ("Trans-Scan" 131). Employing the same logic that, I argue in chapter two, gets the heroine out of her bathtub state, Siemerling contends that we should be "'through' with essentializing narratives of nation and 'go beyond' or 'trans-cend' them," though he acknowledges, at the same time, that "the only way to do so is by also going further through and across Canada" (133). We must he says be "through" with, and therefore go "through," the notion of nation "in the double sense of beyond and across" without for that matter "passing over" or "departing from its situated problematics" (131). Thus, while Siemerling looks *entre autres* forward to the 'beyond' of North American or Hemispheric studies (131, 133) and its "wider comparative perspectives" (139), issues of linguistic inclusivity (135), and race (137), my own materialist trans-ing of Can.Lit, here, involves a (re)turn to the city – to literary Montreal in particular and to the figure of the pedagogical city more broadly – about which (borrowing Siemerling's phrase) there remains still "so much [still] to go through" (133). Therefore, while keywords like institution and citizenship have

guided the process of rethinking taking place at the TransCanada Institute, and whereas my own work has focussed thus far on the relation between bodies and stories, the "time has come now," as Grosz argues, "to go down into the cities" (in Cavell 88) and, borrowing Marcotte's phrase, to *arriver en ville*.

I turn, indeed, to the city now not only because Gail's *Heroine* writes in "dialogue" or in "conversation" with the city ("Face to Face"; *Prismatic*), in the sense that her starting finally to write in the end is equated with the act of stepping back out into the city, as we'll see; nor only, as we've already seen, because Bérénice, in the wake of her new love of reading extemporizes on how, she says, *un livre est un monde* and every page a street – though either of these would be reason enough – but also because the city is "an important element in the relation between nation and identity" (Caulfield 13) and, consequently, a meaningful way to "engage with the global without losing site of the local" (6). Similarly, because the "urban present is a paradigmatic site of the condition of post-modern capitalism" (Iverson and Edwards 207), because it represents therefore "a potential node for social movements that may disrupt capital's hierarchies" (Caulfield 10), and because, finally, the city has such a central place in Western Culture that literature is often said to have contributed to and shaped the production of that city, however, only just as much as the city likewise has contributed to and shaped the production of literature (Lehan 9), thus, turning to the city now may well be as useful to the study of literature as the other way around. Indeed, it is all the more "vital" that we turn to the city now, Iverson and Edwards have argued, for the "Canadian urban system" itself is "on verge of crisis" (9) and Canadian literature and criticism may prove to be just the "space in which that crisis can be examined, contextualized, and possibly even resolved" (9).

It is in this context that a collection of figures from Ducharme's novels, of bodies



walking, riding and driving around the city would have (had I been able to include my chapter on Ducharme here) provided a useful, very material and concrete way of thinking through the relationship between different ways of reading, writing and teaching. Similarly, descriptions of the competing interests of cars and pedestrians that govern discussions about urban renewal, in Jane Jacobs' *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, for instance, would have served as a basis too for describing the different affects and effects of competing literary critical theories, just as Richard Sennett's privileging of the *uses of disorder* in the planning and development of *city life* would have provided grounds for understanding the very similar logic behind Gerald Graff's call, in *Professing Literature*, to "teach" as he says "the conflicts" (14-15, 258). I had hoped, furthermore, to use Wim Nijenhuis' account of the end of the city, for example, Raymond Williams' recording of the blurring of that eponymous distinction between country and city, or Rob Shield's insistence on how "pleasure and the body can be integrated into urban design practice" (84) as so many different ways of engaging with and returning to discussions, respectively, about the presumed death of literature and of the book in our digital, global age, the relationship between literature and its supposed others, and the intimate necessary relation, finally, between the labour and pleasure of reading and learning. I will therefore have to content myself here with only this sampling of what I do have time to mean here by my turning, *in a materialist way*, to the city.

I will map some of this literary touring, real and virtual  
- Gail Scott, "Sutured Subject" (63)

There is, of course, nothing new to this question of the city, nor is mine the first ostensibly literary study to turn, for one reason or another, toward the figure of the city. Indeed, St. Augustine who produced, in his *On Christian Doctrine*, what Daniel Coleman

describes as "one of the first systematic theories of reading in Western culture" (*In Bed* 72), also famously wrote of the (albeit heavenly) *City of God*. While Plato's *Republic*, likewise, is explicitly designed to interrogate the nature of justice *per se* and, as a result, presents itself as an account of the ideal (just) city, Eric Alfred Havelock has shown how this ostensibly urban *political* theory can just as profitably be read as an urban *pedagogical* thesis, which is to say, an account of the new philosophical curriculum being developed for Plato's academy in the wake of the cultural revolution then taking place as a shifting from an oral to a literate culture (*Preface* 13-15) – a shift, incidentally, almost exactly the reverse, but just as troubling, as our own nascent second Orality (Ong 2). Clearly, the relation between literature (poetry) and the city (space) is key here, both to the argument that Plato (through Socrates) is making and to mine.

Somewhat closer to home, I note that modern poets and novelists have long been interested in the city, Baudelaire and Dickens being only the two most obvious examples. Nevertheless, literary criticism has been relatively slow to engage with the theme, the image, or the emblem of the city in literature, and it has done so it seems only in the wake and under the influence of the work of sociologists and historians. For example, rather than "write a work of literary criticism" (Pike x), *per se*, the primary "intention" of Burton Pike's *The Image of the City in Modern Literature* is to "show how literature can contribute to the understanding of culture," every bit as much as sociology, history and psychology has. Indebted to the work of such "boundary studies as Donald Fanger's *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism*, E.H. Gombrich's *Art and Illusion*, Robert Nisbet's *Sociology as an Art Form* and Lewis Mumford's *The City in History*, Pike's own work is likewise an attempt, he says, to engage in a "dialogue among disciplines of study" (xiv), his own part being to identify the peculiar

ability of literature (and literary criticism) "to express many different things at once" (138). Because, while "sociology and psychology have been developed on the linear, sequential model of the natural sciences," literature (and literary criticism in turn) may therefore provide a unique opportunity to capture what he describes as "the tangled complexities of the city" (138) in a way that other disciplines cannot. In this sense, and proceeding by way of a collection of images of ambivalence and irresolution, which he removes from their original context and "juxtaposes" (x), Pike's study is clearly *about the city*, the city as it is "inescapably" defined as "a large scale form of social organization" (xii), and about the changes that system undergoes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (xiii). He concludes for example that, if throughout that period, the literary city expresses first the increasing "isolation or exclusion of the individual from the community" and then the increasing "fragmentation of the very concept of community" (xii), the "ambivalence" or "irresolution" of these two conflicting tendencies is, finally, "the most powerful constant associated with the idea of 'city'" (xii). At best then, this work is about how literary criticism serves to teach us less about literature and criticism than about the city, which in itself is fine except that my own interests tend in the opposite direction.

Richard Lehan's *The City in Literature*, likewise, is modeled on or expressly indebted *entre autres* to Mumford's *The City in History*, as it is to Weber, Durkheim and Simmel's work. It is the product he says of the "desire" for a methodology that would "ground the study of literary texts in a 'theory of place'" (xiv), a method "based on the '*shared textuality*' or *symbiosis* between literary and urban text" (xv; emphasis added). "As we move through the major writers of this study," he says early on, "we see that the city and its literature share textuality," by which he means "that the ways of reading literary texts are analogous to the

ways urban historians read the city" (8). He argues in fact that the city "emerges with the development of writing" (13) and that the novel consequently can serve to "describe" (62), "reveal" (184), "conceptualize" (291), "chronicle" (286) the evolution and transformation of the city from the "greek polis" (51) to the "infested city" (103), the "imperial city" (84), the "modern metropolis" (75), "industrial city" (68), "world city" (62) and the city "of decay and decline" (75) and degeneracy (66). Great! However, of the ways in which that city in turn "transforms" (57-59, 70) and "informs" (74) the novel, relatively little is said – certainly little enough to allow the rest of us to join in on the conversation. Lehan describes, for example, the city's "alienated individuals" to be found in literary texts (71), the "neurasthenia" of the city dweller (183), the crowds, masses and mobs, atavistic and bestial (52), all the human types created by capitalism (57), even the "abulia" of the literary artist in the city (132), but rarely do those figures ever serve to reflect back upon readers or writers and literary texts are and do, which again of course is fine except that it's the latter I have sought to find.

The same can be said, finally, to a large extent, about recent work in Canadian and Quebec Studies. Douglas Ivison and Justin Edwards' edited collection, *Downtown Canada*, for example, argues for "the centrality of the city and the urban within the Canadian spatial and cultural imaginary [...] including its literature" (Ivison and Edwards 4). Thus, they insist repeatedly that, as we move through and across the country by way, for example, of that most iconic TransCanada highway, one cannot help but notice that Canada is an "urban country" (3, 6, 197); or as Hal Niedviedski puts it that "Canada is a country of cities" (in Ivison and Edwards 8). "Urban writing in Canada is ubiquitous," they say, quoting Walter Pasche, who adds though that such ubiquity is "elusive" (in Ivison and Edwards 10). As the editors of the special issue of *Studies in Canadian Literature* put it, while "the majority of Canadians live in

large and small urban centres, cities and city life are so often absent from our critical conversations" (Warley et.al. 2). Exemplified by the Canadian Broadcasting Company's version of the American *Sesame Street*, here called *Sesame Park* (Edwards and Ivison 197), the "urban scene" in critical discourses is often "erased" (198), displaced and dislocated by the "myth of the small town and its virtues" and the "privileged wilderness and nordicity that define Canadian identity" (7), which is to say, by the power of that "myth of Canada as a non-urban place" (197) and by our cognate habit of turning every urban scene into "something pastoral, rural" (198). The city, as Richard Cavell puts it, has consistently been "defeated" ("An Ordered" 14) by Canadian criticism such that there remains today much to say in Canada about the relation between cities and literature.

Indeed, it has become increasingly "commonplace to assert (however uncritically) that 80% of Canadians live in cities" (Ivison and Edwards 3). Citing, for example, the "new deal for Canadian cities" that served as a key issue the in 2002 Liberal party of Canada leadership campaign, or the magazine spreads that accompanied that moment, it is possible to identify a certain "turn to the city" taking place in public and critical discourses (8). "As Mary Janigan put it, in a June 2002 *Macleans*' cover story, 'Cities are suddenly hot. After three decades of neglect and decline, Canadians are belatedly realizing that their wealth hinges on the health of their urban centres'" (in Ivison and Edwards 8). Ivison and Edwards note, however, that the sense of "discovery or loss that tends to accompany such claims (falsely) suggests that this is a new and radical shift in Canadian demographic patterns" (3). *Falsely*, they argue, because "Canadian writers are producing fiction, poetry, and drama that engage with urban reality of Canadian life, and have been doing so for a long time" (12; cf. pages 10-11). Much "more attention" therefore remains to be paid to those bodies of writing (8) and to our habit

especially of eliding that "reality" (9), that "lived experience of most Canadians" (6). That then is precisely the project in *Downtown Canada*: to bridge "the gap between the lived experience of most Canadians, who overwhelmingly live in urban centres" and the "public mythology of Canada and critical production on Canadian literature and culture, which has, until recently, largely focused on rural and wilderness spaces and small towns" (6). And a good and valuable project it is too.

They note, for instance, how often the urban is encountered only in opposition to the rural, or to the wilderness (12) – and as its negative counterpart moreover. This, they say, illustrates the imprecision with which terms such as 'urban' and 'city' are being used and reflects a failure to truly comprehend and engage with the urban" as such (3), with its "material realities" (12), and that failure, they argue, is "fatal" (12). Not only does this situation unnecessarily exacerbate divisions between urban and rural which on the political level make progress that much more difficult but, as Russell Smith suggests (albeit polemically), the ostensible "lag and disconnect between real and fictional, between Canadian lives and Canadian writing" may have a lot to do with "why we don't read much anymore" (8). Thus, to the extent that projects like *Downtown Canada* insist on the fact that the "urban is a central figure in the Canadian landscape" (13) and consequently that "any understanding of Canadian literature must pay attention to Canadian cities" (10 – or conversely, as Henigan insists, that our "debilitation of the urban novel in Canada" will lead "to debilitation of Canadian literature" in general (8) – my own project and theirs can be said to share a goodly amount of common interests, assumptions and hypotheses. However, I intend to take a further step beyond those taken (for the most part) in *Downtown Canada*, or in *Montréal imaginaire* too, for that matter, the most recent sign of collective interest in the city taking place in

Quebec studies too. Specifically, whereas projects like Ivison and Edwards' are rightly intent on resisting that thematic practice of the 1960s and 70s, in its fixations on rural themes and settings, and its consequent exclusion of the urban from the conversation, they remain nevertheless largely (and perhaps inevitably) thematic projects still.

By the *largely thematic* nature of such contemporary, literary critical projects interested in the city, I do not mean 'thematic' in every sense of that "wooly," "shifty" word (Brown, "Practice" 675, 670). I do not, for instance, mean to dismiss or disparage, simply, as "wrong" or "reductive" (653) the whole number of critical and literary projects in the context of which I hereby situate my own practice here. Rather, I mean simply to point out that the *Downtown Canada* project, like much of the work of the *Montréal Imaginaire* group, remains somewhat more sociological and historical than explicitly and formally literary in their conclusions than I hope myself to be. That work, of course, has done much to legitimize (in disciplinary terms) the study of that relationship between literature and urbanity, and then done much of the necessary preliminary work of collecting and cataloging all those ways in which literature itself has long been interested in cities, including, for example, the fact that "since there is literature, there have been cities" (Pike 3), or as Pierre Nepveu and Gilles Marcotte suggest, that the city itself could never have become except by way of the literary (*Montréal Imaginaire* 7-8). Without therefore wanting to make strawmen of the work of those upon whose shoulders I now stand, it is useful to recall and intervene in, by distancing my own materialism from one of the most significant (and enduring) critical traditions in Canadian literary studies, namely, that *thematism* of the 60s and 70s and the decades of critical reaction that followed.

As Russell Morton Brown recalls, we mean by "Canadian Thematic Criticism" a

moment during the lead up to and in the wake of the Canadian centennial celebrations in 1967 that involved editorial activities, like the publication of anthologies and the institution of the New Canadian Libraries series at McClelland & Stewart; institutional activities, such as the opening of undergraduate course offerings and graduate programs in Canadian literatures, as well as the endowing of funding agencies and the constitution of professional associations like the Association of Canadian and Québécois Literatures (ACQL); and, finally, literary and critical projects, including Northrop Fry's conclusion to the literary history of Canada, republished in his collection *The Bush Garden*, Margaret Atwood's *Survival*, John Moss *Patterns of Isolation*, D.G. Jones' *Butterfly on the Rock*, and Ronald Sutherland's books that I'll be discussing at some length in chapter two, among others, all of which collectively constitute a place-based critical project designed, as the editors of that *Studies in Canadian Literature* issue on the city put it, "to assert that there was something unique and fundamental about the national literature that marked its difference from American, British and French literatures," an "essential character often explained in terms of the human relationship to a distinctly Canadian national landscape" (Warley et.al. 1). In a seminal article, published as early as 1976, where it had an immediate impact on contemporary critical discourses – before being republished as the title piece of his collection of "eleven essays on Canadian Literature," and where it remains a staple of Canadian field exam lists – Frank Davey's "Surviving the Paraphrase" is perhaps most effective in its account of the "reductive and defensive" nature of that thematic project and its ultimately "paralyzing" effects, how it relies too heavily "on paraphrase and plot," says Morton-Brown ("Practice" 653), and how consequently it is "extra-literary" at best and, at worst, "anti-literary" (Davey, "Surviving" 2). Fuelled by the "anti-American cultural nationalism of the 1960s," says Morton-Brown, and/or "the centennial



celebrations of 1967" ("Practice" 655), and based on "an implied consensus concerning the nature of the 'Canadian experience'" that is, finally, "unverifiable" (659), the thematic project stands accused, and rightfully so, of being rather more "cultural and psychological" "than purely aesthetic or literary" (Davey, "Surviving" 6), which for a literary critical project is not saying nothing.

However, as suggested by the relatively unconvincing nature of the alternatives that Davey for example provides at the close of his polemic (7-11), and given the fact that critiques of this thematism have far out lived the actual practice of it, as Brown notes ("Practice" 658-665), the time soon came to reconsider the nature and practice of thematics (Brown) and to acknowledge that while it begs questions and testifies to "the limitations of Canadian criticism" (Davey, "Surviving" 1), thematics is not something which for that matter can simply be done away with. Indeed, theme does not only refer to that particular literary critical practice of thematism, but also arguably to the very *stoffe der literature* (Blodgett, "Dinstinctively" 138), the "stuff of art" and "fiction" (Scott, *Heroine* 33, 107). To put this another way, that is, in order to avoid the unhelpfully *critical* impression that my point here is only to label and so dismiss, for example, Justin Edwards' reading of Morley Callaghan as overly or simply thematic (as if any critical reading of literature could escape every reference to themes altogether), let me be rather *discerning*.<sup>58</sup> I mean, allow me to make a distinction between the

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<sup>58</sup> In his *In Bed with the Word*, Daniel Coleman draws a helpful distinction between the *discerning* and the *critical* in order to illustrate the sort of "posture" that it is his intention at this point to argue is both the consequence and the condition of the possibility of understanding "the book," which is to say, the condition of the possibility of reading (60-62). Whereas the first English sense of *critical* refers to the negatively turned finding of fault and judgment, and only later makes way for the more "constructive definitions for criticism, such as analyzing, reviewing, or making an assessment" (61), *discernment* in contrast suggests rather a "sorting out" of "influences" and "sources," of the "constructive" from the relatively harmful (61). Thus, "discernment is self-reflexive" (62), and reading in turn "a process of discernment" (61), in the sense that it allows me to sort out

themes, for example, that are Edwards' concern (i.e. the urban), and those that interest me (namely, the literary), that is, between the two different stages (to borrow that image from Patricia Smart) upon which our relatively similar practices of literary criticism are performed.

Thus, from Morley Callaghan's novel, *Strange Fugitive*, Jonathan Edwards gathers together the "representational strategies that modernist writers used to construct visions of *the modern city* and bring *it* under conceptual control" (7; emphasis added), "textual strategies" that are used, he explains, "to make 1920s Toronto *knowable*" (6), "narrative solutions to the ideological question of how to represent and *control* the social conflicts inherent to 1920s Toronto" (5). In each case, the narrative and textual practices serve to elaborate upon, to know or control *urban* realities. In that sense Edwards' work here confirms, and further elaborates upon the claim that the city is a text, written, legible, and re-writeable – and a valuable project that is. Thus, Callaghan is said to "explore and disseminate," in what is called "Canada's first urban novel" (Edwards n.p.), a series of conflictual, ambiguous, unstable, insecure, (il)legible and textual "conceptions" (n.p.) of urban Toronto, and Edwards in turn explores the ways in which Callaghan's discourse compares with those of other modern "novelists" and "urban critics" (n.p.), how it "adapts American models" to "1920s Toronto" (n.p.), "turns to," or "reverberates with" them (n.p.). None of that, though, serves as grounds for reflecting on modes of particularly literary conflict, ambiguity, instability, and illegibility in general. I mean, there is no return from the theme of the city in the novel to the literary forms that serve to do the representing. Similar distinctions, I suggest, could be made about what Jean-François

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others' interests (Edwards' for example) from mine, without for that matter ascribing failure, or straw-manning him to my own ends.

Chassay, Pierre Nepveu, Ginette Michaud do and don't with the intersection of *stories* and *cities* in *Montréal Imaginaire*, but it is high time I get on with what I myself am here to do instead.

My own "turn to the city," then, is not to be taken as simply a matter of relocating or resituating the question of (national) identity in the more material, concrete, more obviously differentiated space of the city (though it is inevitably that too). More importantly, what follows is meant to serve as a kind of response, or giving voice to the counsel offered by Robert Scholes, in his 2004 MLA presidential address, that as a discipline we must "return" to or reanimate "the pre-Renaissance study in rhetoric" ("Presidential" 732). Indeed, as Diana Brydon says, citing Scholes in her contribution to the *Trans.Can.Lit* project, "thinking through the implications of such a proposal," referring to the reference to rhetoric, is an integral part of the project of resituating Canadian literary studies generally ("Metamorphoses" 198, note 16). My staging here then might well be described as a *rhetoric of literary materialism*. I mean, I turn therefore to the figure of the literary city, and in particular, the literary city of Montreal now, and then of the pedagogical city more generally, in order to develop therefrom a set of terms or vocabulary of rhetorical forms with which to articulate, that is, to *describe rather than prescribe*, the spaces and practices opened up and imagined by Scott's writing of and in dialogue with the city.

## **Literary Montreal: or the Structure of Difference in Time**

*On dit de certaines villes qu'elles donnent des leçons.*  
- Nicole Brossard, "Aura d'une Ville" (42)

At the 2009 NeMLA meetings in Boston, I took part in a panel called the "Literatures of Montreal" which, in anticipation of the fact that the 2010 conference would be held in

Montreal, sought "to explore the city's unique position as a focal point of literary innovation and creativity."<sup>59</sup> The call for papers for that panel cited the election of Montreal to the status of 2005 UNESCO World Book Capital *City*, an honor it shares with Madrid (2001), Alexandria (2002), and most recently Incheon, South Korea (2015). It is an honor, notably, which Montreal's mayor described in primarily institutional and economic, rather than expressly literary terms, as a fitting testament to the number of *award-winning* writers in Montreal, and to its "high concentration of *companies* operating in the book *industry*" (Montreal, "UNESCO's choice"; emphasis added). While the award itself is described as an "exclusively symbolic acknowledgement of the best program dedicated to books and reading . . . aimed at promoting books and fostering reading during the period between one World Book and Copyright Day and the next" (UNESCO, "World Book Capital"), the mayor's statements (to say nothing of the comments from the President of ANEL, the French language publishers association in Quebec<sup>60</sup>) tend to refer much more to the *promotion of books* than the act of reading; rather to products than practices, which is a habit we have seen before and will see again. Without disparaging the importance of institutional and economic factors in the promotion of literacy, as I suggested earlier, I would like (to continue) to focus instead on the formal, individual practice of reading itself that any such institutional or economic conditions allow for. I mean, if Montreal is well-described as a literary city, a book

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<sup>59</sup> The session was organized by Kelly MacPhail (Université de Montréal), and included papers by Joel Deshayé (McGill University), Jay Ketner (SUNY Plattsburgh), Sylvia Terzian (Wilfrid Laurier University).

<sup>60</sup> This designation of Montreal as a world book capital city is described as an "honor" and "a tribute to the quality of (the city's) editorial production and the dynamism of all those who are involved in the book *industry*," said Denis Vaugeois, President of the *Association nationale des éditeurs de livres* (ANEL), upon hearing of the election of Montreal, and a tribute, he goes on to say, to "the excellence of the many activities submitted, which will involve all sectors of the book *industry*" (UNESCO, "Montreal Chosen"; emphasis added)

city, I want to ask here about what that designation exactly signifies. How, literally, is a city like a book? What can we learn about the practice and pedagogy of literature from the shapes and specificities of the city of Montreal in particular?

Indeed, Montreal is a book-city. In her introduction, for example, to the work of the novelist Jean Basile, collected in an anthology, *Montréal en prose*, the editor Nathalie Fredette finds there the figure of Montreal as a "ville-livre," a book-city, "une sorte de grand livre ouvert," as if on your lap, un "texte urbain" crisis-crossed, "sillonné" by its "protagonistes" readers in the course of their "longues et fréquentes promenades à travers le centre de la ville" (Fredette 457). Similarly, Frédette describes how "les poèmes et les romans de Yolande Villemaire sont d'une écriture résolument urbaine," in which "des références de toutes sortes et de toutes provenances prolifèrent et circulent dans cette extravagante ville-texte" (Frédette 481).<sup>61</sup> While Hubert Aquin describes the city's architecture, and the underground city below la Place Ville-Marie, in particular, as a bunch of pages that he cannot tire of leafing through ("Essai" 323), Nicole Brossard, referring to her contribution to another collection, *Montréal des écrivains*, imagines the city as a whole series of different books : "Tout cela, je l'écris en pensant Montréal comme une séries de livres" ("Aura d'une ville" 42). More recently, the *Montréal Imaginaire* research group (based in the Département d'Études Françaises at l'Université de Montréal) organized a symposium called *Lire Montréal*, as if the city were indeed a legible text, and then published their findings in *Montréal Imaginaire: ville et littérature*. Gilles Marcotte, one of the managing editors of that collective, would even publish

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<sup>61</sup> Fredette's collection of texts and introductory comments, not surprisingly, are full of such references, *entre autres*, to Louis Dudek (300), the story-teller Hugh Hood (275), and Lionel-Groulx (161).

his own collection of essays called, *Écrire à Montréal*, in which he suggests (as I noted a moment ago) that Montreal only really becomes a city as it receives the designation *literary* – that "*recevoir la littérature, pour Montréal, c'est accéder au rang de métropole . . . accéder à l'imaginaire sans quoi une ville n'est pas une ville*" (83), which Simon Harel later would confirm, arguing that the city itself is "*la création de l'univers urbain ... est le fait de stratégies discursives*" ("Loyautés" 21). I've already discussed, and repeatedly cited that metaphorizing of Ducharme's Bérénice about how "un livre est un monde" (107), but the question remains still, how indeed is the city, and the city of Montreal in particular, like a book? What does *literary city* literally mean? What does that metaphor do or make us do and, pedagogically speaking, why?

Montreal, I argue, is a literary city in at least three different senses. First, it is literary in the very literal sense that as a city it is full of places associated with the production and producers of literature, a concrete, literal literariness that Gilbert Royer's series of bronze tiles and plaques installed around the city bear steady witness to.<sup>62</sup> The city is full of places like the high school (which is no longer a high school) attended by the poets, AM Klein and Irving Layton, and by the novelist Mordecai Richler, who recalls his attendance there in *The Street*; places like the monument to George-Etienne Cartier, "based with nude figures," that are not quite nude, just beyond Park avenue and below the cross, where the poet A.M. Klein, and his friend Lefty, he says, "playing hookey" from the school nearby "tested our gravel aim (with

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<sup>62</sup> Indeed, Gilbert Royer's career of sculptural projects, as described by Réal Lussier for the *Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal*, has everything to do with the mineral "weight," as well as the "fragility of words" in our lives and in the city (Lussier 16). Projects like *Comme un poison dans la ville*, or *La montagne des jours*, featuring the installation of large "granite disks" in the lawns of Mount-Royal park on which he inscribed rings of "fragments of conversations" (17), are just a couple of examples of the work he has done to make us conscious of the mutually constitutive relationship between literary and urban spaces and practices.

occupation flinging away our guilt) / against the bronze tits of Justice" (*Rocking Chair* 35-36).<sup>63</sup> There are places like that building on rue Vallières, just off St.Laurent, where Leonard Cohen lives when he is in Montreal<sup>64</sup> or like those bars and cafés on St.Laurent where, in the mid-70s, two young feminist writers – one anglophone, Gail Scott, and one francophone, France Théoret – could share a concern, "more for syntax and language than 'story'" and, therefore, find ways and the space to "get behind the masks of ethnic reticences that were such an old story in both our cultures" (Scott, *Spaces* 30), or where, 20 years later, anglophone and francophone poets and *conteurs* could explore shared interests in performance in ways that continue today to make Montreal a hub of sorts for performance poetry (Stanton and Tinguely). It is a literally literary city in the sense that it is so full of places where writers have lived, and written, and strolled by on their way to and from writing, like that Jeanne Mance park again, where Gail Scott remembers walking, with her daughter, and bumping into Geneviève Bergeron, one of the 14 women that would later be murdered at the Polytechnique in December, 1989, on the other north western side of MontRoyal ("Of Blood"). I describe the park, in this sense, as a literary site, associated with the production and producers of the literary, because of how Scott refers to it in the piece she wrote immediately after the Dawson College shooting in 2006, about how she had not initially been able "write" in 1989, and so

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<sup>63</sup> Impossible to withhold pointing out at this point, possibly for future editions of Sherry Simon's *Translating Montreal*, to which I refer again below, that I had long remained baffled by Klein's actions here, until I noticed I had been lead into confusion by Robert Melançon's (mis?)translation of "playing *hookey*," literally "*faisant l'école buissonnière*" in Patricia Godbout's version ("La Montagne dans la ville"), as "*jouant au hockey*," playing *hockey* (Melançon 81). (Mis?)translation, obviously, given how nobody realistically could, with a hockey stick, fling stones at such an elevated target; though if he had been able to Klein might then have aspired to embody our *bilinguifacted* city on the ice rink as much he does in his poetry, wearing the Montreal Canadiens' *sainte-flannelle*.

<sup>64</sup> ". . . *juste en face du Parc des Portugais*," records Nathalie Petrowski in her "*Portrait Robot d'un Poète Perdu*".

"could not" she says "join my voice to those of other women equally horrified at the cold, calculating separation of men from women . . . the better to shoot the women," until 4 years later, when she published her 2<sup>nd</sup> novel, *MainBrides*, "a novel at the centre of which is a gap [or park] in the progression [or urban landscape] of time" which, she says, "was the only way I could represent how inarticulable loss feels in retrospect" ("Of Blood"). Montreal is a literary city then in the sense, first, that it has been written *in* often, and been itself the occasion of so much writing. Indeed, Montreal is the home of a number of literary traditions and writing careers which other, relatively historical projects are better suited than mine to narrate (cf. Simon, *Translation* 125).

It is literary though in another sense too, perhaps more obviously or interestingly, in that it has been written often, not only *in*, but also *about*, fictionalized, immortalized in song and prose and verse and film and stone and steel, etc. Referring again to *MainBrides*, for example, Montreal is full of literary sites like that café, across the street from Schwartz' deli, on the Main, where Lydia, the narrator sits, "drinking steadily to forget a scene that morning where she stumbled across the corpse of a murdered woman" in Jeanne Mance park a couple of blocks away, on her way out for morning coffee (Chisholm, "Paris, Mon Amour" 203), that café where she collects the soundbites and street scenes of which she then composes the series of portraits of her *main brides*, portraits she projects onto the roof behind that "ochre pediment" across the street and three floors up, in whose watchful company Lydia will be able, again, in the end, to walk out into the violent city streets, taking back the night, with a zigzag and a swagger in her step (*Main Brides* 230; Figure 1). It is full of literary sites, like that spot down by the Old Port,



**Fig. 1: "Green Pediment, blvd. St Laurent" (Cassidy)**



where we can look up at, as the "sun pours down like honey on," Cohen's "lady of the harbor" standing atop the so-called Sailor's church, who "can show you where to look among the garbage and the flowers" and the "heroes in the seaweed" ("Suzanne"),<sup>65</sup> or like the Alpenhaus into which Malcolm Reid recalls stepping as a young anglo journalist (*Shouting* 40), creating a scene of sorts that would become fictionalized and ironized in Scott's *Heroine* (45). The list of such sites is long indeed and represents the bulk of the content of those walking tours, both virtual and actual, that I developed over a couple of years while I was reading for my comprehensive exams, in 2005-6,<sup>66</sup> and so I cannot help but refer to still a couple more of my favorites, like that ship's prow, v-shaped house on the fault line that is la rue St. Ambroise, in St. Henri (Figure 2), where, in Gabrielle Roy's classic *Bonheur d'Occasion*, Jean Lévesque spends most of his time studying, to become an engineer and so to prove that he is not bound by the class or place that birthed him there, as so many were in what once was the heart of Canada's industrial revolution; that house from whence he looks up from his books, out the window, and into the blustering snow and wind and open space along the train tracks outside, to clear his mind and thoughts only to find, in the dancing and blustering snow there, another image of Florentine Lacasse, and of his affection for her which would bind him, he fears, to

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<sup>65</sup> Incidentally, I have always taken, perhaps too fancifully, this line as a reference to Klein's "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape," at the end of which the poet rests, amongst all that seaweed, "like phosphorous. At the bottom of the sea."

<sup>66</sup> Indeed, having moved down to the erstwhile industrial, south-western neighbourhood of Montreal, called St-Henri, for love and for a change, and I started attending and eventually giving walking tours of that area where my mom had grown up, in which are set novels, films, and plays by Gabrielle Roy, Jacques Godbout, and David Fennario, and which was then, as now, going through a rapid and contested (because not often equitable) period of renewal and gentrification, whereby for example many open and much-used, but unmanaged green spaces were transformed into largely unused and fenced in parking lots. Then, when I'd later moved back up to the MileEnd, I began adding to my tour guide's map, diversifying the itineraries it would allow for, to the point even of developing virtual tour I took to conferences, for example, in Boston.

this place where "*le luxe et la pauvreté se regardent inlassablement*" (38).



**Fig. 3 : "Shit Encrusted Norman Bethune" (Cassidy)**

I love these sites and this city from whence I can actually look up, for example, with Alex, the fictional anti-hero of Nino Ricci's *Origin of Species*, at that "statue of Norman Bethune (Figure 3) [that] stood shit-encrusted in

the little delta that de Maisonneuve broke up into at Guy. Everyday he was there, iconic and staunch, another Canadian hero with all the sex appeal of cat pee" (151). I love them with the love that motivated my return to school and into a graduate program after a few years of teaching in the 'real' world because, with Ricci's Alex, a doctoral

candidate in English at Concordia (sic) who, in the last words of the novel, and not totally unlike Scott's heroine, "slipped quietly [out] through the door and into his own life" (472), I can walk with the heroine as I can with Alex here, east on *la Ste-Catherine*, "north on St. Denis," "up to St. Louis Square," and west again "along Prince Arthur" (441), past St. Urbain, Park avenue, and then Aylmer, where at "the Yellow a Door, a basement hole in the ground," "Margaret Atwood had read and Leonard Cohen had played," through the McGill campus quadrangle, up McTavish to Pine and then on "up the mountain" (441) to the cross where "he felt a tenderness in his bladder and pulled his zipper down" and, in yet another example of



**Fig. 2: "Maison de Jean Lévesque" (Cassidy)**

how we write and read with our bodies, "lay down his trace" (445).<sup>67</sup> Indeed, I returned to the university's institutional and research oriented forms of reading with Lianne Moyes and Gail Scott, if not finally with Ducharme too, in part, in order to better understand that very real, even visceral experience and pleasure of reading fiction about the very streets that I too walk along and through.

These, as I said, are the sorts of sites with which I filled the itineraries of my walking tours, only to find that nothing more was being asked of me, the tour guide, than to bring people to and point at, for example, Cohen's house, or the house on Jeanne Mance where Ducharme's Mille Milles and Chateaugué live (*Le Nez qui voque*), and from which they hike up into Outremont to wait for their beloved Toune.<sup>68</sup> Sadly, though, I never did, during these tours, manage to guide us as far as I had very much hoped, namely, to the sites of that 3rd and perhaps most literal sense of the literary city that Montreal is, and so to these I now turn. I mean, the point of the tours, from my point of view, was to walk us right up to those places that are, literally, metaphors; places where we get, both, a deeper and more intimate sense of the city itself, its shapes, and several hearts, as well as a very concrete and tangible sense of what literature is too, that is, a sense of the spaces of difference where we are when we read. Thus, what follows is a virtual tour of a series of sites in which it is possible, I argue, to take literally the figure of the book-city and as such to ask, after Derrida again, not how literature and the urban are identical (as that old metaphor, semantically, suggests) but, more

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<sup>67</sup> As Moyes describes in a very helpful essay, citing for instance Paul's moment with the mountain in MacLennan's *Two Solitudes*, Alex's walking tour, and the significance of it is neither unique or rare ("Writing the Montreal Mountain" 49), but not for that matter any less a pleasure to follow along in the footsteps of so to speak.

<sup>68</sup> Which is not to say anyone ever complained that, for courtesy's sake, I always refused to point out the house where Gail Scott actually lived at the time, and her heroine consequently did too, and then the other where she lives now.

precisely, what the literary must be after all in order that something *in it* be equivalent to the urban (Grosz, "Time" 136). Indeed, what follows are sites, figuratively speaking, that are themselves a kind of writing and demand consequently to be either well read or not at all and not without consequence. Moreover, in stopping a moment to read them carefully I suggest we stand therefore to learn to see cities and stories both as spaces of difference through which bodies move more or less freely and flexibly (or not at all), etc.

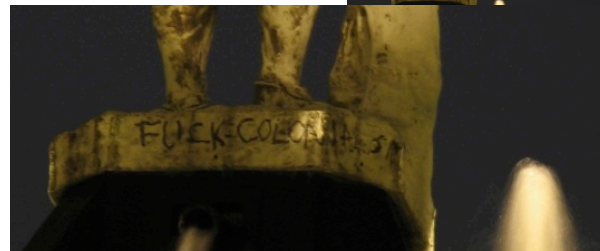
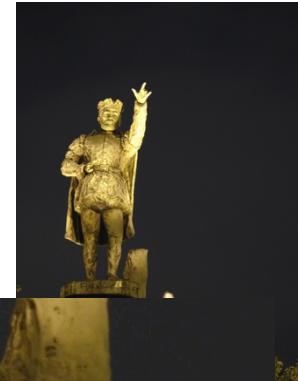
I'm thinking, for example, of the statue of Jacques Cartier (Figure 4), standing atop a fountain in a park, in St. Henri again, that historically industrial but lately gentrifying neighborhood where Gabrielle Roy set her *Bonheur d'Occasion*; just west of Little Burgundy where the pianist Oscar Peterson was born, and where both Mayruth Sarsfield's *No Crystal Stair* and Lorena Gale's *Je me Souviens* are in part set; and northward, across the canal, moreover, from the Pointe where David Fennario set his *Balconville*; St. Henri, the so-called city below the hill.<sup>69</sup> This Cartier is only a replica of the original statue, now being housed in the metro station nearby, to protect it from the inclemencies of history and politics as well as from the weather.<sup>70</sup> From the positioning of its right hand, this Cartier looks like he should be

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<sup>69</sup> ... below the hill and over which the great houses in Westmount can freely gaze; although, as Andrée Maillet describes in her *Les Montréalais*: "Il y a des centaines de milliers d'êtres humains qui soutiennent notre maison," says the patriarch, Sir Alfred, by way of explaining the contingent nature of his economic power. "Ils soupçonnent à peine notre existence. Ils ne peuvent même pas imaginer notre luxe. . . Je ne connais d'eux que leur labeur; ils ne savent de moi que mon argent. Et je voudrais que quelque chose de plus direct, de plus humain nous fasse communiquer. Mais quoi? Sans eux tous, je ne verrais pas ce que je vois de ces fenêtres. Et pour cela, je suis leur obligé" (156-157). See also Paul's hike in MacLennan *Two Solitudes* (in Moyes "Writing the Montreal Mountain").

<sup>70</sup> Indeed, the weather is not the only thing from which the statues of Montreal need protection, as David Widgington, *entre autres*, describes in his *pedestrian's guide to the city* of Montreal, and not without a certain pleasure, how the statue of John A. MacDonald was decapitated in 1992, in protest, the head of which was only ever found again two years later (*Montreal Up Close*). And how could I pass up a chance to recollect here the plan in Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* to blow up the statue of Queen Victoria at McGill's music building; or that other "plot," foiled in the 1890s, "to blow up" the Nelson monument in Place Jacques-Cartier (Hustak 24), which Scott Symons calls Lady Hamilton's dildo (*Place d'Armes*), causing Francois Hebert to regret how that obelisk, "celle de l'Amiral Nelson notamment, qui est toujours là . . ." (*Montréal* 66).

holding a sword that is not for that matter there, that he did once hold before it was, I am told, sold for scrap metal by a couple of local boys (now grown men) who, at the time, had been afraid of getting in trouble for having climbed up onto the fountain and, while falling off, grabbed for something to hold onto, catching only the sword which, however, came down with him into the snow. Indeed, this is a storied statue.<sup>71</sup>



**Fig. 4: "Fuck Colonialism, Jacques Cartier (and detail)" (Cassidy).**

The particular story, though, that interests me here, is one I've never heard tell of or seen recorded in any book but read, instead, upon the statue itself. It is a story about how, under the cover of darkness (one supposes), someone presumably climbed up onto the replica Cartier there and, intentionally or not, broke off the two middle fingers on the left hand that Cartier is extending authoritatively westward above the crowds he is ostensibly addressing, and wrote "fuck colonialism" in black marker across the cream coloured base of the statue. Thus, instead of simply hailing the crowd of his supporters and subjects below, and exhorting them onwards in their collective colonial project, while his right hand rests of the hilt of the (absent) sword with which he "discovered" and took "possession" of this part of *Turtle Island* in the name of the King of France, his "master" (as the official inscriptions set around the base of the statue put it), so that Cartier seems now, and rather incongruously or playfully, anyway significantly, to be telling those of us using the

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<sup>71</sup> Described as the first officially designated green space in Saint-Henri, the park was subject to a significant renovation in 1992, at which time the original Cartier statue was replaced and housed in the cathedral ceiling spaces of the metro station nearby (Montreal, "Fiche"). The replica then has apparently been renovated ("Jacques Cartier") and, while the sword remains absent still, the broken fingers have been, sadly, replaced.

park, not only to remember and celebrate the colonial and imperial history of this place, but to question it also, to resist it, tell the other sides of it, indeed, to "rock on" in the hope of "fuck[ing] colonialism." That inscription, I argue, makes this a literary site, literally, a metaphor, something that can be seen to be saying at least two different things at once, both A and not-A. The fact that the city has seen fit to 'renovate' the statue and therefore 'fix' the broken fingers, whether consciously or otherwise, only reinforces a point I've been making throughout about how reading is hard, even perhaps impossible or unnatural, and yet all the more necessary still ("Jacques Cartier").

Similarly, the monument to the city's first French governor, Sieur Paul de Chomedey de Maisonneuve, in Place d'Armes, is marked by a similar set of differences, namely, different, even conflicting perspectives on the meaning of heroism.<sup>72</sup> Between the figures of Jeanne-Mance and the generic "Iroquois," a-squat and a-watch at the two south- and north-western corners of the monument to the city's foundation (Figure 5), is a bronze plaque depicting that primal scene for which Maisonneuve is remembered as a hero – his "Exploit de la Place d'Armes" – where, as the story is told, for instance, in Robert Majzels' *City of Forgetting*, Maisonneuve shot and killed, and so successfully "defended" his embattled colonial mission against, that 'Iroquois' chief who had come to claim him as his rightful prisoner, for trespassing (76). Except that someone, I think importantly, has inscribed upon that statist memorial a counter-discourse, an anti-colonial message. Three small letters – ...

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<sup>72</sup> Heroism, I've already noted, is a recurrent and central theme, both, in my reading of Scott in chapter two, and in what would have been in my reading of Ducharme in chapter three, but it recurs also in Gilbert Boyer's "Inachevée et rien d'héroïque," an installation in which the artist sought to represent the heroism of, and the part played by those, we, who "labour in anonymity" in the service of our "collective history" (Lussier 20).

eur – marked upon the stone in indelible ink overwrite the monument’s purported intention to memorialize the heroics of foundation by inserting, with quiet insistence, a sign of how *exploit* (triumph and success) is not for that matter unrelated to *exploiteur* (exploitation), which is to say, a sign that foundation is not unrelated to violence, and heroism does not at the same time depend upon villainy, cowardice, and moral bankruptcy, all of which we live in the product of together still today. The monument itself, in this sense, has been transformed. That weight of stone and bronze that imposes itself on my tourist gaze and takes up space, forcing me to alter my course on my way through the centre of the square, has been transformed into a visible, legible, passable or "penetrable" place of the sort, perhaps, that Scott Symons was after the "key" to in his 1967 novel about *Place d’Armes* (136, 110, 103).<sup>73</sup> The memorialist's

intentions have been overwritten, and the monument metaphorized – made over into metaphor – and opened up into a space or structure of visible differences that becomes and remains legible, therefore, or "recognizable," says



Fig. 5: "L'exploitEUR de la Place d'Armes and detail" (Cassidy)

Benjamin, referring to "that perilous critical" or dialectical "moment upon which all reading is

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<sup>73</sup> Scott Symons' *Place d'Armes: a Personal Narrative* is an important reference to make in this context, for it allows me to signal yet another comparison that will remain unmade here *perforce*. Indeed, *Heroine* would do well to be compared to *Place d'Armes*, for it too is a sort of *kunstleromman* in which the novel proper only begins as the narrative ends, open; written by a queer sort of writing subject, or new kind of man (203) not unlike Scott's new kind of heroine (*Spaces* 123); who is "being lived in French, and writing [...] in English" (191) and disproving, therefore, "the *Two Solitudes*" (Symons 46); who threatens to fragment the novel form, to borrow Scott's phrase (*Spaces* 83), and "dangerously" (Symons 97), as author, narrator and main character here too blur and blend into a singular movement towards, as Scott seeks to write the city ("Cusps" 64), learning how to "see" and to "penetrate" the Place, but only finally as he accepts simultaneously to be penetrated and made "vulnerable" to it in turn (Symons 110).

founded" (*Arcades* N3,1), when its several sets of terms are not hurriedly resolved to identity but brought, instead, "together in a flash [...] to form a constellation" (N2a,3). The monument has become literary, literally, and legible to the extent that it is opened up as a space as if between two parallel lines of flight (as I'll describe in a moment), through or around which we are able and invited to move (and keep moving) in different directions, at the same time, and isn't that exactly what literature offers, a crossroads of different and divergent discourses

where we are, I argue, when we read and where each of us is responsible for the adventures we go on to choose from there?<sup>74</sup>



**Fig. 6: "L'ange du Parc Jeanne-Mance"(Cassidy)**

Like the angel atop that monument to Georges Étienne Cartier in Jeanne Mance park (Figure 6), at the foot of which we have stopped before, whose right arm raised seems to be saying both "*voilà, j'arrive,*" here I am, and "*halte là, n'approchez pas,*" stop there and come no further (D. Kimm 141), and like the Maisonneuve monument, which Ringuet noted has "*un bras levé en signe de protestation et l'autre retombé en signe de découragement*" (in Frédette 194), serves me here as a very

concrete representation of that structure of visible and legible differences that is the very definition, I have argued, of metaphor, in particular, and of narrative and the

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<sup>74</sup> Yes, it's true, at the crux of my dissertation's long promised definition of the literary I have made a (not so) veiled reference to those *Choose your own Adventure* novels that I found at once so enticing and frustrating as a boy, for the ways in which, short of drawing up elaborate and seemingly interminable maps on my walls (in the days before computers!!) to chart out the course of all those different narrative possibilities and so to make sure I had tasted (tested) every one, I never did manage to procure for myself a satisfying sense of actually having finished reading the whole 'book'. I found that sort of powerlessness, as I said, both entrancing and exasperating. However, as that sudden and admittedly off-handed reference grows into this explanatory (if not to say justificatory) footnote, I realize that having in that way to grapple with the desire for and lack of outright control over my world (i.e. with the fact that the irreversibly forward coursing of time means that one choice so often excludes so many others, in the real world) put that little boy that I was in good stead to becoming (and needing to become) the reader by trade and the man that I am today.



literary too by extension, the places where we are when we read. Like the artist Roadsworth's stencilings that make of city crosswalks, for example, so many wall-mounted light switches, or footprints (Figure 7), or like the St. Lawrence river itself, erstwhile seen from atop Mount-Royal, in such a way that the "belle teinte verte du St. Laurent dans la partie la plus éloignée, et le brun violacé des eaux de l'Outaouais dans la moitié du fleuve le plus proche" refused to resolve (Lighthall, in Frédette 96), and like the cross finally to which we now turn, these urban spaces and city sites (sights), like the rose that is both a flower and a feeling (love), or the book that is also a city, serve as so many occasions to *learn to better know* about what literary means.



**Fig. 7: "Lightswitch"  
(Roadsworth)**

Broadly defined, then, in this materialist way, the literary is an ongoing collection of places (in either space or time) where two different, even conflicting sets of terms interact, where tenor and vehicle (Richards), frame and focus (Black), or subject and predicate (Ricoeur) – statist terms, on the one hand, and activist, on the other – attempt to *subordinate* one another, but finally will not be reduced or resolved to a single identity, even where the one is ostensibly erased. The literary is that kind of space inhabited, to borrow Dr. Johnson's phrase, by at least "two ideas" at once, and that requires of us, readers (citizens), therefore, an ability to entertain two different points of view at the same time (Ricoeur, "Metaphorical Process" 152), and the "nobility" not to rush on towards some utopic no-place of identity and closure (Coleman, *In Bed* 109). As I move, then, on towards my reading of *Heroine*, finally, and first of all, briefly, to those promised figures of the pedagogical city from which we learn how to know about how we learn to read from what we do and where we are when we read, I

want to pause for just a moment longer at the cross on Mount-Royal that serves, as metaphors do, by recurring as a "mode of transportation" (DeCerteau 115), a way of moving around (and learning) through (and from) this tour of literary and theoretical Montreal, so to speak, on our way to a reading of *Heroine*.

The explorer, Jacques Cartier, of course, was the first to plant a cross on that 'mountaintop', in 1535. Unable to proceed any further in his search for a western passage to China, because of what would become known as the LaChine (the China) rapids, for they way that they prevented any further passage west, Cartier asked the Huron that he met in the village mistakenly named *Hochelaga*<sup>75</sup> to guide him up to where he could look around, northward beyond the cemeteries that flank today much of the mountain's northern slope, beyond "the phallic tower of l'Université de Montréal. *On appelle ça le pénis d'Ernest Cormier*" (Scott, *Heroine* 86), and as far as the Laurentian hills in the distance; southward, over what would become the centre of the city, built up around Place Ville-Marie, which is itself shaped like a cross in echo, and beyond the so-called *Eastern Townships* and as far as, on a clear day, to the American border, says MacLennan's narrator in an essay I'll discuss in a moment; and eastward, finally, over that "universe old cold-water flats" that Mordecai Richler remembers in his collection *The Street*, down along Mont-Royal, Marianne, and Rachel, towards the 1967 Olympic stadium, for which even as it is falling to pieces already we've only just now finished paying ("Quebec's Big Owe"). Indeed, as far as the eye could see, Cartier

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<sup>75</sup> Mistaken, for many reasons, though most interestingly because, according to the Oseaga music festival website FAQ page, *hochelaga* is actually a misunderstanding of *oseaga* which, according to "Mohawk oral history," it says, was meant to designate, not the village, but *the man shaking his hands*, Cartier, who would presumably have been asking about the rapids over there, what they are called, and is there any way to get around them ("What Does Oseaga Mean?").

could see no way around those rapids, and that is why, as the novelist Gabrielle Roy wrote, François Hébert suggests, Montreal exists here precisely because it was impossible for Cartier to go any further : "*étrange paradoxe d'une ville : port, artificiel, existe précisément à cause des difficultés qu'il a surmonté*" (155); because "of that number of rocks in the river bed," adds François Hébert, that make of Montreal both a literary space and "an impass" (35).<sup>76</sup> Cartier did, however, take the time, while he was up there looking around, to plant a wooden cross in honour of the French king in whose name he had sailed.

Nearly 100 years later, the first governor of the city's colonial mission at Ville-Marie, Sieur Paul de Chomedey de Maisonneuve arrived on the island to find that the by now mythical village of *Hochelaga* had disappeared, as Cartier's cross had too, surely. Threatened by the rising flood-waters of the raging river at its doorstep, and by the metaphorical "flood" of Iroquois none too pleased about his missionary intentions to convert them, Maisonneuve pledged in 1643 to carry a cross upon his shoulder up the mountain in exchange for some sort of divine intercession. And he did; however, because it was made of wood, it is said to have fallen soon to the ground, so that Jeanne Mance had, when no one else would risk the trip, to climb up there to fix it herself (Widginton 18). Presumably as a result of such persistent erectile difficulties, the St.Jean-Baptiste society, when they decided in 1924 to install again a cross on the mountain, this time, as a testament to the survival and blossom of an island of French language culture here in the ocean of English speaking North-America, made sure to build one that would stand the test of time and the weather and, so, the 102-foot steel cross still stands today, lit up in white at night or, exceptionally, in purple when the pope dies. An

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<sup>76</sup> Or, as Nathalie Fréchette recalls Victor Barbeau saying, Montreal as "*un aveu d'impuissance*" (180).

obvious, if not untroubled emblem of the city it stands above (Deslisle 71-72).

It is, though, in Robert Majzels' accounting most of all that the figure of the cross acquires the kinds of legibility that is useful to me here. Indeed, the cross attains a degree of figurality in how Majzels' dystopic retelling of Maisonneuve's quest to carry it up the mountain ends, this time (or again), in failure. Set in contemporary Montreal, Majzels' *City of Forgetting* tells of how Maisonneuve's praying for a sign that his mission had not been abandoned (24), is interrupted and drowned out by the "calling" (87) of voices "from outside" its colonial walls (74), Mohawk voices, the powerful, ground-shaking voice of the Peacemaker and founder of the Five Nations Confederacy. Brought to his knees by the power of that indigenous voice, and with his cross on the sidewalk beside him, "split in two and encased in a sheet of flame" (139), Maisonneuve is told of the "belt of burning beads. *Tekeniteyoha:te, the Two-Row wampum, the Treaty of the Two Paths*," which the Iroquois confederacy had concluded with the cross-bearing and warlike Europeans:

"Two parallel lines. Two ships running down the length of the river. On one side the swift, silent canoe of the Five Nations; on the other, the great white sails filled with the crack of falling trees. Each vessel moving freely on the water, each people living freely in its own way. This was the agreement, the Silver Chain of Alliance, *l'Alliance des bras levés*: never to cross the other's path, never to impede the other's progress.

But now white sails career crazily over the width of the river, crashing into the birch-bark canoes. Two paths are *crossed*. And two *crossed sticks* mark the summit above *Tiontiakwe*, the place the white men call Montréal. This cross, this sign with which the white man marks the places where he buries his dead" (Majzels 139; emphasis added).

With Maisonneuve on his knees and about to be arrested, my virtual tour here of literary Montreal then comes again and finally to the point it means to make.

For if the cross, on the one hand, is a symbol of religious devotion and sacrifice—and even for a time the emblem of a nation's identity and survival in the midst of an ocean of

otherness – it appears, in Majzels' account, as a sign also of betrayal; not only a cross, indeed, but a "double-cross" (Majzels 139; see also Simon, *Translating* 201-202), the sound of a compact forsaken. If it rises erect over the city, signifying the potency of an ongoing colonial project, it can also now be seen as a testament to that mission's failure and exhaustion : dwarfed now by the television towers on the mountain, and lain in a sense to rest, spent, however briefly, in advance of the 1976 World Expo *Corrid'art* show that then mayor Jean Drapeau abruptly had cancelled, along Sherbrooke street, in front of the McGill campus (Simon, *Translating* 202). Indeed, it has even served as a place holder for the Hindi symbol – *Ohm* – on a postcard, advertising a new local yoga studio.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, as the debate recurs occasionally about how it perhaps should be taken down, given how the all-too-empty churches in the city are being converted to other, less religious uses (Simon, *Translating* 121), the cross, like the Place VilleMarie, accedes to that status of that "*néant urbain*" or "*signes ambiguës*" (Aquin 323), that centre "*spirituellement vide... d'ordinaire une gare*" or "*point vide d'affluence*" that Barthes described as the condition of a city (or a figure's) significance, its legibility: "*qui, au dire de certain urbanites, permet à la ville de signifier, d'être lue*" (*L'Empire* 56-57). As the city itself does then, and as the Place Ville-Marie does also, the cross speaks a doubled, "divided" discourse: two languages at once, of devotion, and betrayal; of pious humility and colonial aggression, in the midst of which is that gap of non-commensurability – that "crack" as I call that place in my discussion of *Heroïne* – that makes it legible and, in this sense, stands to teach me something about what legibility actually means, and reading too involves, which is to say, what we do in that place where we are when we

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<sup>77</sup> Sadly, I have since lost that postcard.

(learn to) read.

## **The Pedagogical City and the Contingence of Legibility**

A history that provides this kind of instruction does not cause sorrow but arms him.  
- Walter Benjamin, *Arcades Project* (N18.3)

... whose painful contradictions or sutures are worn, for everyone to see, right in the middle of  
their utterances.  
- Gail Scott, "The Sutured Subject" (69)

There is much in this sense about the literary that we stand to learn from the urban and for this reason I turn now, finally, to a set of more explicit figures of the pedagogical city. Indeed, if the city, and Montreal in particular, is a literary and therefore a pedagogical space, these figures of the pedagogical city collected from Patricia Godbout, Brian Poole, Zygmunt Bauman and Lewis Mumford will help me describe further what precisely we learn to know about figurality in that materialist way, and how. Specifically, there is much to learn from the city, not only about the shape and character of literary space itself as we've seen, but about that practice of it too we call reading; a practice that I will then, and finally, turn upon Gail Scott's writing of the city in chapter two.

In an essay collected in 1954, called "The Mountain in the City," Hugh MacLennan wonders at how the people of Montreal can have managed so long and so successfully to preserve the park that crowns the top of Mount Royal – the healthy "heart" (206) of the "vital organism" that is their city (207) – "for the pleasure of the people who love it" (207) and as a "permanent exception" to what he describes as Montrealers' otherwise much more dominant tendency to "*laissez faire* and the quick buck" (208). Normally, he says, citing very low municipal voter turnouts, Montreal is an "extremely careless city" (207). What reason then can

be advanced, he asks, to account for how Montrealers have managed, nevertheless, to resist the lure of the "utilitarians who sought to exploit the mountain" commercially (210)? How has so little success been achieved by the private interests of "those who see no use in a tree except to make firewood, and no value in beauty except to serve as a come-on for a hot-dog stand or a penny-arcade" (210)? How have private, commercial interests, "so far" (210), not managed to overdetermine the shape of the public space that remains still at the top of the mountain in the heart of the city? Having decided, in the end, that "the reason must be more than a poetic one," MacLennan mobilizes the ancient and authoritative figure of the prophet Mohammed, who could humble himself in the face of, and go up instead to the mountain that refused to come when called to him and, on the basis of this powerful precedent, concludes that "On mountain tops people *tend*" (in the present simple tense that signifies perpetuity) "*to feel humble*, even in this covetous, bawdy, exciting place" (210; emphasis added).

It is on this figure of a *humbled population* and of a state of *permanent exception* that I want to focus and, specifically, on Patricia Godbout's eventual and radical mis-translation. Whereas for MacLennan "people tend" mysteriously to "feel humble" on mountain tops, in Godbout's per-version, the mountain instead is seen to teach humility: "*Le sommet des montagnes enseigne l'humilité, même dans un endroit comme celui-ci, animé par l'avidité, la paillardise et la passion*" (Godbout 227; emphasis added). Montrealers, her mis-translation suggests, have managed to protect this public space from private interest, not because they *tend* simply to feel humble, but because they have been taught, rather, or have learned a kind of humility, notably from the mountain itself, that 'empty' (legible?) space at the heart of the city. The mountain, and by extension the city teaches us the humility required to protect its public nature by not taking it for granted, as the rider-lovers seem to at the outset of

MacLennan's essay (to whom I'll return in a moment). Following Sherry Simon's lead in her *Translating Montreal: Episodes in the Life of a Divided City*, I propose to take this mis-translation seriously, literally, as a productive failure in translation indeed for the occasion it opens to think about what humility can mean in this context, how it can be made to figure for the practice of reading (writing), how that learning empowers us to protect public space from the clear-cut of private interests and, perhaps more importantly, what teaching means here that the city can be said, in this way, to teach what I interpret is a practice of reading.

Indeed, the notion that the city can teach people to preserve its public spaces – by teaching humility – begs the question: *How?* How did the city teach its citizens (to feel appropriately humble) and, moreover, might it not just as easily have failed to do so? Could we have failed to learn, we are given to ask, and could the city have failed to meet its pedagogical objectives? Is there a risk of this happening yet? Still? Soon? Under what conditions? And if such a failure were to come to pass, would the so-called heart of the city then be lost? What then would become of the "pleasure of the people who love it"? Although amply possessed of that "oracular confidence produced by anger and a chronic sense of alarm" that is required, he says in the introduction to his collection, "to write a successful article" (vii), MacLennan's essay does not for that matter have any answer really to the questions it raises in translation. Instead, his discourse reifies and naturalizes the successful preservation of an open public space within the heart of the city, and bathes (effectively hiding) the causes of this success in an aura of mysterious and religious necessity, according to which "people," he says, "tend to feel humble" (210).

Godbout's mis-translation, in contrast, exposes the possibility that any such a given distribution of public and private interests may well have been made otherwise, could still be



reversed, and so remains an indefinitely open question. Thus, the agency that is simply assumed in MacLennan's original – *people tend to feel* – is radically called into question by Godbout's translation, where the "people" of Montreal, are literally removed, not only from the active subject position of the concluding statement, but altogether, as if to recall that agency is not a natural occurrence, not a matter of fact that can be counted on and therefore taken for granted (as MacLennan seems to do), but an act rather of contestation, the product of a contest, a pedagogical process I suggest which a body must engage in, take responsibility for, and labour over in the present, and continuously, lest it abort. Indeed, like the young riders galloping (otherwise unaccountably, or anachronistically) through the romanticized and subtly sexualized landscape on the mountain top in the opening paragraphs of his essay – witness : "As the girl galloped through the trees her slim hips were curved tightly in her riding-breeches as she bent forward over the horse's neck" (205) – these young lovers who, "flushed with the exercise smiled at each other with the *special* [eroticized] *awareness* a man and a woman feel when they ride together" (205; emphasis added), that is, bathed in the kind of intimacy that helps them take "for granted" the city and the port below the mountain, where (as Maillet's Sir Alfred insists) the labour of thousands produces the wealth that in fact supports their privilege to roam so lustily around the mountain top (206), likewise MacLennan seems to take for granted (or perhaps purposefully elides) the ongoing and actual histories of struggle that produce and protect the mountain park and, fearing perhaps that it might nevertheless be lost, appeals rather to a *biblical* authority that (it is hoped) could perpetually guarantee the place of such a public space at the heart of the urban (literary) experience.

Still, and notwithstanding how much MacLennan's anger and anxiety might wish them to be otherwise, the 485 acres atop Mount Royal are not in fact a "permanent exception."

Developers are not as he says, strangely, "instinctively afraid of tampering with Mount Royal" (210). There is in fact a long historical record that proves exactly otherwise, that if the mountain in the city is, as he says, "always there" (209), the shape and character of it as a public space is likewise not natural but belaboured, or as historian Kathleen Jenkins put it, the result of a "long and tedious process" (413). In fact, the only thing that is permanent about the mountain-top is that it remains a (therefore literary) site of competing public and private interests, a "contested" space (as the organizers of a 2009 conference at the university of Sherbrooke put it). It is towards the history of that contest, that ongoing labor, those acts of competing over public spaces that Godbout's mis-translation points, I argue, and which I want to reproduce here, in brief, in response to the methodological and pedagogical question of how the mountain teaches humility and as a figure for the *long and tedious*, even ongoing *process* of reading and learning to read.

Briefly then, the acreage atop Mount Royal, the eastern most of three peaks collectively referred to as *the mountain* (cf. Moyes, "Writing the Mountain"), was first expropriated from private ownership by the city of Montreal in 1875 for the eventual and astronomical sum (considering the budget and the population of the municipality at the time) of 1 million dollars, in response to the "public protest that arose in the 1860s when a man named Lamothe purchased a part of the mountain top and proceeded to cut down the timber and to sell it for firewood" (Jenkins 413). Having purchased the land, the city then contracted Frederic Law Olmstead, famous for his design of New York's Central Park, to draw up the plans for the landscaping of this now public space (Beveridge). This initial and not negligible investment of the public purse did not, however, protect the park from a long list of further development schemes, most notably, from MacLennan's perspective (as I cited earlier), a plan in 1949 to

build, behind the Peel street lookout, a "planetarium, a 4000 seat theatre, a concert hall, a museum, a scientific library, a radar, restrooms, a hospital, and a restaurant" (a glorified *hot dog stand*?); or in 1934 a plan to build a casino/*penny arcade* (Pinard). The list of such and other ghastly plans as I said is long and so, in 1986, on the park's 100th anniversary, a non-profit organization was set up (ironically, with the help of private investments) to protect what is now referred to as a heritage site, so that *Les Amis de la montagne* now work alongside the *Centre de la montagne*, another non-profit organization, in service to the park's preservation, and particularly, to the facilitation of its use as a pedagogical space ("Mission").

This history, of course, of the labours that (re)produce public and pedagogical spaces in Montreal is both incomplete and ongoing (and beyond moreover the scope and discipline of this project). None of it though is even visible in MacLennan's essay, except in those very veiled references that I have just highlighted. I suggested that the reason for this occlusion may have something to do with his anger/anxiety at the possibility that this public project could fail and, consequently, his characteristically modern (and notably impossible) longing for an (however absent) omnipresent guarantor, such as the old testament god. In contrast, the figure of a pedagogical city produced by Godbout's mis-translation opens up a space (of difference) in which to engage with the methodological questions that MacLennan's text seems to gloss over in the end as quickly as they are raised at the outset. The pedagogical figure produced by Godbout's mistranslation allows me to offer up, in response to the question *how*, the story of a contest and a labour which MacLennan takes for granted, like his lovers do the labour of those in the city below the hill, and which Scott's *Heroine* represents in the narrative that, I argue in chapter two, its series of cracks tells. Thanks to Godbout's mistranslation then the city is to be seen as a space where those of us who use it, learn how to use it and so to

protect its public, open, contested nature, lest we lose it. We learn, using MacLennan's word, humility, meaning not to take its public nature for granted, but indeed to acknowledge our need to labour in the service of it in collaborative and ongoing ways. Finally, given the analogy between stories and cities, and recalling the "right," "open" posture that Coleman argues for, for example, or that "feminine" sort of posture ascribed by Smart to every good critical reader, I would suggest that in the figure of Godbout's pedagogical city, reading (and learning to read) appears as a practice of humility, a labour and contest of sorts that remains as necessary as it is ongoing, a paradoxical sort of awareness that we need still to learn to read even as we always already ostensibly know how to do so, for there is nothing of a permanent exception about literacy anywhere.

Brian Poole, similarly, produces a figure for the pedagogical city and provides, thereby, grounds for thinking about what the practice of reading means and involves. Indeed, in an article called, "Adiaphora: the New Culture of Russians and Eastern Jews in Berlin," Poole is engaged in a polemic against the "bad reputation" that limits and reifies our conception (and practice) of indifference. He seizes upon this polemic moreover as an occasion to disseminate the pleasure he finds (I am sure) in reading "the benign indifference and ironic ambivalence" of Vladimir Kaminer, "a Russian Jew from Moscow" who, like many others, has managed to come to "feel at home in the land that previously declared war against their nation and their race" (Poole 140). Poole's account of Kaminer's writing, and of the cultural scene that Kaminer writes about in his *Berlin Disko*, provides Poole an occasion to show how an ancient (productive) form of indifference is still alive and well in contemporary Berlin in the person of Kaminer himself, a practice of indifference that will serve me well as a figure for the practice of reading that we learn I argue in and from the pedagogical city it is native to.

Indifference, of the sort that has a bad reputation, is the inaction of that infamous dozens of people who are otherwise "able" to respond, for example, to a woman crying out for help in the courtyard just outside their bedroom windows. Indifference, in this sense, is that deadly assumption that she probably asked for it, that it's probably a trick of some kind, that I couldn't be of any help anyway, and that it's someone else's responsibility to help and why doesn't she call them instead. It is a "passive and pessimistic attitude," reflecting "the spiritual vacuum of urban man caught in the cogwheels of an ostensibly autonomous bureaucracy" and "the mirror image of the ethically degenerated and politically disenfranchised subject" who is "unwilling to act" or "incapable of expressing sympathy and solidarity" for strangers and neighbours alike (Poole 139). It is passive, this sort of indifference towards others, and coterminous, I suggest, with a lack, or failure, of literacy, by which I mean, a failure to perceive and to act upon the relationships between self and other, difference and identity that organize our urban lives. Indifference, in this sense, represents the loss of our power to choose (to act), and of the power of that choice and of that action to make a difference in and to the world, as her writing does in and to the heroine's world (*Heroine* 180). It is in that negative sense a subtle, even institutionalized form of violence.

However, argues Poole, this is not the only way to be indifferent. Indeed, if indifference can be a vice, then it can also be (and once was and still is) a virtue. Cynic indifference was once even thought to represent an important form of "political engagement" (Poole 146). In its ancient Stoic tradition, indifference was taken to be "one of the strongest and most productive ethical currents in philosophy," an "ethically viable survival strategy allowing one to cope with and accept cultural ambivalence" (Poole 139). Indifference thus is not only its negative correlative – acquiescence and passivity – it is also (and more productively) a "method of

moral exercise," a "strenuous practice" or labour of difference that makes a difference (Poole 144). It is a figure for what I mean by an active, affective, productive practice of reading, this Cynic and Stoic conception of indifference as an ethical practice, based on the labour of distinguishing *adiaphora*, or indifferent things, things that are neither good nor bad, neither vice nor virtue, things that are beyond our control or are unavoidable or insignificant insofar as they do not necessarily lead to happiness or impede it (Poole 144). Ethnic hatreds, for instance, or historical conflicts are not relevant in – and so are a matter of indifference to – contemporary cultures where "cosmopolitan citizenship ... is more important than national identity," Poole argues (157). This ability to make that kind of distinction, or to read, I argue in turn, is designed for and *taught by* such cities as Montréal is and Berlin has become, post-1989, in which different cultures clash still, however productively.

This distinction between the virtue and the vice of indifference, Poole recalls, is not at all easy to perceive in English, though it has been well preserved by the modern German words *kyniker* and *zyniker* respectively (Poole 163). In English it remains about as difficult to perceive as the distinction between a) people belonging to that "sect of philosophers in ancient Greece ... who were marked by an ostentatious contempt for ease, wealth, and the enjoyments of life," and b) "a person disposed to rail and find fault" ("cynic"). Poole's point here is not to determine the reasons why indifference, *kyniker*, one person's means of political engagement becomes indifference, *zyniker*, the sign of another's disenfranchisement. The distinction is rather described as a point of fact. His point is not to tell the story of how that "ancient Greek Cynic philosopher" lost his capital-C and became a "sneering faultfinding person," but to urge us to remember instead, or to learn simply how to perceive the distinction that remains between these positive and negative forms. Poole thus would have us remember (learn how) to

perceive the fact that indifference itself is *adiaphora*, an indifferent thing, neither good nor bad, and neither vice nor virtue in itself except, to paraphrase the bard, in how *thinking* about it from only one particular perspective *makes it so* (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 2:2.250-251). The point, as Poole suggests in conclusion, is that this ability to make such distinctions is precisely what the city teaches, "schools" us in, he says, how to perceive the differences that structure every urban scene, how to live thus in-difference and so to maintain (or to find or work towards) a kind of equilibrium (indifference) there.

Although I am interested in Poole's ability to "show that a modern form of Cynic indifference is at work in Berlin's urban culture" (Poole 161) and, more generally, that such a form of modern Cynic indifference is an "urban phenomenon *par excellence*," and "a response to city life," indeed, that it is the very reason why the "clash" of "mentalities" that defines the internal dynamics of so many modern cities today is "so open and so fruitful" (Poole 161). However, what I want to attend to here, in particular, is his account of how "the urban environment that Kaminer describes *schools one*" he says "in ambivalence, *teaches* reserve" (162; emphasis added). The city is seen here to be teaching, whereas it is conventionally (cynically?) only known to sit heavily around, puff smoke, spew sewage, make noise and grow larger and collapse. To that question of *how* then Poole offers the following reflection, regarding Diogenes of Sinope, the prototypical Cynic, who lived in ancient Athens, and who described education as "a controlling grace to the young, consolation to the old, wealth to the poor, and ornament to the rich" (143). To this felicitous reflection Poole adds that education was, in ancient Athens (as surely still is today or comes to crisis otherwise), "dependent upon an open marketplace (*agora*) for teachers and students, and thus upon discursive interaction in ideologically autonomous space," which is precisely what the cosmopolitan city was for the

ancient Cynic philosopher: an *agora* in which the *agon* of (labour of) learning could take place, and upon the ground of which a difference in/to the city could be made (Poole 143). Learning to be indifferent, that is, or humble as Godbout suggested, and to make a difference therefore, depends upon the city's own indifference, or humility.

I mean, the city teaches indifference by way of its own indifference, which is to say, by means of its own provision of precisely such open, indifferent spaces in which to learn to be indifferent, etc. Or, in MacLennan's terms, we learn from the city's provision of open spaces to provide for the open spaces that we need in which to learn how to live here in public together and provide for and protect its open spaces, etc. Translating that paradox back into the account of the conditions of the possibility of reading and learning to read that I am after here, Poole's account of the indifferent and therefore pedagogical city suggests that literature teaches us to read, by being legible – which we described earlier as the condition of being irreducibly averse to the reduction of difference to identity (cf Benjamin, *Arcades* N3,1) – and remains legible in turn by virtue of our being able to read, which is to say, in-different to the resolution of difference to identity. However, and this is the point, if the city provides for the spaces in which to learn how to provide for the spaces in which to learn, etc, etc, etc, then what happens, as Zygmunt Bauman fears is already happening, when the city stops providing – or, as Godbout might prefer us to say, when we fail to protect – such sorts of indifferent, humble, literary, and pedagogical spaces from which (only?) we learn to read? What happens when, as Gail worries, we fail to read or even to teach, except "thematically" (*Prismatic* 90), which is to say, to encourage "prose that can be read denotatively [i.e. is layered, allusive, metonymical]" (*Spare Parts* 17)? Or, as the heroine asks, who seems at the outset to assume, as we'll see, that every question of difference must first be resolved to identity before being



able to write : "How to create the positive feminist persona when she has internalized that the world is going to hell" (*Heroine* 91), how are we ever to learn to read if we are not taught?

Indeed, that sense of an impending crisis "of reading" says Scott ("Mrs. Beckett" 90), or the "novel" ("Sutured" 65), is precisely what Zygmunt Bauman diagnoses so anxiously in the first half of the third chapter of his *Liquid Modernity*, where he provides us yet another figure of a pedagogical city. Indeed, while he draws there a distinction between civil and non-civil public spaces, and then bears anxious witness to the increasing predominance of the latter, Bauman warns of the cost of the consequently diminishing number of opportunities in which we can hope to *learn from the city* the art and skill of living here in-difference together, which is also I argue the art of reading. For Bauman, of course, as for Richard Sennett, the city is a concrete, brick, steel and glass-built space of innumerable differences, a place in which strangers are likely to meet and then emerge from that meeting, more often than not, as strangers still (Bauman 95). It is a space of difference in which, as in an experimental fiction, "there is no picking up at the point where the last encounter stopped, no filling in on the interim trials and tribulations or joys and delights, no shared recollections: nothing to fall back on and to go by in the course of the present encounter" (95). The city is a place in which, as when one is reading literature, one develops by necessity a more or less effective and expensive means of negotiating/navigating through the number of irreducible differences it is composed of. "Urban living" in such circumstances "calls for a rather special and quite sophisticated type of skill, a whole family of skills" actually, which Bauman lists under the sign of "civility" (95) and which I take here as a figure for the art of reading.

Civility, he says, is that art and skill required in order to not impose one's own self or identity upon the strangers that, by definition, one is bound to keep bumping into. Civility is

not, importantly, the same thing as avoidance which, pushed to its logical extreme becomes a form of psychosis in a place where, by definition, encountering difference simply cannot be avoided (105). Instead, civility is to be understood, Bauman describes, as a means of dealing with, because precisely we cannot avoid the meeting of, differences (105). An act of deference, a labour of lubrication, an engendering of empty space around me that allows the person behind me in a crowded metro car to exit at her stop in time without having to jab anyone in the spleen to do so. Like the "spaces between words" and "sentences" marked by the punctuation that Corey Frost has charted the poetics of (Frost, "Punc'd" 40), or the places in prose that Scott herself describes, where "space opens for the thoughtfulness of the reader" (Scott, "Architectures" 133), the art of civility that Bauman describes serves as one way of "coping with the likelihood of meeting strangers, that constitutive feature of urban life" (Bauman 101), and then serves me, in turn, as a figure for that practice of reading – or being in-difference – that I am trying to account for here. I mean, I suggest that the need for civility in civil space is just as great (and potentially as difficult to acquire) as literacy is in literary space.

Public *civil* space, by extension (and summing up a number of the qualities of literary spaces and practices as we've touched upon thus far), is that which "people may share" without their being forcibly reduced to some pre-legislated form of identity, without being urged or compelled in any particular direction and by any particular set of interests. Indeed, civility is "the ability to interact with strangers without holding their strangeness against them and without pressing them to surrender it or to renounce some or all the traits that have made them strangers in the first place" (Bauman 104). Civil space is found/founded as a "common good," a "shared task," "a form of life with a vocabulary and logic all its own" in which we must,

Bauman argues, become actively engaged and participant (96). Here the labour of "facing up to the vexing plurality of strangers" takes place, and productively so (106), and here is negotiated the "risk-fraught commerce, the mind-taxing communication, the nerve-breaking bargaining and the irritating compromises" demanded by both urban and literary spaces (105). Here, though not for that matter "easily" or inevitably, we "live with" and "enjoy" and "benefit from" the differences that constitute properly urban spaces (106), and here an "awareness of that other side" of identity is exposed and will not be reduced or "suppressed" by the labour of either "memory" or "anticipation" (98). It is a "polyphonic" and recursive space, as music is too, and literature, or so I will insist in the chapter that follows on Scott (107).

Identifying literature as a public, civil space, I suggest, is increasingly important where Bauman seems unable to provide any obvious and contemporary examples of civil public space, other than in his account of "carnival" (98), which is both brief and in the past tense (98). Indeed, we are witness, he says, to a "glaring absence" of the art of civility – which, again, I take as yet another version of that crisis of literacy that I've touched upon now several times – given the fact that so much of the built environment of cities at present is encrusted with the affect of a fear of differences that would prescribe or make redundant the necessity of negotiating for ourselves "our life in common" (94). Indeed, Bauman spends the bulk of his time itemizing the many different forms of "ostensibly public but emphatically non-civil" spaces (102) as effectively "repel or mollify the impact of strangers" (103), exclude "the other, the different, the strange and the foreign," and so preclude "the need for communication, negotiation and mutual commitment" (108). The principal dimensions of the current evolutions of urban life, Bauman finds, represented by shopping malls, office blocks, highways, airports and gated communities are in that sense non-civil. As such, public space

thus is increasingly marked by "separation in lieu of negotiation of life in common" (Bauman 94), and the "wilting and waning of the art of dialogue and negotiation," or "the substitution of the techniques of escape and elision for engagement and mutual commitment" (109). This, Bauman insists, is a problem.

The increasing colonization of civil by uncivil public space is a problem, he says (and this is the point), because as urban dwellers we "learn the difficult skills of civility" (or not) from the civility (and incivility) of "the urban environment" (95), as we saw a moment ago too in Poole. Indeed, he says, "never before in the history of the world have non-places occupied so much space" – so numerous are those airports, mass transit systems, hotel rooms, and motorways that do not require the use of and practice of, and therefore do not function as schools for that hard-to-study art of civility (102). Increasingly and critically "the occasions to learn the art of civility [are become] fewer and farther between" (103). How can we expect to learn the arts of civility, he asks (with desperate hands waiving in the air), if the bulk of public spaces do not require its use practice – if public space entails "no controversy" and "no commitment either" (109) – if the increasing bulk of public space can not be said to teach, because it thus does not "promote the study and acquisition of, but renders rather unnecessary the skills and art of civility" (102)? How, paradoxically perhaps, could we ever hope to learn to "face up to the vexing plurality of strangers" in the city (106) if we are never made to hone the arts and skills of civility, "which consists essentially in the wearing of masks" (95)? How do we learn, to borrow a phrase from Jacques Rancière that I will discuss in conclusion, from such an "ignorant schoolmaster" of a city, or to read from an illegible page?

Bauman, though, tempers the severity of his diagnosis, where he suggests, as Scott does in different terms that this rule of incivility is "not the only conceivable, but [only] the most

expectable response" (108) to the question of difference here at issue. I will come to that reading of Scott, presently, but would first stop and spend a closing moment here with the modernist Lewis Mumford's version of that same alternative, the possibility that learning and reading are not contingent only upon some properly open, civil, indifferent, humbling, and so legible space being provided for us. Instead, his own figure of a pedagogical city suggests that the efforts and pleasures and practice invested in the process of opening and maintaining such possibilities for ourselves are what legibility and learning to read depend most upon. Indeed, and in what is effectively a retrospective review and critique of the teachings he has received and refused to take up himself or, by extension, recommend to a series of his contemporaries, Mumford recalls how "not the least part," but instead the very "foundation" of his "architectural education" has come, not so much from books and architects as from his own particular way of walking, he explains, through what, as a result, becomes a pedagogical city (149). In his "Architecture as a Home for Man," then, Mumford recounts how his "walks through" the "tenements" of the Lower East Side, in New York, "their congestion, their darkness, their foul interiors" *taught* him, he says, "by contrast" with what he is used to, aspires to, and values, "what to demand in every work of humane architecture" (149), and just as "LeCorbusier's walking tour through Europe played" an important "part in his architectural awakening," so during Mumford's own "peregrinations" – which I read as figures for the practice of reading, moving about in-difference and in an ongoing way – has he learned much from how "even the worst buildings" became legible "human *documents*" when "encountered in this fashion" (149; emphasis added). Mumford describes this "mode of seeing and knowing that must both precede and supplement the knowledge we receive from books," and which nevertheless figures for it, as a particular way indeed of walking, "not as a sightseer or tourist,"

but "as a man [sic] who sought to *take in* visually and *make* the fullest use of the life around him" (149; emphasis added) as, indeed, I have hoped to *take in and make use of*, after Benjamin's example, the figures of reading bodies and legible cities that I have been collecting here.

Recalling the discussion of intention we had earlier, in relation to Paracelsus for example, it is clear now, and again, that as legibility is not inherent to the pedagogical city, nor the city inherently either pedagogical or even literary, but contingent rather on what we invest in our practice of it, so does Mumford learn (and recommend learning) to read by moving through urban space with intention, namely, to consume (to "take in") and to transform (to "make use of") the city (text) that we come in this way to know, and to be taken in and transformed in turn by the fact of the differences that, as urban residents and students of literature, we are (like Gail Scott's heroine too) immersed in. Indeed, like those countless moments, as in DeCerteau (140), or on the mountain (cf. Moyes, "Writing the Montreal Mountain"), where the breadth of the panoramic view of the city before us gives way to the desire to walk down into the muck of it, trading off the illusion of knowing the city for the actual and pedagogical experience of it, so is Mumford compelling in his awareness of the lessons he learns, ONLY, from actually walking around in, seeing and smelling the urban and literary spaces of difference, finally, from the act of which as urban residents and readers of *great* fiction, or like the *theoros* we described earlier, we have much, still and always, to learn. Learning, again, is seen to depend upon what is invested in the process, on what is sown in the pedagogical fields, so to speak, how we choose to proceed slowly and indefinitely or recursively, or otherwise, and the only question that remains, and to which I turn now, in chapter two, is the question of where that volition comes from, that will, that agency and

intention to learn to read from/in the city and/with the body? What is that pleasure that gets bodies investing all the effort required of reading? What is it that gets a body up (and out of the tub so to speak) and out into the city intending to learn to read (and write), or to otherwise make the world legible? Where does that agency, that will to learn and so to be transformed, come from if, as in Scott's *Heroine*, it has always ostensibly been there, but was until the very last moment, and might have been forever, put off? It is, then, with this question – why and how, suddenly, now and not before – and with my collection of worldly, urban figures for the space and practice of literature, and with the thematics they elicit of risk and reward, agency and utility, material losses and gains, that I turn then towards, and take my first steps down into the city I have come to learn to read from and with Gail Scott.

## Chapter Two – Fingering the Fissures of Literary Studies: Gail Scott and the Time, Violence, and Pedagogy of Narrative

Finger the *fissures* of subjectivity, rent by intervening voices  
- Gail Scott, "Sutured" (66)

### *La Nef des 14 reines* : on the Way into the Violence of Literary Studies

On days when on my way to school I stop at the libraries or meet a friend downtown first, I take the bus then up Côte des Neiges and over the mountain to Queen Mary where I get off, only slightly a longer way from my end of the campus than I otherwise would be at the corner of Jean-Brillant. I do so because between Gatineau and Decelles is *La Nef des 14 reines*, also known as *la Place du 6 décembre*, the memorial dedicated by the city of Montreal on the 10 year anniversary of the massacre on December 6th, 1989, just a little ways up the hill, at l'École Polytechnique. The site as a whole was designed as a permanent public installation by Rose-Marie Goulet, says the city signage by the sidewalks (Figure 8), "*en mémoire de l'évènement tragique / afin de promouvoir les valeurs de respect et de non-violence*" ("Place"; emphasis added). Designed, that is, to *pro-mote*, from *pro-movere*, meaning to *forward*-move or enable a movement forward, in this case, towards respect and nonviolence, the memorial, literally, is a metaphor.



Fig. 8: "la place du 6 décembre"  
(Cassidy)



"Dans l'Athènes d'aujourd'hui," Michel DeCerteau has noted, "*les transports en communs s'appellent métaphorai. Pour aller au travail [à l'école] ou rentrer à la maison, on prend une 'métaphore'—un bus ou un train*" (DeCerteau 115). Indeed, a metaphor is a mode of transportation, a way of moving from one spot to another, in narrative or historical space, from bus stop to campus, or from the remembrance of violence past at school towards the hope that learning to read might contribute instead to a future without or with less of it. Literally, it is a technique, a device, a way to *carry* meaning *over* from one set of terms to another – from 'rhetorical device', for example, to 'mass transit system' – a means of moving a reading body over from one place (one station) in a narrative (or urban) space to another, from one narrative to another, one language to another, etc. To *metaphorize*, I have already noted, is a verb meaning to *do something with words*, to use them to move or to enable movements in discourse, back and forth (Ricoeur, *La Métaphore* 33). A metaphor is a method and, Nietzsche adds, through Hillis Miller, where one hopes to read or write "well," it is a method of moving, as I do here, "slowly" (Nietzsche 18).

Indeed, passing through the memorial is not at all the quickest way for me to get to school but a detour, however, that is well worth taking because, for one, I can and others cannot. Because I have the luxury of (free) time to. Because the memorial invites me to do so and, as I do so, I am given to think about the relationship between narrative and urban space, between reading and remembering, between such acts of violence remembered and the pedagogical practice I am on my way to school to engage in and, in turn, reproduce. Reading the site as a whole, in fact, I am given to raise questions about the relation between violence and literary practice and pedagogy, in particular, in terms of the kinds of temporality that, it is tempting to suggest, seem to distinguish the one (violence) from the other (literature). I mean,

as a student of literature, I would love to be able to argue that, whereas violence tends to explode, like a gunshot, and happen, in that sense, always all of a sudden and too quickly, and so traumatically, remembering and responding to it, as the memorial endeavours to do, and as reading and writing do in turn, takes time, and necessarily. Indeed, how valuable my literary studies might seem if I could successfully hold that the difference between such a murderous series of gunshots and my learning to read and professionally write resides importantly in how only the latter happens slowly.

For to remember, here, and to read and to learn, in turn, is emphatically not simply a matter of stopping at the foot of a singular, phallic monument erected at the very centre of an otherwise empty space and 'remembering', as one takes a photo, before continuing then on one's way and all but forgetting again. Indeed, "*Une lenteur à lire s'installe puisque la lecture est freinée par la manière dont les lettres sont construites*" (Latour 38). I mean, written in the indelible ink of absence, so to speak, signifying loss and, so, bordering on illegibility, the many individual letters that constitute the 14 names of the 14 murdered women are punched out of strips of stainless steel and mounted upon the seven only subtly raised arcs or ribs of black granite rippling down the length of the site like the shock waves of sadness and pain that the massacre shot through both the city and the country's collective conscience. Seven names on either side of a footpath path running up and then down through the centre of the site writ just large enough along the crest of each wave to prevent their being read all at once by only a single and unmoving (unmoved) gaze. As such, lest I walk out below each one toward the site's periphery, and then back to the centre where I started, to where the next name starts, and back and forth, and back and forth again along the grass below the granite crests, where water pools in the spring and muddies the ground which I then carry into school on my boots, I can

manage to read only the first few letters of each memorialized young woman's name.

Moreover, during the winter and fall, blankets of fallen leaves or snow and ice tend to cover over the letters so completely that often I am obliged to come back some other time if I hope to read them at all, or labour at uncovering them now and be late, consequently, to class. And so, after several years of grad school, I still only remember some of them – Anne-Marie, Maud, Maryse, Geneviève ... – and only their first names, as if I still haven't yet managed to take enough time to fully remember, as if ever I definitively could.

The design of the site, in these ways, suggests that as much as, proverbially, we quickly and easily forget, so does it take time and effort to remember (and to learn and to read), and it is tempting, I suggested, to argue that the memorial constitutes a most appropriate response to and rejection of violence by virtue of how the temporality of remembrance and metaphor it embodies here is precisely the other of and alternative to the always too sudden seeming and flashing fast explosions of gun and other violence. It is a seductively simple dichotomy – gun violence fast vs. reading and remembering slow – and, therefore, as the readings in this chapter will bear out, all the falser and more dangerous. Indeed, the pull of the trigger itself, or the peirce of skin and crush of bone is, however quick, not the full extent of the act of violence being remembered here, but a only a part of a much longer, slower, and more deliberate and systemic process, as Brossard recalls in her "*Le Tueur n'était pas un jeune homme*" (29). Indeed, the time of violence, on the one hand, and of reading and learning on the other are not so much in opposition as, much more disturbingly, continuous, and if my meandering long sentences and circular seeming arguments in what follows reproduce in some way that sense of *unhaste*, then so much the better and more precise an account and response they provide.

I mean, "walking slowly" cannot on its own protect against "*le sang et le bruit visqueux que font les humains devant la douleur et la mort collective*," writes Nicole Brossard, remembering how slowly she had been moving through Paris on the morning of December 6th, 1989, as I do now through the park (and through my doctoral program), "*ne regardant que les [noms de] femmes comme pour me rassurer sur l'humanité*" ("6 décembre" 92). And yet, it is important, nevertheless, this act of "slow reading" and walking that Nietzsche calls for and Hillis Miller recalls, that Nicole Brossard practices, Rose-Marie Goulet invites, and Gail Scott's narrative prose experiments with. Indeed, just as in Nietzsche's Germany, so here and now in Montreal, this act of slow reading and this art of "going aside," as Nietzsche would say, of "taking time" is "more necessary than ever" (Nietzsche 5).<sup>78</sup> "In the midst of an age of work, that is to say, of *hurry*, of indecent and perspiring *haste*," as Nietzsche too regretted about his time (5; emphasis added), when the increasing speed of telecommunications and transportation technologies in our own contributes to the so-called "end of geography" that Bauman describes (12), when school shootings seem now to recur with increasing velocity, indeed almost seasonally, it seems all that much more necessary to (be given the chance to) read, remember, move, slowly, that is, to take the time to think, slowly, about the relation (for example) between the *I* that remains and the *they* that "*sommes mortes*" as Brossard highlights ("6 décembre" 93); between the *I* that remains and the *he* who shot them in cold blood; the '*I*'s and the '*we*'s who remember and the '*they*'s otherwise forgotten.<sup>79</sup> It is necessary in this way to

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<sup>78</sup> To cite only one example of the sort of violent haste that I will refer to often in what follows, I would note the rush to pose the question "Why?" that Scott herself and others have remarked upon, in the wake of tragedies like that which took place at the Polytechnique or at Dawson College (*Of Blood F7*), as if we didn't already know.

<sup>79</sup> In her recollection article, Brossard manifests the affect of such acts of violence, the threat of further violence that every one act speaks of, by blurring the boundaries between I and they, first and third person, when she notes, as cited, that, upon hearing the terrible news, "*je sommes mortes*" ("6 décembre" 93). Troubling the

walk slowly, to remember and (learn to) read slowly, because, for all that it is horrific to think that "*l'assassinat des femmes puisse avoir un sens, que le fait d'être prise en flagrant délit d'être femme puisse donner un sens au meurtre*" (Lacelle 26), the feminist reading the murder of 14 women at *la Polytechnique* is right to read it, not as the inexplicable, incomprehensible, and senseless act of a reasonless individual, which it often gets hastily reduced to in the mainstream media (Saint-Jean 58), but as the premeditated and deliberate expression also of an ageless and dominant if largely disavowed patriarchal and institutional reason. Indeed, never has madness seemed so lucid, so cold, and so calculating (Pelletier 32).<sup>80</sup>

The memorial at the *place du 6 décembre* then is a metaphor, not simply because it serves as a means of my getting to school (however more slowly, or indirectly), but because in the process it provides me, as Scott's *Heroine* does in different ways, with the time, occasion, and means required to think about, that is, to move back and forth between two sets of terms not normally related to one another, namely, the institutional practice of literary and critical studies, on the one hand and, on the other, the violence that erupts with increasing incessancy

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boundaries between person and number in this way is something Gail Scott likewise does, and perhaps after Hélène Cixous (in Frost, "Punc'd"53), to similar effect, as I intend to show throughout here, when she asks for example that question that perhaps "brooks no answer, for it allows for no singularity," the question of belonging, of "Who *am* ... *WE*?" ("Mrs. Beckett" 91; emphasis added). That both writing and violence, in this sense, can be said to have something of the same effect is key to what this reading hopes to contribute to the conversation.

<sup>80</sup> In his recent filmic representation of the massacre, *Polytechnique*, Denis Villeneuve translates this feminist critique and memorialization very well, for instance, in the way he has the killer read his terribly lucid letter at the very outset of the film but then refuses to name the killer, which is to say, resists the temptation to individualize an act, as Laurie Penny recently argued in the wake of the May 2014 Isla Vista massacre in Santa Barbara, California, that is rather more ideological and political. Moreover, the repetition and indeed aestheticization of the plotting, the telling of it from different perspectives, notably, that of the male students, arguably shows how the misogyny of that cold-calculating murder of women harms, of course, the women who bear witness to and are subjected to it, but then harms men too in the sense that it reinforces the definition of masculinity current in our society as only likely perpetrators, not victims of violence. The film makes us all responsible in that sense. Robert Jensen makes this kind of uncomfortable argument in his discussion of race in America, and of pornography, respectively, in *The Heart of Whiteness: Confronting Race, Racism and White Privilege* and *Getting Off: Pornography and the End of Masculinity*.

into such presumed safe pedagogical spaces and practices. If it was indeed no accident that this violence exploded at *la Polytechnique de Montréal* – “le symbole le plus fort de la pénétration des femmes dans le milieu nontraditionnel” (Côté 64), in this case, a school of engineering, “nagère réservé aux hommes” (Bersianik 38) – and if the misogyny that this explosion expresses “se transmet d’une génération à l’autre à travers le savoir, à travers les œuvres d’art et les chef-d’œuvres de la littérature” (45; emphasis added), then how even 25 years later could I pretend that it does not belong to me as both a citizen of this still patriarchal society and, more urgently, as a scholar and likely professor of language and literature (Pelletier 31)? What, I am compelled to ask, as much by my passage through *La Nef* as by my reading of Scott in this urban context, is at stake in the practice of literature that I am on my way to school to engage in? What are the “grounds (of my) literary study” (Miller, “Search”) and what violent effects are practiced therefore on what bodies in the course of its pedagogies, and how, and in whose interests? If, and particularly when it comes to literary studies, and the study of national identities, violence is indeed “a pervasive discourse that matters” still, as Margaret Webb notes (84), and if it inhabits, Simon Harel argues (*Braconnages* 9), or animates our literary and pedagogical conversations (81) — “un fait de discours dont la représentation est sous-évaluée” (117) — then what shall be the effect of that awareness? How violently does literature matter, how necessarily, for whom, and to what ends?

This chapter proposes to address these and similar questions by reading, metaphorizing, moving slowly through Gail Scott’s first novel, *Heroïne*, as well as comparatively from *Heroïne* to Anne Dandurand’s *Un Coeur qui craque*, Marie Gagnon’s *Bienvenue dans mon cauchemar*, and Tess Fragoulis’ *Ariadne’s Dream* but, first of all, by way of that likewise political but more institutional version of the question of English language

writing in, and its effect upon, the shape of the knowledge of (national) literature in Quebec and in Canada. I mean, as the memorial park here has just invited me to endeavour, I will argue throughout that Scott's narrative, as well as these others I read alongside it, makes legible a kind of violence in the logic and forms of literary and pedagogical objects and practice, and it is in the hopes of better grounding therefore the terms of my close reading of Scott's prose in the institutional and disciplinary contexts of literary knowledge production and transmission that I attend first to the literary critic Gilles Marcotte's response to the founding of a new field of literary studies in Quebec. I read, in that sense, Scott's fiction through the frame of Marcotte's performance, though in reality I came to the former really only by way of the cracks of the latter. I mean, just as I have used the metaphors provided by the urban text of *La Nef des 14 reines* to open up into the chapter as a whole, so do I intend to move throughout by way of a series of metaphors, namely, through the *walls* we erect in the name and in defense of our physical and institutional identities, towards and along the *cracks* that craze those walls in turn like so many bus lines and *lignes de métro* in the city. These walls and cracks, as they recur in Marcotte and Scott respectively, acquire a kind of currency, a capital which I will invest in the production of what I hope is a profitable reading of Scott's first full-length, forward-looking fiction; profitable, not so much in the "market sense" of that term (Scott, *Prismatic* 95), as in the political and pedagogical sense of it, rather, allowing me to engage with questions about what it means to belong – about "what '*citoyenne*' means" ("Mrs. Beckett" 92) – and about the institutional grounds, recursive temporality, and the violent affects of literary studies.

## On the Ways and Means into and out through the Crack of that Violence

Il faut arrêter de voir ces irruptions de violence comme de pures anomalies, de grands mystères ou alors, de la folie furieuse. Bref, il faut arrêter de faire comme si cette violence ne nous appartenait pas.

- Francine Pelletier, "On achève bien les chevaux, n'est-ce pas?" (31)

The fractal nature of the narrator(s) opens space for many voices to come in. They come in through the fissures in the house, from the past, from the contemporary street, etc.

- Gail Scott, "Architectures" (130)

They are happy cracks indeed that will allow me thus to engage with such important theoretical questions as the relation between literacy, pedagogy, and violence, just as the cracks are felicitous too in Alanté Kavaïté's film, *Fissures*, through which is told the story of Charlotte, a young woman come home to the rural commune where she grew up to face the trauma of, and then to investigate ("*pourquoi on lui a fait ça?*"), her mother's recent and still unsolved murder. Angry and "*enfermée*," having never yet "forgiven" her mother's decision to break a promise and work again as the local "*voyante*," the so-called "*sorcière du village*," Charlotte, it turns out, is herself also a sort of seer. More precisely (though less idiomatically), she is better described as an *écoutante*, a listener. Anyway, upon her arrival, and presumably by force of occupational habit – for Charlotte has been working as a sound technician, recording *les "bouillonnements de la terre"* on a documentary film set in South America (as far, presumably, from her mother as she could possibly get) – she begins listening to and even recording the sound of the walls of that old house *cracking* with age and decay in the rain. As she listens, by way of her recording technologies, she hears, inexplicably, and horrifically, her



mother's voice in conversation.<sup>81</sup> Depending then on where Charlotte places her microphone in the room, she records, not only different conversations (and painful non-conversations) that she herself had with her mother, but conversations also that her mother had with members of the community in which she lived (and in which she was murdered), her "clients," come to solicit her "voyance," her help, including the mayor, for example, and his wife, separately; together, the parents of the young boy who'd recently, and as yet inexplicably, disappeared; her awkward gentle-giant of a neighbour, etc. Indeed, and in line with the domestic, French title of Kavaïté's film, *Écoute le temps*, Charlotte can be said to be *listening* literally to the passage of *time*, listening to *time* past, and to those voices from the past that somehow seep into the present, as if through the cracks in the walls – which materializes the act of remembrance and thematizes what Scott says about how her written English gets "packed" with other languages (*Prismatic* 56). Charlotte, in this arguably materialist and readerly way, not only solves the mystery of her mother's death (as well as of the boy's disappearance) but begins, more importantly, the process of mourning her loss by opening her own self up to the reality, not only of the fact that her mother is gone, and too soon, but of who and what she herself is who remains. *Fissures* then is a French film about remembering, about the time, the technical means (the cracks), and the intentionality required of those of us who remain to

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<sup>81</sup> Describing her then forthcoming novel, *Obituary*, in an interview with Kate Eichhorn, Scott says of "the triplex [that] frames" all the work taking place in the novel, "like a stage set," that "there are all these things going on through the floors from the ground under – where once stood Montréal's Crystal palace, a trope for British colonization, based on the Chrystal Palace from the 'mother country'" (*Prismatic* 57). There is, in that sense, a similar sort of "listening" at work in both Kavaïté's *Fissures* and Scott's fiction, which cannot help but recall, or look forward to that "*aveuglement salutaire*" called for by Simon Harel in his *Braconnages identitaires*, that "*façon de se mettre à l'écoute, semblable à la quiétude du chasseur qui observe les signes de piste, les indices d'un parcours imprévu*" (18). Indeed, this chapter as a whole could be described as motivated by a desire to answer in the affirmative Scott's wondering whether anyone else hears the "musical," or "strong tonal component" in her prose ("In Conversation" with Moyes 219).

remember, read, learn, and so belong. It is a film, in that sense, that has much to give us pause here, in our (anglo)Québécois, literary context which, at least for the time being, still has as its motto the sometimes controversial declarative that *je me souviens*.

Likewise, though somewhat more concretely, Dr. Balvant Rajani,<sup>82</sup> senior researcher in the Urban Infrastructure Rehabilitation Program at the NRC's Institute for Research in Construction (IRC), in Ottawa, listens, or rather, he says, *learns to read* the cracking of city sidewalks. Cracks, he describes, are *signs* that make legible, *qui donnent à lire* (to borrow that happy French turn of phrase) the otherwise imperceptible movements of difference in the ground upon which the rigid slab or surface of a sidewalk is laid. A crack in a sidewalk, thus, is the product of differences, for example, in the soil's composition, its "compaction," its uneven capacities for water retention, and therefore of the differential pressures put upon the rigid structure by seasonal temperature shifts, or upon its 'weight bearing capacities' (Miller, "Search" 31) by the traffic passing upon it (Rajani, "Behaviour" 2-3). As the columnist Ray Ford put it, the "relationship between concrete and soil . . . has a lot of built-in tension," is a "union" that can "*fracture* like a failing marriage" (Ford C1). *Learning to read* the cracks in city sidewalks, Rajani explains, means learning to better understand those "mobile relations" of difference (Mason 126) that cause the cracking in the first place and, as such, make possible the development of a series of "best practices" designed to increase the "tensile strength," or structural tolerance, and therefore the life (time) span of these costly urban (and,

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<sup>82</sup> I would like to take a moment here to thank Dr. Rajani, for taking the time to do that sort of interdisciplinary work required of the best research today. And I would like to note, moreover, that through his allowing me to better understand his engineering 'best practices' and methods may seem to produce here only so many felicitous figures, I insist that, for the student of metaphor that I am, these are not simply decorative but, indeed, crucial to the work I hope to be doing.

metaphorically speaking, institutional) infrastructures.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, there is nothing "pedestrian" about this kind of research, as punster Ford put it (C1), pointing to the fact that replacing the 100,000 kilometres of cracking Canadian sidewalks will cost taxpayers over 12 billion dollars, not to mention the 3 million dollars drained annually from the health system by avoidable injuries caused by severely cracking sidewalks. If such cracks then are legible, Rajani's work insists, it is imperative that we (learn to) read them.

Therefore, in what follows, and like Charlotte and Rajani in different ways, I intend to listen to or read, slowly, the series of *cracks* that *craze*, like a designer dish, the surfaces of Gail Scott's *Heroine* and make me *crazy* for her experiments with narrative form. I will read, too, the series of cracks that course through the narrative of Anne Dandurand's *Un Cœur qui craque*, as so many literary devices, techniques, methods designed to make legible, *en abyme*, the practice of difference at work in the fictions that produced them, what Scott calls "THE WORK of writing, [...] its unforeseeable itinerary" ("Mrs. Beckett" 89). *Heroine* and *Un Cœur qui craque*, I will argue, are *récits spéculaires* (Dällenbach) in the sense that they reproduce, on their very surface, figures for the ways in which they function internally and formally, and therefore pedagogically. Specifically, I will show how this very legible and significant series of cracks allows me to read *Heroine* as what I call a narrative of addiction, which is to say, a story, not of drug use itself so much as of how narrative, like addiction, has the power to intervene in and take over control of, or alter the course of, a life-story. They are a series of figures that do not only, in this way, raise the question of and provide the means to

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<sup>83</sup> As to those best practices, Rajani describes the installing of "expansion joints" to "allow the sidewalk to move independently without damage" ("Best practices" 3) and the designing of "control joints (cut lines)" that provide "a weak plane in the slab where cracking can occur without marring the appearance of the sidewalk" and eventually ruining it (3).

of engaging with the complicities of literary studies and violence, but focus also that interrogation around the recursive sort of temporality that is key to better understanding the complexities of that relationship, a temporality which Benjamin, for instance, describes in the *Arcades*, citing Baudelaire and referring to the "consciousness of time peculiar to someone intoxicated by hashish," noting that "long though it seemed to have been ... , yet it also seemed to have lasted only a few seconds" (N15,1). Indeed, and just as for Scott, "the novel is after all about time" ("Sutured" 65), so is mine an *essai* on the temporality of literary studies.

Before, though, getting directly to that series of cracks and to my reading of *Heroine* through them, I turn first to the *wall* erected in Gilles Marcotte's response to the question of difference posed by the presence and increasing institutionalization of English language writing in Quebec; a *wall*, I will argue, that figures for the paradigm of identity and of mutual exclusion which, by convention, and violently so, Marcotte suggests, governs often still the practice and pedagogy of national literature. That question of (anglo)Quebec literature, first posed (in its recent form) by Lianne Moyes et Pierre Nepveu, who organized the "*Le Québec anglais : Littérature et culture*" colloquium at the *Centre d'Études Québécoises* (CÉTUQ), in April 1997, has generated many productive reflections in the years that have followed, is a conversation in which I seek here to intervene.<sup>84</sup> Following Gregory Reid's discussion of the implications of that question, that the most important thing is not the answer one may be

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<sup>84</sup> Responses to that call out, including Marcotte's, were then published in the "groundbreaking" (Schwartzwald, "Editor's Note" 95) dossier at *Québec Studies*, "*Écrire en anglais au Québec : un devenir minoritaire?*" (Moyes), and the answers continue to role in: in the encyclopedic *Traité de la Culture* (Moyes) and the historical *Histoire de la littérature Québécoise* (Biron et al.); in special issues at *Voix et Images* (Leclerc and Simon), *Québec Studies* (Moyes and Lane-Mercier) and *Spirale* (Lapointe and Poirier), as well as in collections still forthcoming. Of note, also, are articles by Francine Bordeleau in *Lettres Québécoises*, the awarding of the French-language Athanase-David literary prize to an English language writer, Mavis Gallant (in 2006), for which Linda Leith had long been campaigning ("Commentaires" 16).

inclined to give, but rather "what happens when the question is posed" ("Is There an Anglo-Quebecois" 58), I would like, in what follows, to show, first, that in Marcotte's performance a wall is erected that just as quickly becomes crazed with the cracks of difference and, as such, that the infra-structures of national literary study represented by that wall, when subject to the movement of internal differences that cause such cracking, are shown to be at risk, as Bill Readings described, of "ruin." I will show, in this way, the violence of that identitary thinking that governs often the institutional study and practice literature, and the need, which Gail Scott makes legible, to find "another way to pose the question" of literary studies (*Heroine* 154). I will argue that erecting walls designed to defend us against the threat that difference is seen to pose may well be "the expectable response to the existential uncertainty rooted in the new fragility or fluidity of social bonds," as Zygmunt Bauman puts it (*Liquid* 108), it need not, as both Scott and Marcotte in different ways suggest, be either the only or the most enduring answer. I mean, however they seem to fall on opposite sides of the question of the ways we organize and understand the practice and study of literature, Marcotte and Scott come together here to provide us with the means of interrogating the intersection of the ways in which we teach and learn to read, on the one hand and, on the other, the violence we are witness to and horrified by in and around our places of learning. Interesting, most of all, because of how both in some way suggest that violence is not to be understood only as that against which literature and literacy are meant to provide alternatives, but as a large part of the means too by which they make and live up to that promise.

## Gilles Marcotte and the Violence of National Literary Identity

Walls therefore are a kind of folly which ought to be exposed for what they are namely  
a delusion that neither can be made to work in theory or in practice.

Ignorance of the other is not a strategy for survival  
- Edward Said, *UCLA lecture*.

There is a crack, a crack in everything  
That's how the light gets in.

- Leonard Cohen, "Anthem"

On a panel of anglo and francophone writers and critics gathered at the salle Gésu in 1997 to consider the question of the "place" of English language writing in Quebec (Moyes, "Postscripts" 27), Gilles Marcotte responded, I will argue polemically, and therefore productively, that no, indeed, English language writing could not be counted a part of, or belong to "*la vraie littérature québécoise (prière de recevoir l'ironie) celle qui s'écrit en français*" ("Neil Bissoondath" 8). (Anglo)Quebec literature, he explained, would amount to "*une contradiction terminologique*" and as such "*n'existe évidemment pas*" (6); except perhaps as a "*dangeureux néologisme*" (8), a threat we fear come in conquest from elsewhere that, therefore, can have here no "*droit de cité*" (8), no right to belong. It is "simple," he says. "*Il y a un refus*" (6). Between anglo and québécois we are not to imagine a hyphen, therefore, of presumed identity, but a wall, rather, of significant differences that is as long and thick and well-defended as the distance is great between two separate continents, between two different worlds (8); a veritable *Great Wall of China* of differences, he says, that "marks" the distance between these two institutional identities, these two proverbial solitudes, and prohibits their being gathered together "*dans quelque propos unitaire que ce soit*" (9), ensuring that they remain, instead, "*disjoint sous le rapport de la référence institutionnelle*" (9).

Nevertheless, and hence I suggest the polemical turn of his intervention, Marcotte is,

before the end of his performance, compelled to admit that the question is rather more complex than that simple *refus* would make seem. Indeed, if the presence of English language writing in Quebec raises "*avant tout*" the question of language difference (6), and then the question of other historical and cultural differences also (9), it raises finally, and perhaps most importantly, a question of place, of the "place" of those differences, of a "*lieu à partager, où je ne puis être seul*" (10), qui "*m'appartient et ne m'appartient pas*" (10), where we are when we read, where we do literature, so to speak, and literature in turn is done unto us. Marcotte's intervention is polemical, and so productive I argue, because of the way the position he takes, his "*refus*" fails decidedly to answer the question of the place of difference in a national literary space, or get any further with it in the end than he was at the outset, beyond articulating it not as a question of identity or difference *per se*, so much as a question of space (*lieu*) rather and of our practice of it in that space in time that is ours (11). "The problem is in the space between" (*Spaces* 107), as Scott recognized early on, a space I read as variously literary, urban, comparative, methodological, pedagogical and violent, too; or as the heroine again put it: "This is the city" (*Heroine* 9, 31, 60, 122, 179), a space as we saw, in chapter one, of difference, in which strangers can neither be avoided, nor their strangeness held against them (Bauman 104). What Marcotte has done, then, is not nothing. Indeed, he makes us to ask how, in even our everyday uses of literature, we hear or respond to the presence of difference. How, as Bauman puts it, do we "cope with the otherness of others" in the midst of this, our literary city (101)? How do we stay "*à l'écoute*," as Moyes describes, of what is not written in our own language ("*Prétendues*" 17)? What "art and skills are needed to share [the] public life" of this inevitably national literary practice (Bauman 94)? How do we "name" (Moyes, "Postscript" 27), represent, and make sense of – what do we do with – differences in (and what

do those differences do in turn to) the institutional spaces of national literary studies?

I describe Marcotte's response therefore as *polemical*, specifically, from the Greek *polemikos*, meaning *controversial* or *disputatious, of or related to war*. Seeking, he admits, to defend Quebec literature (7), by excluding from it any English speaking body of writing, Marcotte betrays, in fact, or breaches, the very definition of that *littérature québécoise* that he himself helped to canonize, notably, in his *Roman à l'imparfait*. Indeed, in that landmark critical reading of a number of the most definitive novels in Quebec literature at the time, Marcotte found in Ducharme, Blais, Bessette, Godbout and others, "*le mouvement contradictoire par lequel nous entrons enfin dans l'écriture*" (*Roman* 113; emphasis added). Quebec literature is born, he says, of contradictions, "*né de sa propre négation*" (*Une Littérature* 12). With Ducharme and Blais, *et les autres*, Marcotte – arguably the "*doyen*" of Québécois literary criticism (Schwartzwald 95) – finds in himself both the capacity and the courage to own those fissures of difference, that "*rupture*," that "*simultanéité des langues*," that "*éclatement*," and that "*multiple*" – all this *imparfait*, as he calls it – as definitively Québécois (*Roman* 113-114; emphasis added). Thus, like the author of *L'avalée des avalés*, Marcotte "*choisit de ne pas choisir*" (114), and concludes that, "*qui a peur des contradictions n'entre pas chez Ducharme*" (*Roman* 122) and, by extension, *ne monte même pas "au premier rang de la littérature québécoise"* ("Neil Bissoondath" 8), for to climb into Quebec literature, he suggests, is to climb decidedly into a space of contradiction, "to live the contradiction," as Scott's heroine puts it, "to embark upon the poetic adventure" (*Heroïne* 121). "*Nous n'avons pas sitôt accédé à la lucidité rationalisante d'une réponse à la question que pose la différence*, Marcotte concludes, "*que déjà ces nouvelles terres se fissurent sous nos pas*" (*Roman* 114; emphasis added). Therefore, to reject the possibility that English language



writing may have a place in Quebec literature, *for fear of the contradiction that this would involve*, is precisely contradictory. It is a discourse, which Marcotte calls, "*à l'imparfait*," imperfect, and which I, for the moment, am calling polemical.

Strictly speaking, Gail Scott is correct to point out that, "*parlant du milieu anglophone*," Marcotte "*est resté au passé simple*" ("Miroirs" 23). Indeed, with one or two exceptions, Moyes has remarked, the English language writers that Marcotte does refer to as English language writing in Quebec "*ont tous commencé à écrire avant 1970*" ("Postscript" 30), which is to say, before the quiet revolution that bore witness to the birth of that *vraie littérature québécoise* that is in question here. He says nothing, for example, of those two or three younger generations of English language writers in Quebec – including Gail Scott, Robert Majzels and Erin Mouré, Rawi Hage and Heather O'Neill (Scott, "Mrs Beckett" 89) – whose "*visions alternatives de Montréal*" and "*pratiques alternatives de l'anglais*" (Moyes, "Postscript" 30) should rightly make it impossible to so summarily and uniformly exclude what is decidedly therefore not a single "solitude," as Moyes nicely puts it, but a "*company of strangers*" ("*Prétendues*" 17; emphasis in text). Scott is right, then, to show up Marcotte's lack of response to the actual body (bodies) of English language writing in Quebec, his failure to respond, and ultimately his *irresponsibility*. She fails, though, it seems to me, to note the manifest irony of all this; his reference, for example, to "*l'immédiateté foudroyante de mes rapports avec la littérature canadienne-anglaise de ma ville*" (8; emphasis added) when he openly admits to having only just now, 25 years later, read Cohen's 1966 novel, *Beautiful*

*Losers* for the first time.<sup>85</sup> In this way, he seems to me quite conscious of precisely how badly positioned he is to presume to dissert upon the belonging and the contours of English language writing in Quebec, so much so, in fact, that what Gail calls the simple pastness ("Miroirs" 23) of Marcotte's discourse might more profitably be read, I suggest, as an "*imparfait*," an imperfectness, which is to say, as a discursive practice that is more than simply *passé*, and rather more complexly "*menacé de l'intérieur, mais toujours présent à la fois comme tentation et limite à franchir*" (*Roman* 21), that is, a discourse written, says Marthe Robert, in "*un temps de l'interrogation*" (in Marcotte, *Roman* 68) that begs us, readers, to "*repenser ses conclusions*" (Moyes 30).<sup>86</sup>

Indeed, I want to suggest that it is not only the conclusions of his intervention that Marcotte's polemic compels us to rethink – as Marcotte will have done most of that work himself before the close of his own intervention – but the very bases, rather, the ground upon which any such conclusions are come to. Thus, whereas his intention, ostensibly, had been to define the place of English language writing in Quebec literature – namely, to say that it does not and cannot have a place – in the end, it begins to seem that his intention, after all, has had less to do with English language writing, or its relative place in Quebec literary studies, and all that much more, finally, with the idea of national literature itself which we invoke when we speak of that *québécoisité* that is here being called upon to assimilate (or not) such differences as

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<sup>85</sup> As Leclerc and Simon suggest in their introductory comments to the special issue at *Voix et Images* (28), Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* represents a uniquely fruitful (though still largely untapped) site of investigation in this context. Cohen, of course, has never been the sort to claim allegiance to any but the nation of poetry, and yet his style, and his almost fanatical attention to the touch and rhythms of language and thought, as Scott described, make this reference to him in Marcotte first of all, particularly apt: "... *celui qui a capté le son de la voix anglo-québécoise mieux que personne, peut-être par ce qu'il est musicien*" ("Miroirs" 23).

<sup>86</sup> The imperfect, in French, is what Gail Scott, in her discussion of the *future anterior*, calls a "composite" tense (*Prismatic* 57), a complex temporality that invokes both the past and the present simultaneously. It is therefore an example of that sort of 'structure of difference' I have described as constitutive of what I mean here by literary.

English language writing represents. What seemed at the outset simply a question of belonging (or not), has become instead a much more interesting question of the discipline and methods of literary knowledge production. His polemic, therefore, functions as that sort of "self-undermining" groundwork, that "groundlevelling" and "tunnelling down," "filling in" and "opening" out of the question ("Search for Grounds" 33) that J. Hillis Miller calls "critique," after Immanuel Kant, and which, he says, is the "necessary" and "all-important task of literary studies" (29). Not unlike the work that Rajani has done towards understanding the ground beneath our cracking Canadian sidewalks, Marcotte's polemic represents a kind of "testing" or "investigation of the weight-bearing features" of the language we use when talking about literature (31), the "figures of speech" – here the *wall* that separates the *two solitudes* – that always in one way or another serve as the necessarily fractured and unstable grounds of our every response to this question of identity and belonging, the sandy soils upon which the foundation of the edifice (the wall) of an answer is always imperfectly to be erected (32). Indeed, as Derrida also shows in his "La Mythologie blanche," Marcotte's critique of institutional reason is valuable for the ways in which it makes plain how the ground of that question of the place and practice of identity is a-wash with irreducible differences, that is, with metaphor.

Or, to put this in terms more obviously his own, Marcotte remarks on the different levels of *obligation* that he feels, on the one hand, towards Gabrielle Roy's work and, on the other, towards a Hugh MacLennan novel or a David Solway book of poems ("Neil Bissoondath" 7). He does not go on, of course, to explain how such a different sense of obligation could mean that he is not, for that matter, obliged to respond to the actual corpus of English language writing in Quebec that he had accepted the explicit invitation to engage with. Nor could he, I

suggest, do so without at the same time undermining the very position he is attempting to defend, and that, precisely, is his polemical/critical point. For if, as Gloria Anzaldua has remarked, the "ability to respond is what is meant by responsibility," and if, as Marcotte's non-response exemplifies, some aspects of "our cultures take away our ability to act – shackle us in the name of protection," such that, like Scott's heroine in her bathtub we'll see, "blocked, immobilized, we can't move forward, can't move backwards" (Anzaldua 43), I argue that Marcotte's polemic is productive to the extent that his initial response, his polemical erection of a wall of identity meant to exclude English language writing from Quebec literature, compels us to recognize the instability of the grounds we stand on when engaging with such literary questions of identity and difference and, therefore, to seek another way to pose the question, as the heroine says (154), or to "*penser autrement la manière dont se constitue notre relation singulière à l'altérité*," adds Harel (*Braconnages* 12). What more, Marcotte's response suggests, failing to do so threatens the institution and the practice of literature in Quebec with the very same sort of paralysis and disintegration (or cracking) that we find Scott's heroine at risk of drowning in at the outset of her narrative. Marcotte, in this sense, and Scott's *Heroine*, in a way, are telling the very same story.

This polemic, though, shows not only that the grounds we stand on are crazed with cracks, but why also, how necessarily so, and to what effect. His performance is polemical then, not only in the literal sense of being confrontational or war-like (contradictory) as we've seen, but in the less-etymologically evident sense also, from the Greek *polos*, meaning *pivot*, such that, over the course of its performance, the position Marcotte takes – his desire for "simplicity" (7) – seems to *turn*, as if upon an *axis*, into an eventual admission of its own insufficiency and a recognition of the "complexity" involved (7). It seems to *swing*, as if from

one discursive *pole* to the other, saying first one thing (no!), and then being compelled by the force of its own reasoning to admit exactly the opposite, that there is in Quebec "*une légitimité historique de la littérature, de la culture et de la langue anglaise*" (10). His discourse seems to *slip*, as if down a greasy *pole*, or a slippery slope, back to where he started from, and where he remains (as we do still today remain) faced with the unanswered / unanswerable question of the place and the practice of difference in the place of identity and the *obligation* nevertheless to respond.

Moyes has described the impressive number of slippages, hesitations, reversals, and "*effets contradictoires*" that craze Marcotte's relatively short text, and she suggests that these are all so many places where he shows himself to be very well aware, indeed, of the instability of the position he has taken, where he signals, "*son propre malaise avec les déclarations totalitaires à propos de la littérature québécoise*" and demonstrates "*une certaine résistance à ces distinctions méthodiques et ces définitions coulées dans le béton*," his own most of all (Moyes, "Postscript" 31). All these moments when his discourse seems to slip or get tripped up, as if on so many significant cracks in the sidewalk of the position he has taken; these are all so many "possibilities," Moyes has repeatedly insisted, occasions to turn our attention to the grounds upon which such forms of exclusion are practiced.<sup>87</sup> Marcotte claims, for example, that only by force, "*plutôt que de gré*," would a writer accept a position as

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<sup>87</sup> In her account of the *No fixed address* circle, composed of Gail Scott, Robert Majzels, and France Daigle, Moyes notes that what is important to its members is not "*la question institutionnelle de leur reconnaissance en tant qu'écrivains anglo-québécois, mais plutôt la question de l'écriture et la possible résistance qui, en son sein, se trouve justement au point de collision (et de traduction) entre les mondes linguistiques*" ("*Prétendues*" 17; emphasis added). That possibility has been available moreover since at least 1997, where Moyes again had asked that "*au lieu d'argumenter pour ou contre l'existence d'une littérature anglo-québécoise, pourquoi ne pas repenser la crise définitionnelle occasionnée par la discussion de la place de l'écriture de langue anglaise au Québec et explorer les possibilités créatrices engendrées par une écriture qui met en scène le processus de devenir minoritaire*" (Moyes, "Postscript" 27).

"obligatoirement minoritaire" in Quebec (6). And yet, so limited is his acquaintance with that body of writing that his apparent generosity – whereby he seems to leave it up to the other to decide where he or she may want to belong – in fact says more about his own (however historically legitimate) anxieties regarding marginality than it does of that of those he is expressly referring to.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, in the very next paragraph, and in order, he says, to keep things simple, Marcotte turns toward *his own* personal experience, "*mon point de vue de francophone né natif*" (7), and thus too the *rapport d'adresse* that organizes his discourse as a whole seems uncomfortably uncertain, slippery: "*si je dis, pardon; si je me dis qu'il est essentiel d'aller voir . . .*" (Marcotte 11; emphasis added). Marcotte is addressing himself here most of all, and anyone whose first response to the question of (anglo)Quebec literature would amount to this same sort of knee-jerk rejection, and what he seems to be saying, I suggest, by way of that refusal is not so much 'No, they do not belong,' but 'Take a look at the effects (which I am still in the midst of itemizing here) that follow from our categorical pretension that they do not' and then 'Therefore, let us (for our own sake even) guard against the temptation to do so again and again, ok?'

Allow me to illustrate. Perhaps the most striking and telling example of such polemical slips in his discourse follows from his justifiable conviction that indeed "*il y a vraiment des différences*" between English and French language writing in Quebec, and that "*il importe de les marquer fortement, ne serait-ce que pour éviter les rassemblements thématiques effectués*

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<sup>88</sup> Quebec, of course, has long been and considered itself as on the margins, first, of the French metropolitan and then English North American centres. The notion that an (anglo)Quebecois would necessarily choose a Canadian, instead of a Quebecois identity – or even that it is only a question of either/or – flies in the face of evident desires to belong here, and however complexly, represented most notably by Gail Scott, Linda Leith, and Robert Mazjels, *entres autres* (Leclerc and Simon 20; Moyes, "*Prétendues*" 16).

hâtivement *par le comparatisme*" ("Neil Bissoondath" 7; emphasis added). Marcotte, of course, is not alone in worrying about that sort of haste. Catherine Leclerc, for example, rightly sees in the project to assimilate English language texts into the corpus of Quebec literature the risk of subjecting the many facts of difference to the singular interests of identity, whereby "*se trouveraient rassemblés des projets esthétiques qui n'ont rien à voir les uns avec les autres et qu'une lecture hâtive et intéressée risquerait d'homogénéiser*" ("*Détournements*" 77; emphasis added). The comparatist, E.D. Blodgett, in his *Configuration: Essays on the Canadian Literatures*, has described that *hasty* sort of *thematism* that Marcotte feels he must defend against as one of "the main comparative tendencies" of the 1970s in Canada and Québec (26), and he points, among others, to the work of Ronald Sutherland as having perhaps "the most *retentissement* among students of (this kind of) comparative" practice (21). This "metaphorical tendency" (9), Blodgett goes on to explain, "springs from the unhappy meaning" of the verb to *com-pare*," which "denotes a shared similarity, a relation among things of the same kind – among equals" (6) and, as such, fails to take into account the historic inequalities between English and French in Canada, the majority status of the French language in Quebec, and the differences internal to 'English language writing in Quebec' which, as we've already seen, make of it more a "company of strangers than a single coherent solitude" (Moyes, "*Prétendues*" 16-17).

A good example, as I said, of that hasty sort of thematism that Marcotte polemically reproduces, even as he explicitly seeks to defend Quebec literature against it, can be found in the introduction to his *The New Hero: Essays in Quebec/Canadian Literature* (note the singular, "literature"), where Sutherland admits – as if in pre-emptive response to Marcotte ("Neil Bissoondath" 7), but likely rather in response to the criticism already at the time being

levelled against his own and similar projects (*New Hero* vii) – that "of course there are differences" between the two bodies of writing in Canada (viii). Difference, he adds, "between individual writers ... is hardly a notable phenomenon" (viii). The over-haste of his project becomes most apparent when he goes on to argue that, beneath the "*illusion* of dissimilarity" (viii), there remains, he says, the reality of "*shared* values and attitudes" (viii), "a great deal in *common*" (vii), a "*single* mystique" (vii), and a "*single* line of development" (*Second* 23); all of which, "whether one likes it or not," is "of far greater significance than the normal and expected differences" (*New Hero* viii). Sutherland even went so far as to say, in his first such book length project, *Second Image*, that "aside from language, it is quite probable that there are at the moment *no fundamental cultural differences* between the two major ethnic groups in Canada" (23; emphasis added); as if language were not in itself a significant sign and kind of, even a system of such cultural differences!! Embodied, then, in what he calls THE "basic Canadian personality" (*New Hero* ix), THE notably singular and seemingly only masculine "new Canadian hero" (vii), Sutherland's thematism subordinates "*superficial* cultural differences" (ix), and privileges rather an admittedly very selective set of supposed more *fundamental* similarities and this, rightly, Marcotte sees as a problem, a threat that we need to defend against. It is all the more terribly ironic, then, or rather productively polemical, that Marcotte, in his express intention to ward off ("Neil Bisoonath" 7), should in fact rather reproduce and risk reinforcing that very kind of hasty reduction of the plural to the singular that Sutherland's project, for example, performs. Indeed, as Marcotte himself puts the irony: "*C'est là le discours que tiennent d'un commun accord, mais sans toujours le conduire jusqu'à son terme logique, d'une part l'impérialisme linguistique anglais qui ne peut voir la langue française que comme résidu colonial, et d'autre part, le nationalisme québécois qui*



*n' imagine de salut pour le français que dans l' unilinguisme intégral*" ("Neil Bissondath" 10; emphasis added). In both Sutherland and Marcotte, differences are made to resolve to identity, and that, we must feel compelled to admit, is a problem.

Marcotte's polemic, then, shows how, when faced with the same problem of the presence of language and other differences at or within the garrison walls of their respective national literary institutions, both Marcotte and Sutherland are seen to react to the same felt need to defend against an analogous threat of assimilation (or insignificance) posed by a likewise larger and more powerful language and cultural identity, respectively, in English Canada and in the United States. Borrowing one of Marcotte's seeming favourite phrases, we might say that moving from Marcotte to Sutherland here, which is to say, from a *unilinguisme* to an *imperialisme*, we move by way of the very same notion of identity towards the very same arguably violent, and ultimately terminal erasures of difference (cf. *Roman* 19). Though they each may be driven by different, even opposing, national interests, both tend to deploy the very same notion of nation, imagined as singular, undifferentiated, and therefore embattled, and the effect, in both cases, is the same, namely, that difference is reduced into the service of preserving and (re)producing a privileged sense of identity that remains, nevertheless, embattled by the fear of difference's ongoing and insistently irreducible presence. Both respond to the same question of the place of difference by performing in different ways the same reduction of difference to identity that they are each intent upon defending against or, to borrow a phrase from Derrida's reading of the *pharmakon* (to which we will return below, and so find therein one of several specific points of comparison between Scott's narrative and Marcotte's polemic): "what is supposed to produce the positive and eliminate the negative does nothing but displace and at the same time multiply the effects of

the negative, leading the lack that was its cause to proliferate" (Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy" 100).

What I find productive in all this is how, with all the force of authority possessed by such an established and decades-long serving writer and critic, Marcotte erects the biggest wall and imposes the greatest distance between those two supposed institutional solitudes and, in this way, he carries to their "*terme logique*" ("Neil Bissondath" 10), to their breaking point, the rule of those "*certaines paramètres*" he says, "*qui, sans être reconnus officiellement, régentent le discours en cette matière*" (6). For, officially, Quebec is a multi-nation (Micone, "Immigration" 4), a nation internally and constitutively plural; as Canada and the Assembly of First Nations are too, though the latter much more self-consciously so. The 1985 and 1989 resolutions in Quebec's National Assembly, for instance, recognizing the national rights and status belonging to the First Nations People of Quebec (Québec, "*Reconnaissance des droits*" and "*Reconnaissance de la nation*"), as well as the House of Commons' 2006 passing of a New Canadian government motion recognizing that "that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada" (Canada, *Journals*), both bear witness to the shape and direction of *officially* recognized discourses.<sup>89</sup> Marcotte's polemic, though, appears to put the lie to that promise – as Harel certainly does, too, and much more explicitly (*Braconnages* 23-24) – warning that the institutional practice and study of literature continues to be, as it has been since its inception in the nineteenth century, organized by and oriented around the law of non-contradiction and

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<sup>89</sup> It is interesting to note here, the irony, that this very form of national identity and recognition is what determines or forces the exclusion of First Nations voices from the conversation institutionalized by the recent Boucharde/Taylor Commission, because an other nation is still considered outside, elsewhere, and they could not, therefore, participate in what was framed as an intra-national conversation, as if difference were always only elsewhere ("Building" 8).

mutual exclusion according to which (only) *one* language, on *one* territory, spoken by *one* people, define *one* nation, *one* literature, indivisible, under god, the (indifferent) father, who art in heaven, etc. Governed thus by the either/or rule or "*ou-bien de l'exclusion*" (Marcotte, *Roman* 114), difference is seen as a problem, an obstacle, as something to defend against or to resolve to identity before being able to move forward.

However, and as we will see again later in the plotting of Scott's *Heroine*, the problem is not that difference itself, but that "*nationalisme instinctif*" that paralyses our response to and polices the space of our practice of it (Marcotte, "Neil Bissoondath" 7), that "habit of mind," as Blodgett names it, "that looks upon difference as a kind of failure, a lack of fulfillment" (*Configuration* 15), that "*imaginaire un peu trop centré sur le même*," that Luce Irigaray well describes (*Ce Sexe* 28), and those "*paradigmes identitaires de soi et de l'autre où prime la consensualité*," where difference and conflict must *perforce* be resolved to identity and consensus before anything can happen (Lane-Mercier, "*Dislocations*" 27). The problem that Marcotte is identifying here is not this or that particular difference, in itself, but that idea of national identity "*devenue point de vue méthodologique*," says Harel ("*Loyautés*" 42); that "obsession" (41) for identity that has become a veritable malady (*Braconnages* 21), a toxin ("*Loyautés*" 42), and a "most terrible drug," as Benjamin might have added (*Reflections* 190). The problem here is that "*logique de l'exclusion*" (Lane-Mercier, "*Dislocations*" 32) and of "*l'identitaire*" (Harel, "*Loyautés*" 41) that, however *désuète* (47), "*fragilis[ée]*" (43), "*épuisée*" (43), and "*soporifique*" (*Braconnages* 9) remains, Marcotte warns, no less dominant still, and his intent, again, is not so much to reject some form or other of (anglo)Québécoisité – which he has largely not even read – but, rather, to question the particular grounds, the methodologies, the ('best?') practices by means of and upon which is erected and maintained the edifice of

Quebec literary studies itself. I mean, his purpose would not be to foreclose the possibility of an (anglo)Quebec literature – for as Gregory Reid would put it, such is no longer the question<sup>90</sup> – but to expose, rather, and warn us away from, the fear that motivates, and the *effets de violence* engendered by, the pedagogies embodied in that figure of those two old and supposed separate solitudes, each on their own side of the walls of national identity, each stuck and decaying in their own "mossy little pond" (Gallant 691), in the stagnant "*marasme*" of their own "*conscience nationale*" (Fanon 108).<sup>91</sup> If, therefore, it is the very definition of tragedy, to effect exactly the opposite of what had been intended – in this case to reproduce the violence of that *hasty* sort of *thematism* that he had meant precisely to defend Quebec studies against – the possibility that Marcotte in fact intended to do exactly that makes his performance legible as polemic.

I mean, I am arguing here, and again against to the seductive dichotomy I attempted at the outset of this chapter, that violence, in so far as it intersects with literary and pedagogical practice is to be understood, on the analogy of (the threat of) cutting, beating, bruising, breaking, piercing the skin and ultimately death, as a mode of transgression, an expression of power, and a form of control. Moreover, as I will continue to elaborate throughout, violence is to be seen as having a place in the spaces we inhabit as teachers and students, not only tragically by virtue of the 'madmen' who bring guns to school and use them, but necessarily

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<sup>90</sup> In an essay cited above, Gregory Reid is clear about how even only asking the question "Is there an anglo-quebec literature?" is always already to have answered in the affirmative ("Is There" 58).

<sup>91</sup> This phrase, *effets de violence*, I adapt from the notion of those "*effets de traduction*" that Lane-Mercier has discussed ("*Écrire-Traduire*" 104), in order to bring this thematic of violence into the closest possible proximity to the material and texture and rhythms of language itself, which is of course the *alpha* and the *omega* of translation. However, I do so also strategically where the distance between violence plain and simple and *effets de violence* (which sounds better than violence effects) makes it all the harder to blur, and therefore easier to remain conscious of, the difference between the actual mortal violence of cuts and bruises and breaks and the "violence of rhetoric," as DeLauretis calls it ("Violence" 240), that is, however real in its effects.

too, by way of the logic and economy of our learning to read and write, the way we organize literature and literary studies, determine how it is to be taught, and acknowledge (or not) what effects these decisions have both on each other and the worlds of difference to which we belong. Indeed, the notion that reading and writing be simply the other of violence is, frankly, too simplistic to be anything other than a form of violence in its own right. I will come back in a moment to the particular *effets de violence* that Marcotte's short text is both littered with and warning of, but would like first to add one more piece of the puzzle here, by turning again, and briefly, to the work of the sociologist, Zygmunt Bauman, who issues, I suggest, the very same warning about the paradigms and ultimately the violence that, by convention, organize our practice of and response to the presence and question of difference, as much in literary studies as in urban design. Doing so, though, is not meant simply to repeat in different terms the same basic argument that I am already eliciting from Marcotte. Instead, turning to Bauman now allows me to articulate this intersection of pedagogical practices and violent effects in terms of the logic, importantly, of addiction (i.e. of our bad habits of identitary thinking) that I am coming to in my reading of Scott below.

Thus, in that chapter on the different paradigms of time and space belonging, respectively, to the modern and to liquid modernity that I have already had occasion to discuss, Bauman recalls Levi-Strauss' description of the only "two strategies" ever "developed" in response to the "need to cope with the otherness of others" (101). Marcotte's exclusion of English language writing from Quebec literature – his *unilinguisme nationale* – can be read, accordingly, as a version of that *anthropoemic* strategy, that "‘vomiting’, spitting out the others seen as incurably strange and alien," the "extreme variants" of which, says Bauman, "are now, as always, incarceration, *deportation* and murder," while its "upgraded,

‘refined’ (modernized) forms [...] are *spatial separation*, urban ghettos, *selective access* to spaces [including institutional spaces] and selective barring from using them" (101).

Sutherland’s hasty thematism, too, or "*imperialisme linguistique*," as Marcotte would have called it, is easily legible as only another version among others of that *anthropophagic* strategy, that "soi-disant ‘disalienation’ of the alien substances: ‘ingesting’, ‘devouring’ foreign bodies and spirits so that they may be made, through metabolism, *identical* with, and no longer distinguishable from, the ‘ingesting’ body ... " (101). In both cases, as we’ve seen, the outcomes are likewise as violent.

In chapter one, I attended to Bauman's description of how, as the public space of contemporary cities is increasingly being "colonized" by such rapidly proliferating "architectural renditions" of these expressly non-civil *anthropoemic* and *anthropophagic* "efforts to keep the ‘other’, the different, the strange and the foreign at a distance, [...] to preclude the need for communication, negotiation and mutual commitment" (108). I described how, as the city in this way becomes increasingly violent, we lose, in turn, as many occasions and opportunities "to *learn* the art of civility" (103; emphasis added) needed to deal with difference for ourselves, "casually," with "our own eyes, tongues and hands" (92-93). If "inhabitants are to learn the difficult skills of civility," Bauman argued, "it is the urban environment that must be ‘civil’" (95). What I omitted, though, insisting upon at that point was the further consequence that, as we lose increasingly those habits of and occasions to learn the art of civility (or reading), the cost of that loss only gets increasingly more expensive as we therefore become all the more and solely dependent upon the technological and "power assisted measures" we entrust, consequently, to deal with difference for us. All those "high voltage electric fences" (91), "hidden TV cameras and dozens of hired gun-carrying guards

checking passes at the security gates and discreetly (or ostentatiously, if need be) patrolling the streets" (93) are being purchased with "public money" that "has been set aside in quantities that rise year by year" for the purpose of protecting "the protection needing people against the fears and the dangers which make them jumpy, nervous, diffident, and frightened" (93). That vicious circle and the increasing expense of such illiteracy, so to speak, is characteristic, I will show, of the logic of addiction.

The number of such *power-assisted*, literary and pedagogical *measures* as increasingly define what Anzaldua calls our current "way of life" (68), those techniques that increasingly only a few of us actually "can afford" (Bauman 91), nevertheless affect us all in increasingly costly, "damaging" (102), and even "pathogenic" ways (105). They are "counterfeits of experience," Bauman insists (100), in a place and time (and discipline) where "the likelihood of meeting strangers" and having to "cope" with difference remains nevertheless a "constitutive feature" (101), where difference remains and its movements continue to trouble still the grounds, as we've seen, upon which are erected, to the point of cracking and ruin, our most rigid and imposing infrastructures of learning and identity. Echoing Derrida's account of the *pharmakon*, which I cited above (and will cite again below), Bauman notes that "the more effective the drive to homogeneity and the efforts to eliminate the difference, the more difficult it is to feel at home in the face of strangers, the more threatening the difference appears and the deeper and more intense is the anxiety it breeds" (106). This "institutionalization of urban fear," as Sharon Zukin calls it (in Bauman 94), what Bauman describes as our "pathology of politics" (109) and which, I might add, describes the violent logic of national literary identity that Marcotte was warning us away from, leads only further on into a viciously circular, "self-perpetuating and self-reinforcing" cycle of fear (106), the

ridiculous and reductive but nonetheless logical outcome of which is articulated by the man Zukin overhears in the bus saying, "Lock up the whole population" (in Bauman 94). We'll encounter other versions of this vicious cycle in the logic of addiction discussed below, and it is precisely the kind of crisis and ongoing violence that Marcotte's polemic, I argue, compels us to recognize the workings of in the explicitly pedagogical spaces of our institutionalized literary practice.

Indeed, like a beaver that slaps his tail to the ground – "*bonne bête de confiance*" that he is (Marcotte, *Roman* 121) – Marcotte designs a polemic, I argue, to warn, to shake, and so to test the grounds and assumptions upon which we stand collectively as literary critics and teachers in response to the presence of difference. Forcing us to pause here a moment as we open up new sub-fields of research and knowledge production – for "to thinking belongs the movement as well as the arrest of thoughts" (Benjamin, *Arcades N10,3*) – his polemic compels our recognition of the *effets de violence* and the costs incurred by a practice of difference that would limit the function of literature and literary criticism to only the business of (re)producing and preserving a privileged and notably singular and masculine notion of national identity, as represented by Sutherland's uncivil *new* hero and by those two *old* institutional solitudes that represent *his* interests. To borrow a few more words from Moyes, Marcotte's polemic arguably shows that "*si la figure des deux solitudes semble a priori traduire une certaine idée de la différence, elle n'en renvoie pas moins à l'affirmation d'une similitude d'une même, c'est à dire d'une homogénéité qui masquerait les ruptures et différences inhérente à chacune de ces 'solitudes', tout en les plaçant dans une relation factice d'égalité qui, dans les faits, voile un rapport de force qui ne l'est jamais*" ("*Prétendues*" 18; emphasis added). Similarly, and borrowing Blodgett's phrase this time, Marcotte shows how



"a certain violence must be done" to the history of Quebec and to the literature that animates and documents it, and to its students in turn, in order to make the argument for mutual exclusion and non-contradiction "persuasive" (*Configuration* 24). Indeed, Marcotte himself had already said as much at the close of his reading of the fable of *Eésirg* and *Grisée* in Ducharme's *L'Avalée des avalés* (287), that "*il ne faut pas vouloir, à tout prix, éliminer la diversité des langages,*" because "*on risque d'y perdre la tête*" (*Roman* 114), lest we have off with our own heads, as Lewis Carroll's Queen of Hearts might say (*Alice*).

A good example, then, of those power-assisted methods of dealing with difference that Bauman has just described, is that "*histoire d'une égoïne*" that Marcotte recalls – the story of a saw – about two friends separated by a wall (of identity) and unable, consequently, to understand one another. *Eésirg* decides to buy a saw to help him/her open up a crack in the wall through which the two might better communicate. However, that resulting sort of transparency and immediacy presumably requires too much of the one and the other involved, too many *emic* or *phagic* effects, or so anyway *Eésirg*'s own first response to hearing *Grisee*'s voice suggests, as he turns the saw he's used on the wall, upon himself and, literally, removes his own head. Identity, the fable suggests, is (however seductive) a dangerous drug. Without being quite identical, Ducharme's fable resonates with the moral of the story in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* (5.1) where, and illustrating the dictum that Fanon records in his essay "On Violence," about how "*l'obstacle*" only accentuates "*la tendance au mouvement*" (Fanon 60), the poet's star-crossed lovers, kept apart by the wall their families built expressly for that purpose, are only all the more so incensed in their desire, and compelled, consequently, to seek out some other way to meet, some other place, namely by that proverbial mulberry bush where, as a result of a series of misunderstandings and misinterpretations, both

of them wind up dead.<sup>92</sup> My point here is that we should require or hope for neither the complete absence of walls or complete erasure of every difference (as we saw in Sutherland), nor the total removal of that difference through the building of ever bigger walls (as we continue to see being built). Rather, the question that remains (from the outset) is how to compose with the walls of identity that are always already there, and the differences that trouble and crack them regardless? How do we deal with the risks and dangers involved in what must remain, I argue, an open and not uncomplicated question, the question of literary pedagogies and practice?

How, in that sense, do we deal with our addiction to pedagogical models that patently have failed, given the forms of violence that erupt in their wake? Indeed, as Gail Mason's describes, in *Spectacles of Violence: Homophobia, Gender, Knowledge*, violence "emerges out of a struggle between power and resistance [...] at the point where power is most vulnerable, where consent has failed and resistance is strong" (Mason 129, 131). Thus, all those military figures of assimilation ("Neil Bissondath" 7), annexation (9), betrayal (9), interdiction (9), menace (11), defence (7), and force (6) peppered through Marcotte's text serve what Mason describes as, an "instrumental function" (Mason 120). They are so many "spectacles" (Mason 127), "specular figures," as Lucien Dällenbach says, *signs* of the "vulnerability or disintegration of" (Mason 134), as well as the long-standing and perpetual failure of (Moyes, "*Prétendues*" 18) what Mason would describe as the "hierarchical constructions of difference"

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<sup>92</sup> By proverbial I mean to refer to that old children's song that taught us how to wash and clean our faces and teeth and clothes. However, the aptly named website [cracked.com](http://cracked.com) posted an article in September 2012, about the "Terrifying Origin Stories behind Popular Children's Songs" explaining that the bush in question stood in the centre of the damp yard of a nineteenth century prison in Wakefield, England where, frighteningly, children too were incarcerated "for crimes their mothers had committed" (Kroes).

that structure our thinking about English and French language bodies of writing in Canada and in Quebec (Mason 121), in this case, that figure of the two solitudes that "undergirds," I argue, the repeated explosions of violence both in his text and in the hallways, classrooms and playgrounds where we (learn to) read and which we remember at *La Nef des 14 reines* (Mason 121). Marcotte, in this way, exposes "*that violence sous-jacente*" and "*sourde qu'il faut apprendre*," says Simon Harel, "*à connaître*" (*Braconnages* 119, 18), that violence that remains embedded still or potentially in the pedagogies and methodologies of the literary practice that we learn, learn from, and learn to respond to difference with; pedagogical models that would actually have us do unto others precisely that which we fear is being or would be done unto us.

Indeed, that fear-fed law of the jungle, that *loi de tallion*, to either kill or be killed, assimilate or be assimilated, exclude or be excluded, is not only morally wrong, Marcotte suggests, it is dangerous to ourselves as well as to whatever 'other' happens to be in question. Though it is perhaps convenient, easy, and almost natural, or "*commode*," as Marcotte says, to think, "*comme on l'a fait longtemps et comme on le fait encore souvent aujourd'hui*," that an impassable wall of identity stands erect along lines of difference between nationally identified bodies of writing – "*qu'il y a deux villes, comme il y a deux langues, qu'elles se combattent, qu'elles se nient mutuellement, et que dans cette lutte à mort [only] l'une d'elles finira par l'emporter*" ("Neil Bissoondath" 10; emphasis added) – nevertheless, he concludes, "*la littérature ne permet pas de penser aussi simplement*" (10). Indeed, as Micone puts it, "*il est impossible de faire simple dans ce domaine*" (Micone, "Québec" 21). For it isn't the difference itself (only) that is the problem, but the grounds upon which we engage it, namely, that "*terrible peur [de l'autre] qui nous cache la vie*" (F.Leclerc), that cycle of fear qui

"*menace*" *notre survie* (Bouchard Taylor 78), that "fear in my life" as a result of which "I could not feel" (Lanois). Therefore, I conclude, some sort of "survival mechanism" is required (Anzaldúa 68), some way to avoid shooting ourselves in the proverbial foot, to not "*faire fi de notre nouvelle identité fondée à la fois sur des valeurs civiques et sur l'appartenance à un territoire*" (Micone "Immigration" 4), to not "*rapetisser et dévaloriser le caractère englobant et inclusif*" *de la littérature Québécoise* (4), and so to escape from the straight-jacket of that "*modèle de la peau de chagrin qui est sans avenir*" (Bouchard and Taylor 91).<sup>93</sup> That model, I will argue, we find contested in Scott's avant-garde and theoretical experiments in prose.

Therefore, Marcotte's intervention, in the end, does not actually say '*no, they cannot belong*', but rather '*yes, and necessarily, they must and so, if not for their own sake then precisely for ours, we must go see*': "*Si je dis, pardon; si je me dis qu'il est essentiel d'aller voir enfin de l'autre côté [du mur] de quoi il retourne, ce n'est pas par générosité, pour créer de la bonne entente. C'est très égoïstement, pour occuper plus complètement mon territoire, ce territoire qui est en même temps, indivisiblement, celui de l'autre par excellence, de l'ennemi fantasmé, du maudit anglais ...*" ("Neil Bissoondath" 11; emphasis added). The question, of course, and as always is, how – how does one get over into the other side of town, so to speak, or in terms more directly drawn from my reading of Scott's *Heroine*, how do we up and get out of the tub, finally, that we've been sunk in this whole time?

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<sup>93</sup> This reference to the report of the Bouchard / Taylor commission on reasonable accommodations in Quebec is useful at this juncture for how it recurs later in my reading of Scott and so provides, as Derrida does, further grounds for comparing Scott and Marcotte. Moreover, as I was writing an earlier version of this essay, the riots in *Montréal-Nord*, following the police-shooting death of Freddy Villanova, confirm the sense of urgency that Bouchard and Taylor emphasized in their conclusion: that if Quebec society has so far largely escaped the violent "*dérapages*" which many other cities have been subject to, we are not, for all that, immune and therefore must needs be vigilant (*Fonder* 117).

## Turn 1 : through a Crack in that Wall of Literary Identity

We are *chile colorado*,/ the green shoot that cracks the rock.

We will abide.

- Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands / La Frontera* (104)

Les peuples sous-développés font craquer leurs chaînes  
et l'extraordinaire, c'est qu'ils réussissent.

- Franz Fanon, *Les Damnés de la Terre* (77)

Anyway, cracks the heroine out loud

- Gail Scott, *Heroine* (157)

To admit, then, that it has become necessary to "*aller voir de l'autre côté*" is to admit, simultaneously, that it is possible to do so, for Quebec studies to read English language writing; that there is, metaphorically speaking, a means, a fissure, or crack, "*une brèche*" (Bordeleau, "La révolution" 17) in the walls of national literary identity, large enough through which to pass, like the light in Cohen's song cited as an epigraph above. Indeed, says Marcotte himself, "*la porte est ouverte*" ("Neil Bissoondath" 6). It is to admit that "*à la base de la constitution de corpus littéraires nationaux*" (Leclerc and Simon, "Zones" 18) – or as Hillis Miller says, to the same ends, in "the grounds of literary study" itself (Miller, "Search") – there is a "*double fondation*" (Marcotte, "Neil Bissoondath" 10), a differential movement and therefore a crack in the equation of "*langue et territoire*" (Leclerc and Simon 18) through which English language writing gets into Quebec literature; *eine gross kluft*, as Kant said in his *Critique of Judgment* (in Miller, "Search" 30), along which difference moves still, and incessantly, and through which our knowing of different bodies of literary and critical writing is practiced and passed on. What remains, then, is to find some pedagogical model, a metaphor by means of which that movement is to be made legible and that conflict teachable, as Gerald

Graff has urged (*Professing*), instead of only fearsome felt. Without however suggesting that any such *passage obligé*, to borrow Harel's happy phrase, this time by way of the crack of English language writing in Quebec, should be anything like as smoothly consensual as that other, *via les écritures migrantes*, had hoped and purported to be (Harel, "Loyautés"; Lane-Mercier, "Dislocations" 27), I would suggest that just such a model of learning and means of making legible is to be found in Scott's prose, and in the cracks distributed there, which it is the business of this chapter now to collect and closely to read.

Indeed, if it is possible to pose "*à la base*" and "*au sein de l'institution littéraire québécoise un regard critique sur la littérature anglo-québécoise et de s'interroger sur la participation de celle-ci à la vie littéraire québécoise*" (Leclerc and Simon 23), and to lay the foundations there of "*une approche du corpus anglo-québécois*" and "*une étude de la littérature québécoise qui ... inclurait se corpus*" (22), such a possibility will not for that matter be unproblematic. I mean, that crack in the wall of national literary identity, which English language writing in Quebec opens up, "*pose problème*" (Leclerc and Simon 15), not so much in itself as for the way it calls into question *both* "*les présupposés du discours social élaboré en français*" (22) and "*la convention selon laquelle une littérature donnée s'exprime dans une seule langue*" (Moyes, "La Littérature" 424). Doing so may well thus compel "*la littérature québécoise à se redéfinir*" (Leclerc and Simon 23), and that, in turn, could cause the sort of violent "*reflexes de défenses*" that Marcotte's own polemic performs ("Neil Bissoondath" 7). Indeed, the institution of (anglo)Quebec literatures could in this way come to cause what Moyes calls a state of "*crise définitionnelle*" ("Postscript" 27). Depending, though, on what definition we start out with at the outset, what models we deploy to respond to the problem of difference, how even we pose the question in the first place, and how we might

have put it otherwise, the supposed crisis itself may turn out to have been nothing more than a "crisis of perceptions" finally, as Bouchard and Taylor put it ("Building" 13), only a regrettable choice of metaphors.

For, alongside the *stories of war and solitude*, of fear and sterility that Marcotte, we saw, presents, however polemically, there are also being told other tales in the body of criticism and theory on the subject, a *series of family dramas*, of "*récits apparentés*" (Majzels, "Anglophones" 17; emphasis added); stories of bodies of writing stood *au sein*, as Leclerc and Simon put it (23), at the breast of and feeding off and back into, "mutually nourishing" one another (Scott, "Miroirs" 7).<sup>94</sup> There are love stories being told, stories of bodies of writing carrying, as if pregnant with, one another (Leclerc and Simon 16), *qui se veulent et veulent s'avoir, s'approprier et s'incorporer* (Brossard, "Quelques" 12), *se faire avoir, savoir, valoir, et qui veulent se toucher et toucher en l'un et l'autre quelque "jouissance" et "plaisir, ... bien plus diversifié, multiple dans ses différences, complexe, subtil qu'on ne l'imagine" possible* (Irigaray, *Ce Sexe* 28). From such a perspective, *Heroine* invites me to make of the crack of (anglo)Quebec literatures the figure of a *stimulating* situation (Bordeleau, "La Révolution" 18), for that place where two lips touch "*sans pour autant se confondre*" (Irigaray, in Scott *Spaces* 72), the possibility that, as Mavis Gallant put it, *there* (in the crack of differences that will not be reduced or confounded) is to be found the "exact point of the beginning of writing" (*Selected Stories* XV), that "*mouvement qui anime tout activité de création*" (Harel, *Braconnages* 102). Indeed, in the figure of an English language body of writing, "*impregné de*

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<sup>94</sup> See, most recently, the *Quebec Studies* article in which Catherine Leclerc recounts that her own French language study of such large institutional questions is rooted in the "love story" she herself has lived with a certain number of English language texts ("*Détournements*" 78).

*la culture et la langue majoritaire franco-québécoise*" (Scott, "Miroirs" 23), and "*tributaire*" in the sense that it is both dependent upon for nourishment and a tribute to what she calls "*une culture francophone forte*" (23), I want to suggest, following some of Bouchard and Taylor's recommendations on the question of reasonable accommodations, that in this body of English language writing in Quebec, and in the differences and distances it manifests, "*la francophonie québécoise*" could well choose to find a reflection of that "*identité forte*" required of it "*pour calmer ses inquiétudes et pour se comporter (enfin) comme une majorité tranquille*" (Bouchard Taylor, *Fonder* 79), which is to say, that way of governing *otherwise* the teaching of literature in the *ruins of the university* where we are I suggest when we read.

Simon Harel, of course, is right to insist that while we cannot, on the one hand, limit ourselves in our practice of reading to the strictures and violence of thinking through only national identity, nor can we continue to put off an analysis and better understanding of "*la violence sous-jacente aux expressions actuelles du pluralisme*" (*Braconnages* 119), what he earlier called "*la face cachée de l'altruisme*" (12). This is to say, simultaneously, that these stories of our newfound love affair with the figures of difference – and of the relationship between English and French language writing – shall remain "*radicalement conflictuels*" (Majzels, "Anglophones" 17); that any inclusive "*et*" meant to take the place in that critical vocabulary erected upon the "*ou-bien de l'exclusion*" that Marcotte described will, for all that, remain "*déchirant*" (*Roman* 114); that any "*désir d'ouverture*" (Lapointe and Poirier 26), "*de rapprochement*" (Leclerc and Simon 20), or "*d'écoute*" (Scott in Moyes, "Discontinuity" 175) should not, for that matter, be thought to signify "*que l'on puisse annexer le corpus de langue anglaise sans rendre compte de profondes fissures*" of difference and distance that remain (Leclerc and Simon 23; emphasis added). Indeed, there will be nothing simple, or



straightforward about the cracks that I will presently be collecting in *Heroine* and elsewhere, the pedagogical model they are made to figure for, or their relationship to violence.

In fact, that network of cracks and fissures coursing across and crazing the narrative surface of Gail Scott's *Heroine* which, like Marcotte's, is the narrative of both a *refus obligé* and an *éventuelle reconnaissance*, therefore, will serve as a figure for the institutional space in which I learn to read (and will eventually teach), examples of those "grandes lignes de failles internes qui font des littératures anglo-québécoise et québécoise contemporaines des lieux habités pluriels, certes, mais surtout tendus, dissensuels, 'malmenés'" (Lane-Mercier, "Dislocations" 23; emphasis added); and as a figure for that "notion de loyautés conflictuelles avancée par Harel . . . [qui] s'avère être l'un des rares outils conceptuels actuellement à notre disposition pour procéder au démantèlement effectif des [deux] solitudes" (Lane-Mercier, "Dislocations" 23-24). I mean, not unlike that "wry civility" theorized by Daniel Coleman as an "antidote" (45), and an "engagement" (239) with both "the construction" and "the *fissures* in the edifice of what has become known as English Canada" (37; emphasis added), I want to argue, in what follows, that the cracks I collect *entre autres* in *Heroine* are rightly pedagogical for the ways in which they allow me to think through the dynamics of this institutional space in which I am come to learn to read, well and slowly, without, for that matter, simply reproducing the violence we find at work there. They provide, that is, a model for and means of thinking through the differences that may be "avant tout" but finally "pas seulement" a problem (Marcotte, "Neil Bissoondath" 6), because *après tout*, after all, they represent the necessity and the possibility of putting the question otherwise, de "*penser autrement la manière dont se constitue notre relation singulière à l'altérité*" (Harel, *Braconnages* 12). What I hope to have found then is (to sum up) a model for the possibility of

living accountably among these *ruins of our university*, for the place, that *tertium comparationis* (Blodgett, *Configuration* 6, 35), where we are when we read, and learn to read (Quebec) literature comparatively, and for a practice of reading and learning made, as we are in that *Nef des reines* I described at the outset, to move slowly back and forth and repeatedly, to remember and so protect against the simple return of such violence, by making it legible and therefore teachable.

### ***Heroine* 1: Some Cracks in Time in the Tale of her Tub**

Something there is [in Québec] that does not love a wall  
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,  
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;  
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast [...]  
He only says, 'Good fences make good neighbours'  
[but] Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder  
'Why do they make good neighbours?  
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.  
- Robert Frost, "Mending Wall"

Vacherie de vacheries  
- Ducharme *L'Avalée des avalés* (23)

Les grues sont comme des murs, elles n'ont pas d'oreilles.  
- Ducharme, *Le Nez Qui Voque* (304)

*Heroine* tells the story of a woman – the heroine – lying in a bathtub in the basement apartment of a rooming house near the Main in Montreal, "legs up, mourning lost love," and "trying to tell a story" (Friewald 63), the story of "the heroine and her friends moving towards the future" (*Heroine* 148), of a "movement from stasis to struggle," "to awareness," and ultimately to action, "through some pleasure and much pain" (Blumberg 60, 59). It is a modern day *tale of a tub*, a *tub-tale* (*Spaces* 86). If it is not quite in every respect like Jonathan Swift's

own, a fable ostensibly of "less interest" than the "series of digressions are with which it is interspersed" ("Tale of a Tub" 1090) – for indeed this story of a woman learning to belong and to write simultaneously is as important as its digressive forms are, to me, who hopes to learn therefrom, and allegorically, how to read and write – *Heroine* does though, like Swift's satire, achieve its narrative end and purpose, and get where it means to go, so to speak, by way of a great many different forms of digression and deferral. Indeed, I will in what follows describe such forms as a veritable *poetics of digression and deferral*, manifest for example in the series of such a number of narrative beginnings (7-70) and endings (81-183) that leave virtually no room for any middle other than that brief and parenthetical bit of poetry and sex (71-80). Unlike the tub of Swift's telling though, which refers to the practice of casting wooden *flimflam* off the rear of a ship at sea in the hopes of distracting the dangerous attention of whales away from the ship itself, the heroine's tub is moored to the floor in a bathroom, into which the heroine has withdrawn, or *digressed*, instead of writing (or in order to write) the novel she's been promising to "for years" now (*Heroine* 32), and in which she remains one "afternoon" through the evening and late into the night in late October, 1980 (*Heroine* 13), some ten years after having first arrived "*en ville*" from the small Sudbury suburb of Lively, Ontario where she grew up on the banks of the Castor River.

It is hard here not to read that *Castor River* in Lively as a "perverse translation" (Simon, *Translating* 119), or a looking-glass version (L. Carroll) of that *Lac aux castors* on Mont-Royal, in Montreal, which is to say, as a felicitous perversion of phrase providing Scott's readers here with an occasion to ask about the relationship, indeed, the proximity of the heroine's points of departure (Lively) and arrival (Montreal) and, so, about the temporality of her coming by writing deferral and digression to belong. Indeed, in the drama of that 10-year

lag between the time of the heroine's initial "transgression" in coming to *la cité* (*Spaces* 87) and her eventual, and perhaps still and ever unfinished process of integration, we are made to ask about the temporality of belonging and of writing, and so of learning and learning to read in turn. How (un)reasonably slow a process can it be allowed to be? And why, and who decides? I want, thus, to suggest in what follows that, while the very open-ended "sort of resolution" (Scott, "On the Edge" 16) that closes this story of the heroine's long protracted labour of coming in a very recursive way to write and to belong suggests that there is no easy answer to such questions about time, pedagogy, and politics, the practice of writing thematized in the narrative argues for the possibility of belonging in the absence of identity and of learning in the absence of firm conclusions, definite bodies of knowledge, or bounded subjectivities supposed to know and to learn. Scott's novel, in this way, not only has much to teach me about writing, reading and belonging in turn, but it models, moreover, the poetic and temporal structure of that pedagogical process.

All of that, though, is a far cry from how, to an "impatient reader" (Scott, "Author Replies"), it might seem as if nothing much "happens" in this story of a woman getting in and then out of the bathtub one day, "at least in terms of plot" (Persky C13). Indeed, like Lydia, the sedentary narrator with the peripatetic imagination in Scott's second novel, *Main Brides (Against Ochre Pediments and Aztec Sky)*, about whom our hasty critic is explicitly complaining – who remains from morning till night sitting in a café on the Main, watching and imagining movement, and imbibing coffees and carafes of wine as she tries to "absorb" (*Heroine* 170) the paralyzing shock of the violence against women that has marked again the

city's streets and parks, schools and newspapers<sup>95</sup> – so the heroine of Scott's first novel remains relatively still in her tub and silent for what may seem like the "entire plot" (Markotic 37). This is not, however, the end of the story. Indeed, and significantly, *pace* Markotic, the heroine in the end does get out of the tub – "now I'm out" (Scott, *Heroine* 171) – and has started transcribing the high-lit passages from her diary, which she's been collecting, "pages on which she's written pain in curved letters" that seem now, from "a distance," to be possessed of the power, somehow, to change the context of the room (180). Something indeed has happened, the *how* of which, though, it will remain until the very end of the chapter to articulate.

Strengthened, if not quite (homeland) secured, in the end, by the community of *main brides* that she has imagined and gathered together onto the rooftop across the street, Lydia steps out "into the night" (*Main Brides* 230) and moves, zigzagging, towards "a new kind of History" (*Main Brides* 199). Likewise, the heroine in the end steps out of the tub and, as she does so, gives birth to a "new" kind of "heroine who is not merely the feminine of hero" (*Spaces* 123); who is "not a loser," is "not afraid," or is able, nevertheless, to "trace where the fear comes from so [that] it doesn't get sprayed over everything" (154). *Heroine*, indeed, tells the story of a woman, in the end, who "belongs" now "to the streets of the city" (*Heroine* 100) as she did not before (*Spaces* 87), who can capture their rhythm (*Heroine* 140) rather than be

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<sup>95</sup> Indeed, there is no shortage of signs of the threat of violence against women in the urban landscape, neither in *Main Brides*, where Lydia's discovery of the murdered body of a woman in the park one morning frames and fractures, or "colours" she says, the whole narrative (Scott, "Author Replies"; "Of Blood"); nor in *Heroine*, similarly, does the city escape the characterization of "crazy stabbing sensibility" (*Spaces* 79), a place marked by the free passage of structurally and physically violent intentions against a whole series of women who remain, consequently, and unlike the heroine herself in the end, stuck, silent, beaten (cf. the note below for a sense of the way in which, indeed, "The list is long . . .").

penetrated (146) and paralyzed (155) by the fear of them, who can take the city for her own, "My Montreal" (Scott), and can "take it all in, her face a divided map of the present moment, one side savouring the sweetness ... the other smarting against something vaguer" (*Spaces* 182). Thus, her supposed "inactivity" is not nothing, as Gloria Anzaldua would argue (71), but "something" (Majzels, "Crosscurrents" 16) indeed as "necessary as breathing" (Anzaldua 71) and "dynamic" (69) if also, at least initially hidden or underground (69); a practice of writing, acting on, or acting out of narrative from which, I argue, there is much in the end to learn about the time and the violence, too, of writing and reading and pedagogical space.

And while for a moment I am at the dispelling of what I take to be misreadings of the novel, I want to be clear that neither is the heroine's getting out of the tub finally devoid of "political content," as Frank Davey suggests, suddenly (and one can only hope polemically), at the end of an otherwise helpful essay ("Totally" 69). No, I insist, the novel does not in fact narrate, what he describes dismissively as "*merely* an individual's brave attempt to continue to live – to leave a bathtub, or take a *mundane* walk outside one's home" (69; emphasis added), but something more and not quite so easily seeming dismissible. Thus, I submit, and in a way that directly contradicts Davey's dismissal, that the "narrator envisions herself walking calmly and confidently towards her destination" (Markotic 51). Given the number of women in *Heroine* who remain, throughout, dispossessed "by politics ... by patriarchy" (*Spaces* 84) of "(material) capacity" required "for existence. For not getting murdered—" (*Main Brides* 199); and given the number of women who do not, as the heroine does in the end, have a voice, a

community, an audience, or the freedom to move as they desire through the city,<sup>96</sup> therefore, and borrowing a phrase from Irigaray's account of "*l'économie phallique dominante*" (Irigaray 24), that while Davey is right to note how what "animates the novel is not a feminism within national politics but a transnational feminism" rather (Davey, "Totally" 70), he is wrong by the same token to conclude that the novel's *non national politics* signify (except symptomatically) a *non-political* practice of writing (cf. Irigaray, *Ce Sexe* 26).<sup>97</sup> He is wrong. Rather, if the "novel's imagination" is engaged, as Davey himself rightly points out, with a kind of "feminism" that "seeks *action* rather than essence" ("Totally" 70; emphasis added), and if the narrative tells the story, again, of a "movement from stasis to struggle through some pleasure and much pain (indeed) *to action*" (Blumberg 60, 64) – including, acts of walking, belonging and writing – then what *Heroine* "emphasizes" is not, as Davey suggests, the "personal *over* the collective" ("Totally" 65; emphasis added), but that the "personal *is*" in fact "political"

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<sup>96</sup> The list is long, indeed, of these women marked and silenced and reduced to what Ducharme's Bérénice calls "*attentisme*" (*L'Avalée* 116) by the violence of patriarchy: including the Peruvian woman who is "unable to move either forward or back" (*Heroine* 145); the disappeared daughter hunted by a rapist in the park (126, 131, 182); the "grey," homeless woman accused of being a "female impersonator" (36, 67), who moves silently and namelessly until the end through the city, or her sister who died in the office of the "welfare dentist" for having failed to "tell" him of her allergy to novocaine (39); the anonymous woman who died on a vent in the winter cold (*Spaces* 103); the exploited waitresses in the Plateau (136); Polly, married to the mob, whose children have been taken from her (*Heroine* 163); the Polish woman who was strangled to death (100); the woman with the empty birdcage who can't afford to buy a bagel (123); the elderly steno who "can't stop talking ... couldn't help listening" (42; cf. also 91, 104, 153); the landlady who "can't come out now waiting for a phone call" (45-6, 66); and of course the heroine's mother who recalls "the thing She loved, a wedding, and the thing She hated, marriage" (47).

<sup>97</sup> I have now, several times, cited Luce Irigaray in this context to help situate the source of those *effets de violence* I referred to earlier, that "*effraction violente*" I find both in Marcotte and in Scott in different ways (Irigaray, *Ce Sexe* 24; cf also Harel, *Braconnages* 28). I cite her, most of all, of course, because Scott herself does, in *Spaces like Stairs* (41), that collection of theoretical moments occasioned by the writing of *Heroine*, and because the novel itself, with its two thick outer sections "1. Beginning" (9-70) and "3. Ending" (83-183), which almost swallow the thin middle section called "II" (71-80), recalls the structure of Irigaray's *Speculum de l'autre femme*, which Toril Moi (in Blumberg 58) describes as a "hollow surface on the model of the speculum/vagina ... the centre ... framed by the two massive sections" (in Davey, "Totally" 69). In this case, however, the reference is specifically to her insistence, in *Ce sexe qui n'en n'est pas un*, that the inscription of the female sexe as the absence or lack of its masculine pendant, is only the first of so many other forms of economic and physical violence.

(Brossard, in Scott, *Spaces* 50). For, faced with the pervasive nature of the "symbolic order of language" (Davey, "Totally" 53), represented by the capital-M in the Mama who "put this hole" in her, and regardless that the heroine's "triumph" may be only "minor" (*Spaces* 92), her subjectivity "crushed a priori" (84) and "in process" (62), "disintegrating," and "porous" (*Prismatic* 86, 90), and her "resolution" rather open and sort of than all closed up ("On the Edge" 16), the fact that she does step out in the end on her way to breakfast down the street, and however badly attired (*Heroine* 180), none of that is, therefore, *mundane*.

Thus, if the heroine does indeed get out before it is too late, and if her stepping out is neither nothing, nor devoid of political address, then the question remains, methodologically speaking, *how* does she do so, step out in the end of what I call her *bathtub state*, *how* in the first place did she even get stuck there, and *what* has she been doing all the while, "caught in a swirl of crosscurrents" (Friewald 65), "suspended between the sadness of the past and the beauty of the future," in a "present rendered painfully vacant" (Friewald 66-67)? The point, of course, as I've already described, is to provide an account of what, finally, there is in all this story of a practice of writing to learn about reading and writing and learning, too. Thus, if the answer to the question of how she gets stuck in the tub is evident on virtually every page on the narrative, the answer to the questions of how she gets out and what that might mean (about reading and learning, in turn) is evident exactly nowhere, in a sense, except in that series of cracks and the (dis)course of addiction and logic of violence it speaks to. I mean, in order to account for the *what* that actually happens in *Heroine*, the *how* of its political and pedagogical promise, and the *why* it takes so long to come to term, and to illustrate, while I'm at it, the poetics of deferral that I suggest is key to all these questions, I need, in what follows, to gather up that series of cracks that I read as representing both the space and the practice of writing



itself and the institutional, pedagogical and methodological space, too, where we are when we learn to do so – which is to say that, clearly, I am unable to resist the invitation (to vulgarity?) in what follows to, as Scott herself puts it, carefully, and figuratively "finger the fissures" of her *Heroine's* narrativity (*Prismatic* 101).

What's [she] doing in there?  
- Tom Waits

Tell all the truth but tell it slant  
Success in circuit lies.  
- Emily Dickinson

In the wake of the "dissolution of certain political dreams" (*Spaces* 81) and of the finally failed reconciliation with her "trendy" left lover, Jon – not to mention also a temporary pregnancy (13), a bout of pneumonia, that "illness of the lungs" that "means sadness" (166), and a possible cocaine addiction (Webb 83) – the heroine, in the narrative present, is and has been sunk in a "little" (100) or "a serious depression" (173), and this is affecting her writing: "The continuing sense of relationship failure resembling (her) incapacity to finish a novel" (*Spaces* 88; see also *Heroine* 102, 103). The heroine is having "trouble concentrating" on her "writing" and on herself (*Heroine* 73) because, ostensibly, the focus of her sexual and textual – her sexual (Silverman 141) – pleasure is angled, romantically, or "dare I say it, hysterically" (*Spaces* 90), always elsewhere, "*toujours vers*" as Irigaray noted (in *Spaces* 108), "slightly in your direction, my love" (*Heroine* 60). She goes to the library, for instance, "to start her novel" but spends her time there "trying to locate you my love" (92). "Soon," she says, "I'll write a novel. *But first ...*" (14). She walks "like a careful drunk, looking neither left nor right so as not to confuse my creative radar" (42), "so as not to disturb a new vision in my head of the heroine of my novel" (57), but no matter what she does, her intention to write is incessantly "disturbed" (106), "inhibited" (42) "upset" (118) distracted (107) and so deferred

in different ways. Like an addict does the day when she will finally kick her habit, I will suggest later, the heroine "keeps putting off" her writing (*Heroine* 121). Like the wall representing Marcotte's attempt to avoid responding to the question of difference simply by excluding it, so the heroine's perceived need of a "smoother writing table" (144), her thinking that "in the 80s a story must be all smooth and shiny" is *cracked* and fissured and finally exploded by the knowledge that "there is this terrible violence in me. In any story, it will break the smoothness of the surface" (182). And this, she thinks, is a problem.

In many ways as I described Marcotte's performance above, *Heroine* tells the story in this sense of a "narrator who imagines a character," or body of writing, "so externally coherent that aesthetic distance will control 'inner chaos'" except that, "as she tries to plot this character's trajectory," she "immediately runs into *contradictions*" (Irvine 7; emphasis added). As the heroine herself describes from upon the therapist's couch: "Each time I start, it's as if the memory of the past (the noun, the sentence's beginning) wipes out the present (verb). So I can no longer move forward in the words" (*Heroine* 175). She attempts admittedly to regain some sense of (self)control (20), to "get a fix on my heroine, pull myself together" (60), to get somewhere (34), and "be my own woman" (97), by withdrawing into her otherwise regrettable basement apartment in the Waikiki tourist rooms, where they "supply everything" so that "a person doesn't have to worry. She can focus on her work" (41) – as if work required no worry, no effort, no labor!! So, too, she decides to "run a little bath," to "try to relax ... to be myself, go with my flow" (58), to live for herself (52), to "lie" also *for*, rather than only *to*, herself as

she has for so long (Markotic 50).<sup>98</sup> However, what is supposed to serve her as a cure for distraction – her withdrawal into the tub – soon appears as only another symptom of the same problem, only a further kind of distraction, another *digression* or "displacement of some earlier love ... some earlier trauma" (*Heroine* 52, 89). As Derrida said of the *pharmakon*, and as we saw with Marcotte's erection, "what is supposed to produce the positive and eliminate the negative does nothing but displace and at the same time multiply the effects of the negative, leading the lack that was its cause to proliferate" (Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy" 100). Again, this is initially seen as a problem.

The heroine, therefore, like the grey woman whom she sees passing by her little green window, "in exactly the same place. As if nothing had changed" (*Heroine* 50), seems, until the end of the novel, to have lost control, or "lost track of time" (16). Indeed, she seems to be "locked in time ... Still" (132) in a way that "could" she fears "be the ruination of the novel" (132), that might "fragment the novel form" (*Spaces* 83), for a narrative after all "includes time as one of its constitutive principles" (Benjamin, "Storyteller" 99) and writing, says Anne Carson, is "a way of controlling" it (121).<sup>99</sup> Given such a risk then, it is with a growing sense of urgency that the heroine calls herself out of the tub and yet, and like the (love) junkie that I will describe her as being, and so true to her name – heroin(e), about which we'll say more

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<sup>98</sup> After returning to a relationship about which she had "serious reservations" (*Spaces* 99), the heroine spends a lot of time, Markotic points out, "lying to herself." Now that the reconciliation has permanently failed, she spends the day in the tub "lying for herself" (Markotic 50; emphasis added). The pronominal difference here, as always, is a crucial sign of what (violence) is happening in the novel and in the tub and to what *other* end.

<sup>99</sup> This moment when the heroine fears being locked in time and so recalls the actor "Chibougamou," who "comes out of yet another tavern His pants are wet" (*Heroine* 131-132), cannot but recall CHABOUGAMOU, the local drunk in David Fennario's *Nothing to Lose*, whom the barkeep, Claude, refuses to serve: "No beer for him. He piss himself, then I have to throw him out" (55), gets thrown out (70), and again (81), or exits on his own (86), pays with empty bottles (96), and pisses himself (104). This of course is that kind of question that only Scott herself could answer but, regardless, the continuity serves to highlight the strange, recursive kind of temporality at play I suggest in *Heroine*.

below – each exhortation is met with another excuse, a further occasion to defer: "I should get out. Write this down. *Still ...*" (132; emphasis added); "I should pull the plug, make coffee, and sit at my little table. *Except ...*" (143; emphasis added); "I must get dried, start the novel ... *soon ...*" (148; emphasis added). Still, she does not get out, and neither will she until the very end of the novel, and regardless that she is conscious of the risks she is running, that so long as she stays in the tub, she remains increasingly at risk of becoming *impaired in or deprived of buoyancy and rendered unserviceable from excessive saturation*, which is to say, as she puts it, "waterlogged" ("Waterlogged"; see *Heroine* 143, 148).<sup>100</sup> She knows she risks "drowning in confusion" (*Spaces* 47; cf. Lane-Mercier, "*Écrire-Traduire*" 98), in "despair" (25), and sinking "in sadness" (108), or as her friend Marie puts it: "*Tu vas craquer si tu ne défais pas le nœud. S'il te plait, FORCE yourself to write it. By your own words you may start to live*" (*Heroine* 172; emphasis added). Nevertheless, and incessantly, the heroine remains in her tub, indeed, in her *bathtub state*, and the question is why? Or, to adapt a question from a Tom Waits song, *what, if not nothing, is she doing in there?*

The answer to that question, I argue, of why she stays in the tub so long (and puts off her writing so incessantly), given the ostensible risks, is always already there in the way we put the question in the first place. Or, as Gregory Reid said earlier, to ask the question is already to have answered it (58), which is to say that the same crack ("*tu vas craquer*") that figures for the madness, the breakdown, the risk she runs so long as she continues not writing also, it turns out, figures for the obstacle, the problem (of difference) that has kept her all this

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<sup>100</sup> Or, as suggested by the different definitions of the word "ratatiner," which Suzanne de Lotbiniere-Harwood chooses to translate "waterlogged" (*Héroine* 195), the heroine risks being *shortened, tightened, wrinkled, even exterminated, massacred and demolished*.

time from writing, namely, that she is already cracked.

Oh, my fingers are getting *waterlogged*. I should pull the plug, make coffee, and sit at my little table. Except that *big black crack* in the arborite table really bugs me. Reminding me as it does my little novel has certain *inconsistencies*. Given how the heroine's inner time is *fractured* between light and dark, so she seems to move in circles. Leaning first one way and then the other: the free woman coming up to the city, then the happy lover slowly slowly *disintegrating* into melodrama, finally the free woman again (143-144; emphasis added).

Indeed, every time she tries to imagine the forward looking present, a memory of the past intervenes, and causes the heroine to hesitate, to pause, and so to defer her intention to write. Though she may want to live "every moment in the present" (*Heroine* 94), "moving towards the future" (148) and "over the top of things" (141), she slips recursively and incessantly back "below the line of pain" (173; cf. Irvine 116). In a recent essay, called "*En arrière avec Réjean Ducharme*," Gilles Marcotte comments on one of Mille Milles' favorite phrases, his "*Restons en arrière*," to describe how "*Pour lire Réjean Ducharme, il faut éprouver l'extrême violence, l'extrême souffrance de cet en arrière qui est tout le contraire d'un confort de mémoire et d'appartenance: un naufrage – mais paradoxalement actif, prodigieusement vivant – dans la boue des origines*" (*La Littérature est Inutile* 21). I would argue likewise that in order to understand the full range of what actually happens in *Heroine*, or the politics of that poetic, we have to acknowledge how painful this slipperiness of her being in time (and in the city) is for the heroine, how big a problem it presents for her, and how necessary, I will argue below, is the fact that "She just can't seem to march on the bright hard edge of the future very long without the dark side creeping up on her" (*Heroine* 159), that just as the heroine's "paranoia" pokes through the surface of her "toughness" (85), she says, the past pokes its way into the present and turns it around at virtually every turn of phrase. Indeed, the heroine (feels) she has a problem: she is, as they say, damned (cracked) if she

doesn't but then always already is.

This crack of temporal differences that trips her up, this shifting back and forth from present to past, as a result of which we find the heroine stuck in her tub and unable to move forward is perhaps best illustrated in the first two pages of the "Fluffy White Clouds" chapter, which opens in the present tense on the "mountain top" where "the sunray *hits* a tile floor" in the "public chalet" and the "tourist *awakes* with a start" and "*steps* out into the sparse snowflakes again" (83; emphasis added). However, just as suddenly as the chalet, at that point, "*fills* up with freaks" (83), the narrative shifts from the 3rd person, "he," on the mountain, to the first person, "I," in her bathtub, who loves, in the present tense, "the solitude of white" (84) and, then, no sooner though does that I-voice appear, "Flying high," and looking towards the future, to "Tonight," but the recollection of the heroine's hometown and of her mother threatens to drag her and her narrative back to earth, if not actually six feet below it: "Then appears that country road going by the *gravestones*" back in Lively, and "*Her* cameo in the sky" (84; emphasis added). Symptomatically, the heroine's intent to move forward at this point gets tripped up on – is literally stuttered by – that crack of difference between past and present, here and elsewhere: "Tonight the storm will *do it, do it*" (84; emphasis added) and her response to that stutter, and to the question of difference it articulates, is heard in the imperative to repress that recollective slip into the past altogether, to "focus" rather "on something else ... Shh ..." (84), and in the shift then back from a 1st to a 3rd person narrative, from "I have to be more rational" to "the heroine could be from Brecht. Emphasizing the external the better to *distance* from inner chaos" (84; emphasis added). But, though the heroine reminds herself that "the trick *is* to keep looking towards the future thus cancelling out nostalgia" (84), the content of that repression, the past (tense), returns to the surface of the

narrative present with the inexorable vengeance of an addict's withdrawal pains and, indeed, until the next section break (where the whole recursive back and forth process of repression and return begins again) takes over: "Standing there among the dark oak booths in the Cracow Café *was* just a moment in passing time . . ." (84; emphasis added).<sup>101</sup>

The black crack in her table, then, figures for these kinds of narrative "inconsistencies" that constitute the poetic of deferral I referred to earlier, and for the slippages, stutters, repressions and returns, the internal (temporal) differences that seem to pose such a problem *for*, and indeed (until the end) appear as the sign of a "problem *with*," the heroine (102; emphasis added). Or, as the heroine herself puts it: if she's "*fractured* over time" in this way "with the inner self shining bright and dark like that, from what angle can a person start the story?" (132). How can she pretend to move forward with her fiction if her narrative keeps slipping back in time? Recalling that Benjaminian figure of the historian, his *angel of history* who "though wanting to examine the past, is blown forward by a strong wind while gazing back at the past's growing detritus" (Scott, "Sutured" 63), the heroine seems to feel that as she slips back into the past, into melancholy, which is "death for feminists" (*Spaces* 142), she therefore has failed to create the progressive (120), forward-looking model for women (117) that she had promised to. She seems convinced that, "split between two different sides of myself" and "going in two opposite directions at once" (*Heroine* 119), her "behaving doubly"

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<sup>101</sup> There is of course much more to say about the shifts in time and person that craze the narrative surface of *Heroine*; how, for example, from her bathtub in 1980, the heroine's narration of the year 1974 in the past tense (85), shifts into the present tense of her narrative of that romantic "spring of 1975 . . . 'Tis a beautiful May day" (86), before falling prey again to the pull the past tense (87), heavy like fear and guilt, which remains then in force until the next section break (88), where the cycle/circle starts again. The point, though, is to only go so far as to be able to follow the series of cracks in *Heroine* that figure for the fractures in narrative time and space that the heroine initially fears are a problem, but which will serve me as rightly pedagogical figures.

(*Spaces* 83) or, "(dare I)" say it, hysterically (90), like the "hookers" on the sidewalk (*Heroine* 119), is a problem, an impossibility, or at the very least marginalizing and so grounds she fears for exclusion, and something therefore that she has to resolve before being able, finally, to move forward or go public.<sup>102</sup> As Corey Frost puts it, in conversation with Scott on the subject of her use of the present participle in *My Paris*, "by definition if you're moving backwards and forwards at the same time you're staying in the same place" (in Scott, "Cusps" with Moyes 66).

The heroine, then, is not writing yet, and still, for she feels she has a problem. However, and this is key, her problem is not, as Marcotte too seemed to feel, with difference itself so much as with the way she perceives or responds to its presence and to the questions it poses: "How to create the positive feminist persona when she has internalized that the world is going to hell?" (*Heroine* 91). The heroine's problem is not with her internal differences *per se*, as she initially supposes, but rather with those *paramètres qui régissent*, the way she engages with this question of difference, that "*imaginaire [identitaire] un peu trop centré sur le même*" that Irigaray helped us identify earlier according to which her "double movement" (*Spaces* 82), or "double sided-journey (132), back and forth, which is, literally, *pas un mouvement mais au moins deux* is understood, therefore, as corresponding to no movement at all, *pas de mouvement* (Irigaray 26). The problem the heroine actually has, from which "*elle souffre*," as Harel might say (*Braconnages* 21), is her identitary habit of thinking that whatever is not

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<sup>102</sup> The heroine, of course, is not alone in this estimation of a 'problem', where these sorts of "discontinuity, disjunction, and contradiction," says Moyes in her reading of the relationship between Scott and Gertrude Stein, "tend not to be foregrounded in women's literary history, perhaps because they are taken to be the mechanisms by which women's writing has been, or will continue to be, excluded from prevailing accounts" (Moyes, "Discontinuity" 171), which is to say, as a problem.



singular is not at all, therefore, or not yet; that logic of identity, I argue, that we are all addicted to, says Benjamin in his "Surrealism" essay, "that most terrible drug" : "ourselves" (191). Indeed, the problem with the heroine, and the reason she is found "wallowing in a destructive inability to choose" (*Spaces* 83), for instance, between her "feminism and the physiological residue of experience (battering, childbearing, love, nuclear waste ... which also have their truths)" (*Spaces* 134), or between "her love for the male" and "the free woman, possibly lesbian" (*Spaces* 83), is that she seems to feel, until the end, that the "work of the novel is to choose" (*Spaces* 83) only one or the other, which of course she cannot. And that is the Aristotelian *knot* of difference (*Heroine* 48, *Spaces* 126, 128), that sets the quest(ion) of the plot in motion so to speak, and which she will, only in the end, at the *dénouement* (the *un-knot-ing*), achieve some "kind of resolution" ("On the Edge" 16) or loosening of those ties that otherwise bind her and paralyze: the idea, for example, that "in the 80s a story must be all smooth and shiny" (182), as I noted a moment ago, that she could choose, only one or the other, "to write or not to write ... exist or not to exist" (*Spaces* 121), to "bury or confront" (22). It is that idea that she will have to and then does in the end unlearn (Johnson, "Teaching" 181) and work through.

Creation seemed a mighty crack --  
To make me visible  
- Emily Dickinson, "To My Quick Ear"

Another way to put the problem that the heroine has and, simultaneously, point at the space of possibility that opens up therein – the crack, so to speak, that she's hooked on, that risks cracking and/or has already cracked her up – is to note how she does not "trust [her] 'feminist consciousness' enough to forget it" (104, and 63), that her "women's culture has come of age enough" (118) to allow her to be "honest" (*Spaces* 117), "to follow in [her] fiction the

darker trails of being" (117), those "unfeminist" forms of passivity, including hysteria and melancholy (116) which, as Elaine Showalter argued, may in fact have functioned as "a mode of protest" (147), or a form of "proto-feminism" or early means of "calling into question [the same kinds of] constraining sexual identities" (160) that Florence Nightingale, too, raged against the violence of (*Cassandra*). Indeed, that "disease" of "despair" that "breeds" passivity (Guilbert and Gubar 52-53), which from one perspective is read, for obvious reasons, as illness, may very well serve (and has served) as a kind "survival mechanism" (Anzaldúa 68). Nightingale, for instance, remained an "invalid" and "bedridden" well into her sixties, while at the same time therefore free to "produce over two books, pamphlets, and reports, as well as over twelve thousand letters, most related in one way or another to her work" (Stark 17); "freed" in this sense from the "torture" of the "life of an idle woman" (7, 6) and the "presence of her family" (17) by what George Pickering called a "psychoneurosis with a purpose" or a "protective illness" (in Stark 17). Thus, says the heroine, and recalling my reading of Marcotte once again, that "almost too-proper image of the 'strong woman' of a certain kind of feminist fiction" (*Heroine* 118), "that positive image of the indomitably courageous feminist marching down a straight road towards the sun feels like a block [...] a wall of meaning" (*Spaces* 128; emphasis added) and an "obstacle" which, if Fanon was right to remark, will only increase "*la tendance au mouvement*" (19), has first of all, at this point in the story, paralyzed her. That increase in freedom of movement, however, is the possibility inherent in the problem the heroine is afloat in at the outset.

I mean, and getting back now to the course of cracks I've been collecting, I argue that if the heroine suffers until the end from the habit of such "too rigid attitudes" (*Spaces* 62), what Bouchard and Taylor call a "*mouvement de braquage identitaire*" (*Fonder* 17), or from the

kinds of "entrenched habits and patterns" and forms of "rigidity" that are, says Anzaldua, "the enemy within" and even "death" no less (Anzaldua, 101, 106), then the solution, in turn, to her problem and the *resolution* (possibility) that she, along with her narrative comes to (open up to) in the end, resides in her remaining open, finally, and allowing herself, as Davey usefully puts it, a little "more latitude" ("Totally" 68), in placing herself (in writing) not in either only one position or the other but in "between certain expectations of [her] feminist community and [her] desire to be excessive" (*Spaces* 129), neither simply over or below her so called line of pain (*Heroine* 173), but in the "affective 'in-between'" (Norton 29), through and "across which the writing subject in the feminine is constantly in the process of becoming" and unbecoming (Scott, "Vers-ions" 160), both brought into focus and diffused (Moyes, "Affective" 10). And if, in turn, the solution is not in choosing, finally, but in following rather "the thread of her obsession, wherever it goes" (*Spaces* 83), embarking upon "the poetic adventure, i.e. living the contradiction" as Quebec literature itself, we've seen, does so well (*Heroine* 121), choosing to celebrate that undecidability, to immerse herself "into women's tragic potential" (117), to "finger the fissures of subjectivity, rent by intervening voices," as I myself am attempting to do here, until the single fissured part of her writing subject "metonymizes" into the whole "music" or "gravity" of subjectivity ("Sutured" 101) – which is, so to speak, what the heroine has been doing all along in her bathtub state, over and over again and in anticipation of her great coming, stepping out – then it is no surprise, as Webb notes, that the writing subject this practice of writing is at pains to create is born "at spring *crack* up" (Webb 83; emphasis added), through the "sound like a huge *crack* (spring breakup on the Castor River)" (*Heroine* 139; emphasis added). Indeed, it is through a *crack* of aural and seasonal differences that the heroine "steps," in the end, out of the tub and back into the city,

into public space and into a writing life that cannot, therefore, be only either/or anything, but can and must now be both "grandiose and humble, miserable and angry, not to mention any other contradiction, without shame ..." (*Spaces* 124); where she will be able "to face her own particular madness, her own particular pain. To *pass through it* in words. To 'accept' her hysteria as not only negative; (but) as an adventure. And *pass through it*" (*Spaces* 101; emphasis added).

As I described at some length in chapter one, therefore, that metaphor in general has that peculiar and productive ability to be legible in many different, even opposite directions, so does this single recurrent figure gain in currency enough to allow me to map the narrative of this "breech birth" (Anzaldua 71) of a practice of writing (and learning to read) and of a new writing (learning) subject through from crisis to climax and conclusion. Illustrative of what I have meant by the poetics of deferral and digression that govern Scott's prose here, I suggest that this series of cracks that serve to trace the arc of the narrative as a whole is gathered up from amidst only the series of "Ending" chapters in the novel's third and final section (*Heroine* 172, 143, 139). These cracks, then, of difference that I collect here "in their contradictions seem," says Scott from that open space she's created for her writing subject beyond the bathtub state we find her in at the outset, "to point boisterously to movement towards some other meaning" (*Spaces* 81), in many ways towards a sense of what the heroine has been doing in the tub for so long, why she has deferred her writing practice such a long time, and what we can derive therefrom about how to read and learn to. The metaphors here serve me as my way of (narrating) learning to know how to read.

We talk, for example, about the crack of doom, of a whip, of a gun-shot (Anzaldua 83), or of canon-fire, but also of the crack of a new day dawning, a good joke or a smile. Cracking

the code to the human genome, or to some ancient dead language, can be a moment of great triumph and discovery – as is that moment when you feel you’ve “cracked” as Gail puts it, “the complex equation” that the “work” is said to be (Scott, “Conversationalist”) – but if the safe or security code is mine that’s just been cracked, I likely have a problem. As we will see again below, if crack is a very powerful and addictive form of cocaine, a kind of poison, it is also for the addict, like the *pharmakon* that Derrida describes writing as, the only kind of medicine able to cure the pain of his “sickness” (Burroughs, *Junky* 56). Getting back to the novel itself, that “crack in the door” through which the husband watches his wife “make love” with the heroine’s boyfriend can figure either as the source of sudden riches – “he gave me 50 bucks for my trouble. We’re rich, let’s have dinner” – or as the source of the “hurt” of her sense of betrayal (*Heroine* 46). Similarly, it is through the crack in the “gold brocade curtains” (155), in the woman’s shelter where the heroine is working the overnight shift amidst fears of mafia violence, that the moonrise seeps in cold like fear, and it is through the same crack in the same “curtains” that the dawn of a new hope blushes the next morning when her friend shows up and with her the thought of “Easter” (157) which, in the economy of the novel, aside from the more conventional reference to rebirth and so salvation, signifies a place that is “equally for girls” (151).

Thus, the same crack of difference can figure, simultaneously, for the risk that the heroine runs so long as she continues not writing (172), for the obstacle that ostensibly keeps her from writing this whole time (143), and for the very shape, too, of those *spaces like stairs* of spiralling, moving differences that Scott’s prose, in the end, opens up and leaves open, makes legible and habitable as a place of both pleasure and labor, which is to say, of learning (139); and the question, as Blodgett of course put it, is what these convergences signify

(*Configuration 23*)? Borrowing in turn from Anzaldua again, I argue below that if the same figure stands at once for the risk (of going crazy, cracking) that "compels" her to write, and then for the risk (of exposing her cracks, so to speak, and so of breaking the novel form) that "blocks" her writing too (Anzaldua 95), then the same crack of such differences figures for the very condition of both the possibility and the impossibility of new forms of writing and subjectivity (and of reading too in turn) which it is the business of this chapter to account for and articulate as pedagogy.

## Turn 2: A Crack in the Readings of Scott's Readers

We are sealed vessels afloat on what it is convenient to call reality;  
and at some moments, the sealing matter cracks; in floods reality;  
that is, these scenes ... my natural way of marking the past  
- Virginia Woolf, "Sketch of the Past" (122)

I see the crack growing on the rock.  
I see the fine frenzy building.  
I see the heat of anger or rebellion or hope split open that rock,  
releasing la Coatlicue.

And someone in me takes matters into our own hands.  
- Gloria Anzaldua *Borderlands/La Frontera* (73)

It is not for no reason, therefore, that *Heroine's* critics have consistently tended to chose from among the same family of fragile figures of difference as those cracks and fissures in the course of their accounting for the literary form, cultural moment, and theoretical context of the "WORK" of Scott's experimental practice of writing (Scott, "Mrs. Beckett" 89). Like Webb, Nicole Markotic describes how it is "through the *cracks* of plot" that the "narrator" steps in the end "to reclaim her sense of language as poetry, to give herself permission to follow wherever the poetics of narration meander" (44; emphasis added throughout), and through the "*clivages linguistiques et culturelles tant internes [...] que contextuelles*," adds

Lane-Mercier, where "*les contradictions ne sont plus mutuellement-exclusives*" ("Écrire-Traduire" 102, 103; emphasis added), through the "*holes and patches*," the "*gaps and fissures of language*" (Blumberg 61), the "*linguistic fissure*" and "*fissures of female discontinuity*" (Kadar 156, 158) that "the desire for a subject emerges" (Godard, "Writing from the Border" 139). As Gail herself notes of Kathy Acker's labour of rejecting both the phallogocentrism of realism's readers and, at the same time, the reduction of the issue of writing to questions of identity – a project that Scott admires and shares – whereby "her subjects ... are pure dialectical progressions, whose painful contradictions and sutures are worn, for everyone to see, right in the middle of their utterances" ("Sutured" 69), these all are indeed the very aptest of figures.

It is surprising to me, therefore, that these same critics do not then take their own literary critical figures back to the proverbial text they are writing about, and to the similar series of figures found there, the cracks that I've just been collecting. Instead, they tend, consistently, to defer to that image of those "stairs" that Scott's book of essays provides to describe the shape and character of those "spaces" opened up by her practice of writing *Heroine*. Surprising, then, but likewise understandable, and just as apt that they should do so, considering the literally very *authoritative* source of this other image, as Scott puts it, for how her "prose writing becomes part of a *spiral like movement*, linked in space and time to the work of other women in Québec and elsewhere" (*Spaces* 40; emphasis added). Markotic's discussion of "Scott's process of narrative construction" is exemplary in the way she says it speaks of her "technique of writing a *spiral*" (Markotic 48), or of the device of the "lens shift" (39) that "allows the narrative to *spiral* around, questing its own (pleasure) centre and questioning the location of the subject" (Markotic 39); a "narrative spiral," in turn, that "allows

particular scenes to accumulate, rather than point directly" (40; emphasis added). Such deference makes sense, too, given the reference of that choice of figures to Montreal's own iconic spiral staircases and to the fact that Scott was a founding co-editor of the cultural magazine, *Spirale* (Hill 51),<sup>103</sup> and it provides a further grounds for bringing Scott's work into a conversation with Walter Benjamin, who agreed with Hermann Lotze that "the course of history takes the form of *spirals*" rather than "onwards and upwards" lines of progress (*Arcades* N13,2; emphasis added). The most compelling reason, though, for this deference to the spiral, in a comparative Canadian context anyway, is the role it has played in discussions about the relationship between the (cultural texts of the) two 'founding' nations in Canada. Indeed, Blodgett (*Configuration* 17) and Stratford ("A Search for Emblems" 133) have described the history of the use, in the corpus of Canadian thematic criticism, of this figure of the double spiral staircase at the Château de Chambord, in France, as well as its relative improvements on and ongoing habit of remaining still overly "metaphorical" in its tendencies (Blodgett, *Configuration* 14).

For all these reasons, therefore, it is simultaneously surprising and understandable this habit of failing, or of choosing simply not to connect the cracks that serve us as means of describing the shape of her prose, etc., and the cracks produced by and gathered up in the prose itself. Most importantly though, from my perspective, it is felicitous and fortunate too (if also admittedly vulgar, somewhat) to think that in this gap left agape in the extent body of critical writing about *Heroine*, I find a place into and through which to insert myself humbly

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<sup>103</sup> There is surely no better testament to the conjunction of Montreal's iconic architecture and this collective reading of Scott's work than Chris Ewart's "Outside Staircases (One to Four)" series of poem written for the recent *Open Letter* issue dedicated to Scott.



and so join in on the conversation about writing and reading and learning to learn from Scott. Fortunate and yet risky, still. I mean, if it may seem, as Catherine Leclerc put it, somewhat *self-serving* to take the gaps left agape in the work of another as only there for me to fill,<sup>104</sup> the greater risk by far resides in the possibility of my reproducing, as Marcotte did too, we saw, the very kinds of *hasty thematism* that tends to obscure, as Blodgett put it, "the metonymies of national literatures" behind "the metaphor of universal forms" (*Configuration* 14) and confound, what Philip Stratford calls, "the third view of a complex reality, the comparative view," namely, mine own, with "the reality itself" of Scott's work and its significance (137). Such a risk may well have left (and for a time did leave) me, critically speaking, exactly where we find the heroine at the outset of her own narrative, "ineffably despondent" (Blodgett, *Configuration* 18) and stuck so to speak in a bog or bathtub or "Slough of Despond" (Bunyan 46). I argue, though, that the risk remains worth taking, that it need not be "fatal" (Blodgett, *Configuration* 14), finally, for this collection of cracks I've collected here and read as figuring for both that third, comparative view and for the work itself are rather more metonymical than metaphorical, rather figures of difference than of identity, which is to say, again, akin to Benjamin's figure, in his essay on translation, of those two pieces of a broken vase which, for all that they fit perfectly together in one respect, remain radically and jaggedly different otherwise (78), or to those two labial lips that Luce Irigaray describes, "qui déjà deux – mais non divisibles en un(e)s – qui s'affectent" (Irigaray, *Ce Sexe* 24). The risk is real, in this sense,

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<sup>104</sup> Leclerc, referring to her insistence on using the term *québécois* in discussions of English language writing in Quebec, rather than return to the Canadian reference that is all the more conventional and uncontroversial, or to Montreal as is much more easily admissible, explains that this insistence is, in part, self-serving in how it circumscribes a space in which she can install her young career, where she would otherwise have to fight for every inch of space already populated by giants in the field, as it is conventionally defined ("Détournements" 77).

but worth it all the more.

Indeed, it will have been worth the while if, as Scott has learned much, she says, from "*Beautiful Losers, le beau roman de Cohen*," about how to "*mettre [son] texte à l'écoute de l'autre langue, de ses rythmes, de ses sons*" ("Mon Montréal" 100 ; emphasis added), I can, in what follows, learn from the "*dissensualité volontairement entretenue*" (Lane-Mercier, "Dislocations" 21) in the cracks I have here been collecting, about the sort of "writing strategies," and "reading strategies" too that are needed, Scott argues, to keep "apace with our era" ("Mrs. Beckett" 92); those "*stratégies de lecture*" (Harel, "Loyautés" 44) and that "*pensée plus radicale*" that they represent, "*si essentielle à la survie*" (Lane-Mercier, "Dislocations" 27; emphasis added). It will have been worth it if, specifically, from Scott's recognition that "the labour intensity of the work, trying to do what poets are doing in a way and trying to do some of what novelists are doing takes *twice as much time*" (*Prismatic* 95 ; emphasis added), that "*le travail est lent*" ("Mon Montréal" 100 ; emphasis added), I can learn to go "slowly," as Nietzsche recommended (1),<sup>105</sup> and with "diplomatic caution," says Blodgett likewise (*Configuration* 6), as I endeavour to read those cracks collected in *Heroine* and elsewhere as figures first for the temporality and space both of a particular body of writing and for the process of learning therefrom to read and write, and then figures too for the violence that is the very condition of the (im)possibility of writing, reading, and learning at all.

Therefore, not wanting to be over hasty, I turn now to the similar series of cracks in

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<sup>105</sup> In the preface to his *Daybreak*, Nietzsche describes himself and his book as "*tout deux des amis du lento*" (18), *des êtres* "souterrain", *de ceux qui forent, qui sapent, qui minent*" (13). He argues, as we've seen, that "*au sein d'un âge de travail, autrement dit : de hâte, de précipitation indécente et suante qui veut tout de suite 'en avoir fini' avec tout,*" it is today "*plus nécessaire que jamais,*" that we learn to "*bien lire, c'est à dire lentement, profondément, avec des arrière-pensées, avec des portes ouverte, avec des doigts et des yeux subtils*" (18).

Anne Dandurand's *Un Cœur qui craque*, before then returning to my reading of *Heroine* finally, however, by way of parallel readings of novels by Marie Gagnon and Tess Fragoulis too, as so many narratives of addiction. As I will describe at length below, the cracks I've collected so far invite a reading of the fictions themselves as providing a vocabulary by means of which to answer that theoretical question of what we have to learn from Scott's fiction about the temporality and the violence finally of writing and of reading (and learning to read). I mean, I read Scott in this way comparatively and rhetorically alongside Dandurand and Gagnon in order to better and more slowly articulate the sudden and recursive temporalities that will be key to understanding the continuities and remaining differences between, what Teresa DeLauretis would describe as, *the writing of violence* in these and so many other contemporary narratives and settings, on the one hand, and the violence in turn of the process of writing, reading, and learning, on the other.

## **Anne Dandurand's *Un Cœur qui Craque***

They are saved through the exhibition of the fissure within them.  
- Walter Benjamin, *Arcades Project* (N9,4)

Introducing the cracks and fissures through which the muted, clandestine, and thus the  
feminine can speak  
- Friedman and Fuchs, *Breaking the Sequence* (12)

*Un Cœur qui craque*, then, tells the story of a woman who, like Scott's heroine, writes her way out of the state of withdrawal in which we find her at the outset. Like Scott's *Heroine*, Dandurand's first novel is a kind of life writing or *journal intime* though, because it is also much more than just a diary, she playfully calls it "un journal imaginaire." It is a kind of *kunstlerroman*, a story of the (re)birth, course, and ultimately (open) end of a practice of writing that is, like *Heroine*, both "blocked" and "compelled" (Anzaldúa 95) by the forms of

difference and acts of violence that its heroine encounters and which here, too, a network of cracks is made to figure for, a series of cracks, indeed, that serve as so many ways into the novel and as means by which to map the movements of the narrative from conception to term, from the initial crisis to the (kind of) resolution that it opens out onto in the end, much as Scott's does ("On the Edge" 16).

Thus, and just as in *Heroine*, where a crack (in the table) interrupts and defers the practice of writing being promised there, so the (journal) writing practice of Dandurand's *intimiste* is interrupted – in fact, it is brought to term – by what she calls "*une faille géologique de première grandeur*" (115), that "*craque maximale*," she says (115), that has opened up in the middle of the landscape of her life-narrative, "*dans le petit terrain de ma vie*" (115), swallowed up the passage of time there, and kept her from writing even a single word these last six years: "*vous n'avez que tourné une page, et, ô sortilège de la littérature, six ans se sont maintenant écoulés ... bref, je n'ai pas eu une demi-minute pour vous*," us, her ostensible readers (115). She hasn't been writing; hasn't had time to since her decision, six years ago, to open up both her house and her heart (121) to the province's foster-care program. Indeed, just one page ago (113-114), she was being interviewed by a social worker to that end, and soon thereafter six children, we are now being told, six little girls were delivered successively into the refuge of her care: an "*abîme*" (115), she calls them collectively, or abyss, a great tear torn into the time-scape of her (life) narrative by the (patriarchal) violence that these children have at once been subject to, marked by, and so made effectively to figure for.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> "*L'abîme, enfin le premier de la série, ce fut Caroline . . . une enfant de onze ans, incestuée depuis l'âge de sept ans par son père, son oncle, et son frère, c'est un abîme on ne peut plus instantané . . . [qui] dormait sur le dos, les bras sur les yeux, les pieds plantés très droits sur le matelas, les genoux pliés et largement écartés . . .*" (Dandurand 115-116). Then, there was "*Lucie, doline de dix ans*" (from the Slavic *dole*, meaning un *creux*, a

Indeed, violence does not only blur, as we've seen, distinctions of grammatical number and person. The crack of violence breaks time into before and after pieces and turns the bodies it touches (here a group of foster daughters) into signs of its *matter*ing passage, as Judith Butler might say (*Bodies* 9). Gail Mason's *Spectacles of Violence*, again is a useful resource in its negotiation of what is not, in fact, an irreducible difference between feminist and Foucauldian "repressive" and "productive" hypotheses. She explains that, of course, the touch and even just the threat of violence contained in as little as a hostile stare is 'repressive' in the sense that it "restricts everyday life," constraining our movements, therefore, and "limiting pleasures and freedoms" (Mason 121) by compelling the bodies it touches in one way or another to police their own behaviour in the hope of defending against its explosion or return (Munt 115). I would argue, in this sense, that the violence suffered and embodied by her eventual foster daughters interrupts and silences our intimiste's practice of writing.

Violence, though, is also "productive," Mason argues, following Foucault. Indeed, it is itself a kind of writing. Violence "matters," in that active sense theorized by Judith Butler (*Bodies*), and since recalled *entre autres* by Margaret Webb in her reading of *Heroine* (80). "Undergirded," Mason explains, "by hierarchical constructions of difference" (121), violence marks the bodies it touches "with undesirable" but no less, for that matter, legible "statements about their vulnerability to violence," their place in and part of that hierarchy. In part (but not

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depression), " . . . sa mère l'avait abandonnée, et, en cinq ans, Lucie en était à son dix-septième foyer d'accueil . . ." (116). Then, Odile, "un gouffre insoupçonné" comme "un coup de pistolet," " . . . son père l'avait battue jusqu'à ce qu'elle s'évanouisse; puis, la croyant morte probablement, il avait étranglé sa mère avant de se tirer une balle dans la tête . . ." (118-119); Josépha and Jésula, "jumelles haïtiennes de l'orphelinat Notre-Dame-du-Perpétuel-Secours" adoptés par "un cardiologue et un neurologue" québécois qui refusa de les accueillir par ce qu'ils "boitaient" (124-125); and, finally "la vraie solifluxion" (from the Latin *solum*, meaning the ground, *sol*, and *fluere*, meaning *couler*, suggesting flux, and slippage and instability), "ce fut Annie, neuf ans. Un fléau," like both a plague or a scourge and a flail, a medieval instrument of torture, a weapon, as well as a wooden stick designed to beat and so to separate the grain from the chaff of wheat (126).

exclusively) by virtue of how it always comes, as if all of a sudden, always-already too quickly and too soon to be properly and directly assimilated, let alone defended against, and because it therefore remains, as the American Psychiatric Institute puts it, "outside the range of usual human experience" – or, as Freud puts it, a "foreign" dominating "body," "introjected" whole and undigested (in Marden 135) – violence marks bodies with "messages that infiltrate (and can dominate) the processes of subjectification through which we come to understand who we are" (Mason 124) or, in this case, understand who our intimiste's foster-daughters are. Violence is an act of inscription, a kind of writing on the body about how likely that body is to being subject to, or the perpetrator of more violence and, therefore, absent some process or other of re-inscription or re-writing (or erasure), such a body remains traumatized and "possessed" by (Marden 135), stuck or trapped in, and subject to the determinations that violence makes and marks, or inscribes and enforces upon it.

It is no accident, therefore, that the arc of Dandurand's narrative recalls that of the heroine stuck and unable to write, at the outset, in the a-temporality of her bathtub state. Indeed, our intimiste's foster-daughters are themselves, in this sense, the crack of violence that silences her practice of writing. The violence that her foster-daughters have been subjected to, and subjected by, that they have internalized and been marked by in these ways, has *literally* cracked, overwritten, written out, and silenced, not only their own erstwhile childhood (in the best sense of that word), but the intimiste's otherwise solitary practice of journal writing, too. Nevertheless, while that violence that is the expression of a too rigid and imposing hierarchy of (gender and sexual) differences marks her foster-daughters and then interrupts the intimiste's practice of writing, that practice of writing, in turn, and by the same token, I argue – as if "du tac au tac" (Bergson 83), or "par un juste retour des choses" (Fanon 51-52) – tells

the story of a practice of over-writing also, of un- or re- writing, and writing otherwise, the world of possibilities that is open both to herself and to her eventual foster-children. I mean, if Dandurand's *Journal* tells the story of a practice of writing interrupted by a crack of violence, it tells too the story of a practice of un- or re-writing that is itself, I will argue, a violent cracking of sorts, and necessarily so.

For instance, in anticipation of a first night of lovemaking with Francois P., the man who later will share in the actual adoption of her foster-daughters, our intimiste recalls warning her daughters, not about the nature of sexual relations – for "*Caroline les avait déjà renseignées*" (123) – but of her likely vocalization of its pleasures, "*le fait qu'au moment de plaisir, les femmes, parfois les hommes, en tout cas moi, je pouvais criailler, mugir, gronder, m'époumoner sinon tempêter tout à fait*" (123). She felt compelled, given especially Caroline's experience of sexual abuse, to warn them that such vocalizing should not be mistaken or mis-read as a sign of pain or a cry for help, and that sex is not the same as incest and rape, but a pleasure rather (one hopes). It is in this sense, I want to argue, that the career as a whole of our intimiste's foster-caring can be read as a course and practice of re-signification, of re- or un- or over- writing of what sexuality, for example, or family might mean. Indeed, *Un Coeur qui craque* tells the story of a practice of writing that is also violent in its long and ongoing process of unwriting and rewriting what Michael White and David Epston call the "dominant" and "problem-saturated narratives" that violence, in different ways, has imposed (*Narrative Means*).

Annie, for another example, arrived into the diarist's foster-care like a landslide and a plague or scourge (un fléau), "*vouée à la révolte. Et à la destruction*" we are told (126). Marked by the experience of some form of violence or other, she appears as destructively

violent in turn to her environment (and so to herself). We are not told what exactly happened to her but, given what we know of the other children's experience, and given that we are told about how Annie wanted to "*éprouver notre capacité à l'aimer*" (126), I believe we can legitimately imagine any number of stories likely to explain how she has come to be in this sense marked, in even her own eyes, as unloved and, indeed, unlovable. In that sense, and for whatever reason, Annie clearly cannot believe in, as presumably she has never experienced, a home where loving is the rule and love does not just hurt. Indeed, so incessant and indiscriminate has her testing the limits of this new promise of security and affection provided for her by our intimiste's foster-care – her searching in a sense for that all too inevitably forthcoming moment of truth, that is, of betrayal – that drastic measures have had to be taken. Having reduced her foster-family home to ruins, "*physiquement et moralement*," François P. proposes to take Annie and her foster-sisters out on a camping trip into the Boreal forests of Quebec for a week, equipped with only a survival knife, some matches and a compass; the theory being that, thus, faced with "*des conditions de survivance problématiques*," the diarist explains, "*le fléau*," Annie, "*consentira peut-être à collaborer. Pour ne pas crever*" (127). Having learned that family can only mean pain and betrayal, Annie is invited to experience the possibility that it might mean otherwise, namely, that her new family might represent instead a structure of mutual support; indeed, a sort of survival strategy in the face of pain and threat. Thus, family here, or sex, like the cracks I read in *Heroïne*, and like metaphors generally, as I described in chapter one, can be read in many different directions.

Simultaneously, and not insignificantly, our diarist is allowed to stay at home alone, rather than join the excursion; "*Motif: malaise existentiel bien antérieur au fléau*" (127). Doing so, in fact, provides her the opportunity again to write, as she hasn't ostensibly in six



years, and so to catch us up on all of what has been happening in the interim. The fact that this account *entre autres* of the camping trip takes place in what is effectively our intimiste's last journal entry, after which she will again stop, and permanently, suggests that the end (term) of her writing practice, which coincides with the welcome, and the new possibilities she offers those who have been marked (silenced?) by acts of violence, can be read, simultaneously, as its end (purpose). It suggests that the point after all of her practice of writing is to exhaust itself, but exhaust itself only as it opens (itself) up into, or inspires simultaneously a new (writing) project, as *Heroine* does too, in the end, and that both projects in this sense are designed to unwrite and rewrite the repressive and productive effects of different forms of violence.

The possibility of reading her foster-caring, in this sense, allegorically, as a practice of un/re-writing is confirmed, moreover, by the slippery, ambiguous nature of her references to her writing itself, and in this final section especially. She asks herself, for example, about how, though she loves now, and is loved in returned, not only by her foster-daughters, but also by François-P., still, she feels a certain "*creux au cœur*," a "*vide qui blesse*" (124); a hole moreover that cannot help but recall the (w)hole that Scott's heroine keeps asking her Mama about, and it identifies, I will argue presently, the practice of writing with the logic of addiction. Significantly, she attributes this "*endolorissement*" (126) to the fact that she has not, these last six years, been writing. It is painful to her, she seems to say, not to write because "*Il n'y a qu'ici, entre les lignes, avec les mots, avec vous, que moi je survis. Que je vis. Que je survis. Que je vis. Oui. C'est ça. Oui. L'écriture comme geste ultime de l'amour. Celui dont je me privais. Mais plus jamais. Oui*" (127). Yes, the intimiste seems to say, *writing is the ultimate act of love*, rather than *No, I will not again deprive myself of the relief of writing*, as

readers trained in the conventions of idiomatic speech may well have been right to expect her to say. While the intimiste promises, then, to go on writing lest the pain associated with not writing returns, the fact that this is the very last of her journal entries suggests that the practice of writing in question is not limited only to the literal act of putting words on a blank page in a journal but includes, also, other such figurative acts of love as her foster-caring. Dandurand here, and cleverly, seems to want to have it both ways, such that when simply living is so easily confused with barely surviving, then writing, the ultimate act of love, need not be limited to happening only on the page, but is given to happen also *between the* proverbial *lines*, just as for Scott's heroine "theory" happens "in the spaces between my fictional output" (*Spaces* 66). Indeed, I suggest, there is an interesting continuity at work here in the blurring of difference between literal and figurative acts of writing (as I've already suggested), and the blurring of the difference between imaginative and historical spaces in time such that, on the one hand, while the diarist describes not having written for six years, since the arrival of her foster-daughters, on the other hand, there is that inscription on the last page of the narrative itself (common to all books published at VLB editions) defining the place and time of its writing, namely, "Montréal, 8 janvier 1988 – 1<sup>er</sup> février 1990" (128), which is to say, over a period of only 2, not 6 years. The question remains, then, if there is a parallel between literal and figurative, between historical and literary acts of writing – between her journal writing and foster-caring – where then does the line blur between the practice of writing being born here and the violence to which and by which, I suggest, it responds? What is the relationship between the violence, figuratively speaking, that interrupts her practice of writing and the violence that the writing itself, however figuratively, embodies and employs to interrupt the paralyzing and deadening effects of the gendered and economic violence that is everywhere on

display in both Dandurand's and Scott's first *kunstlerroman*?

These connections, I suggest still, have everything to do with time. Our intimiste stopped writing, she explains, the moment she "jumped" into that metaphorical abyss of pain and trauma, into the crack of violence that her foster-children are made here to figure for: "*J'ai sauté dans l'abîme ... je marnais dans une tranchée. Caroline la tranchée*" (116; emphasis added). She stops writing, that is, the moment she decided (91) to *dive*, she says, back into the *real* – however awful and violent it may be<sup>107</sup> – rather than continue, as she had, withdrawing from it: "*Bonjour le réel, je te crains mais je plonge*" (82; see also 14, 74).<sup>108</sup> Indeed, instead of continuing to write in her journal, our diarist since has been writing in a different sense, namely, fighting a kind of trench war against the debilitating effects of the sexual and other kinds of abuse suffered by her foster-daughters. *Marner* is the word she uses to describe that labour, which in popular speech means to work hard but, literally, means to *amender un sol en y incorporant de la marne, une roche sédimentaire argileuse très riche en calcaire* ("marner," "marne"), a kind of shale, or *soil consisting of clay and lime, that can serve as a valuable fertilizer* ("marl<sup>1</sup>"). To *marner*, then, in this trench-war of time that has swallowed up her practice of writing means to labour to fix or repair, or prepare, as in to fertilize, the ground of her foster-daughters' psyches by adding the kind of love and sense of security – the

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<sup>107</sup> As I've already shown in *Heroine*, the 'real' in Dandurand's narrative is, to borrow Scott's word, "splayed" (*Spaces* 96) with the horror of violence. Thus, throughout the course of the narrative a great number of such geo-political and natural explosions are cited, including that at *Tchernobyl* (*Coeur* 72), Burundi (77), St. Basile le Grand (78), Biafra (83), pollution (87), poverty (89), Armenia (98), Palestinian and South African apartheid (111), etc, etc.

<sup>108</sup> Indeed, there are a number of occasions throughout the latter half of the narrative when the diarist experiments with that return to the real, to "*tenter l'impossible . . . vivre dans l'instant*" (78), "*m'inventer une nouvelle manière d'exister*" (79), each of which corresponds with a pause in her practice of writing; as if by writing she were training herself to face the reality she has withdrawn from (cf. also 82), as if "courage" like any other muscle in the body needs to be strengthened (90), and that the purpose of writing were always, in the end, to stop.

metaphorical *marl* – that has been taken, by force, from them and which they need in order to build, or in this case rebuild, a viable sense of self, indeed, a sense of themselves as other than simply the playthings of some dominant and sexually violent male. By extension, to *marner* (here meaning also to write) could mean to fix, as in to repair, or *tie* (from the Dutch, *merren*), meaning to *fasten* with *marline* and so to *secure* the fragments of her daughters' fissured hearts ("marl<sup>2</sup>"). If, as British child psychoanalyst Adam Phillips describes, the "dismaying repetitions" that are characteristic of traumatized subjects, the "unconscious limiting or coercion of the repertoire of life stories [that] create the illusion of time having stopped," on the one hand, and, on the other, if the "psychoanalytic cure," in turn, "does nothing less than promise time ... [and] offers the subject the option of accepting the contingencies of living in time over the pleasure and pain that attend the attempt to stop it" (in Marden 134), then the diarist's welcome of her (pseudo)-daughters, and the consequent interruption of her practice of writing, which is to say the *marnage* that she dives into the labour of, instead of writing, represents an attempt, in a sense, to provide her daughters the space in time in which, simply, to be children of which they had been dispossessed, "*pauvre enfant sans enfance*" (Dandurand 116). Time, again, being one of story's constitutive principles (Benjamin, "Storyteller" 99), the fixing or re-fastening – *marnage* – that her foster-caring does is, like writing, a "gift" in that sense of "time," to borrow Marianne Wolf's compelling if not necessarily original definition of the value of literacy (141). It is a gift of time, however, that takes time and effort to secure.

I keep insisting here on the effects of, and the kind of work – the marling – that she has been doing with her foster-daughters *instead* of writing, because the novel, I am arguing, constructs a kind of symmetry between, on the one hand, the space she jumps into and the work she does there *instead* of writing and, on the other, the space she inhabits and the work

she does *when* she writes, to which I turn now. Or, to put it another way (and getting back to the figures that brought us to this detour away from Scott's *Heroine*), if our intimiste's practice of writing is interrupted *by* a crack, it is figured also *as*, and indeed as *born of*, a crack (of violence). Her writing may well be a response to, and an un-writing of the effects of the explosion of gun and sexual violence, but we have, simultaneously, to acknowledge and articulate the extent to which writing itself here is characterized and shaped by the logic and affect of that violence too.

Recalling the primary sense of *marner*, Dandurand's diarist first began writing her journal, she says, to *fill* her insomniac nights, to *fill* the empty time she spends "waiting" for something or someone, in turn, to fill the "vide" and the hunger, both literal and figurative, that she felt, she says, inside (9-11). She writes, that is, to create a space, her notebooks (78), into the shelter and safety (77) of which to escape, and so to "defend" (24) herself against the paralyzing effects of a reality that is often too painful and too cruel to bear (78).<sup>109</sup> Just as Scott's heroine withdraws into her bathtub in an attempt to escape from the differences that prevent her, she believes, from writing, so is the intimiste's practice of writing here figured as a kind of escape, or bathtub state of withdrawal, in this case, from the "*violence de ce siècle*" (95) and the "*cruauté du réel*" (78), its "*éclaboussures sanglantes*" (77) and "*misère[s] ambulantes*" (90): "*La vie,*" she says, "*est si salope et la page si sereine*" (97). Specifically, her practice of writing is figured as an (attempt to) escape from or repair a present that remains incessantly and painfully marked by a) the loss and lack of love (16), b) the persistent and

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<sup>109</sup> There are, as I've said, many references throughout the narrative to various forms of violence (war, genocide, poverty) "sprayed" (*Heroine* 154) across the pages of the newspapers delivered to the intimiste's door. It is, in part, this reality that she seeks to escape from.

traumatic memory of a recent and regretted abortion (14, 20), which she calls "*ma plus large déchirure*" (16), and c) the attempted rape (48ff., 63) that she is subjected to the ignominy of, and was just barely able to escape from, when all the while she had expected to be sharing a series of conversations about, of all things, literature. Indeed, (talking about) literature as we saw in chapter one can be dangerous.

The highly (and productively) ambivalent nature of the cracks I'm collecting here, and of the practice of writing, and of literacy, in turn, that I am arguing they figure for, are well illustrated by the narrative of her relationship with her rapist. As he was struggling to get his pants out of the way and hold her down at the same time, our intimiste managed to hit him on the head with a stray monkey-wrench, and effectively to knock him out, such that he has since been a-bed in the hospital, comatose. Though she did, in this sense, escape, she nevertheless remains (of course) traumatized by the attempt, and so, has taken to carrying in her purse a knife to defend herself with: that classic French folding knife, *Opinel* (61), the role of which invites a parallel with the survival knife that Francois P. and her foster-daughters take into the Boreal forests in order to rewrite, so to speak, the meaning of love and family. What I am suggesting is that, just as her writing practice is designed, it seems, to escape from and eventually to help her overcome the paralyzing effects of violence both proximate and distant, the knife she carries can be made to figure, loosely, for the writing of the *opinions* that enable her to *eliminate* the fear that such violence has imposed: writing *opinions* + *eliminate* fear = *opinel* (28). Moreover, as that practice of writing seems, in this way, designed to help and protect herself, first of all, it has the added effect of enabling her, eventually, to help others in turn, and not only her foster-daughters. Indeed, the intimiste uses the knife that she carries to protect herself as a means of saving the life of the very man from whom she'd learned of that

need to carry a knife for protection in the first place. Thus, feeling alienated by the excess of bourgeois family Christmases, the intimiste decides that instead of spending the holiday with her family, she would visit her comatose rapist in the hospital where, alone in the gloom of a hospital ward, he happens, all of a sudden, to stop breathing whereupon, not knowing what else to do (and having seen the procedure on television), and rather than simply let him suffocate to death, she decides to use her knife to cut a hole in his trachea and insert there a plastic tube through which his body might breath. Thus, she saves his life (103), which suggests that the effects of good writing can be powerful indeed, as well as dangerous, and a matter of life and death.

Interrupted, as we've seen, by a crack, her practice of writing, "*ce mensonge, cette lézarde*" (97) she calls it, is marked, also, as a crack, *une craque* which is in French a lie, and which in this situation is more appropriate than the English use of 'crack' to mean a 'joke' (Scott, *MainBrides* 120). Figured as a lie, an untruth – an act, not unlike a violence, that marks a difference between truth and falsity, between the reality she escapes and the place into which she withdraws (16) – her journal writing is motivated, she says, paradoxically, by a desire for truth: "*J'ai un besoin de vérité en dedans, si fort que ça me brûle*" (10), a desire, though, that she will defer sating until the end of the novel. She writes, she says, because she cannot bear to continue any longer living a lie, "*dans un état de craque maximum avec le monde entier . . .*," she says, "*Je mentais sans arrêt pendant les heures ouvrables, tout ce que je pensais c'était de me suicider, mais personne ne s'en serait jamais douté*" (27). She has been living a lie that marks, even as it hides, the difference between inside and outside: "*Je tenais une forme superbe, souriante, invulnérable, en dedans je pesais une tonne bien comptée et en dehors j'étais splendidement anorexique*" (27). She writes, in that sense, lies, cracks, out

of a desire to escape the lie, the crack of the loss, falsity, and even the violence that she has been living (with). Cold as she is because unable to heat her apartment properly in this "*temps de Bien-Être*" (9) into which she has fallen/retreated, "*J'écris pour oublier que je grelotte*" (89), to warm herself. Torn, "*lacérée à coups de ciseaux par la vie*" (94), *dilacérée par "l'angoisse"* (95), "*le cœur en charpie*" (99), *disloquée* (63) and disintegrated, to borrow a word from Scott (*Heroïne* 170), Dandurand's intimiste cracks, lies, writes, in order to bind, or *book* together the fragments of her cracked and fractured heart: "*Elle raccommode son passé en lambeaux en le ... livrant*" (44) – as a result of which she will, in the end, be able to step out again, as the heroine does, into the real/the truth that she longs for, though it pains. This is what her writing does or what she does writing.

Anticipating some of the paradoxical terms ascribed to writing (and reading) in *Heroïne*, below, I add that her writing practice, that lying is figured as a kind of cure, a "*balme*," an "*elixir*" (95), a "*onguent miracle*" (45), "*pas meilleure chimiothérapie*" (107). It is, as Derrida again describes, a kind of *pharmakon*, a sort of poison (falsity) which, by its very nature as poisonous, is intended to be curative (truthful). Indeed, it is through the crack of her practice of writing fiction – *cette "brèche du conditionnel"* (45) – that she finds, in the end, the "*courage*" (90) to live again in the present indicative, "*vivre dans l'instant*" (78) that she had otherwise lost, in the crack of trauma, "*au fond d'une blessure*" (79). To write, then, is figured, I conclude, as a kind of *marnage*, a kind of labor, or ground work – a relating of things (Scott, "In Conversation" with Moyes 225) – that serves as the means by which she has fixed, in the end, the fragments of her own fractured heart, her own *cœur qui craque*, enough anyway to work then on fixing/rewriting in turn the fragmented hearts and stories of her foster-daughters. Having labored, *marled*, in her writing to fill, or to escape the emptiness that she feels inside



herself (11), that practice of writing opens out into a space of possibility of other writing projects, of writing otherwise, not only for herself, but (as she opens both her home and her heart) into a space of possibility for others (her daughters and her lover) as well. Working, in writing, through the cracks of violence that she herself has suffered from, which caused her to write and to retreat, she is able, in the end, to stop writing, to end her withdrawal, and to find (again, in herself) love enough to help, both herself and her foster-daughters work through the cracks that they each, in their own ways, have suffered from the lack of love : "*Était-ce pour eux ou pour moi que j'agissais*," the intimiste rhetorically asks (116).<sup>110</sup> Thus, the "*déchirure*" of her recent abortion and the *état de "craque maximum"* (27) that was occasioned by her rape and which occasioned, in turn, her practice of writing, is re-presented in the crack, the lie of the practice of writing into which she escapes and through which she finds the courage to stop, finally, trying to escape, to stop lying, and to face, rather, or jump into the "*crack maximale*" (115), the crack of violence and abandon that has marked her foster-daughters and then brings her 'writing, practice to 'term'. She writes, in that sense, in order to stop writing and stops writing in order, finally, to start writing (again and otherwise), just as Scott's heroine does too. If these cracks therefore that figure for the writing she produces, the work it does and the violence it responds to points ultimately to the logic and affect that writing in general may share with violence, they open up also towards that strange, recursive temporality of addiction that I will call of literacy too and learning and belonging.

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<sup>110</sup> As I've already cited above, in relation to the Montreal Massacre, and to Nicole Brossard's response to it, violence can have the effect of collapsing the differences between grammatical persons suddenly, as in Brossard's "*je sommes mortes*" ("6 décembre"). I want to suggest that writing in turn, as is manifest here in Dandurand, and manifest also (if perhaps to a greater degree) in *Heroine*, likewise has that same *effect de violence* of enabling, in this case, the blurring of boundaries between first and third persons, singular and plural, etc.

## Specular Figures and Fictions

Like an avant-garde manifesto, the editorial links the transgressive, the subversive, and the new to violence in the order of the symbolic.

- Lianne Moyes, "Into the Fray" (314)

The series of cracks I've been collecting in *Dandurand* and in *Heroine*, therefore, are good examples of what Lucien Dällenbach describes as *specular figures*. From the Latin for 'mirror' and the verb '*specere*,' meaning *to look*, a *speculum* is an instrument "for dilating orifices of the human body so as to facilitate examination" ("*Speculum*"); "*un instrument*," as Irigaray put it rather more directly, "*qui écarte les lèvres, les fentes, les parois, pour que l'oeil puisse pénétrer à l'intérieur. Qu'il puisse aller y voir, notamment à des fins spéculatives*" (*Spéculum* 180). These cracks are, in that sense, theory machines, narrative techniques, devices, or tools that exploit "*certaines propriétés naturelle du miroir ... son singulier pouvoir de revelation*" to compensate for "*la limitation de notre regard*" and so reveal "*ce qui normalement serait exclu de notre champs de vision*" (Dällenbach 20). Both *Heroine*, in turn, and *Un Cœur qui craque* are, what Lucien Dällenbach calls, "specular fictions,"  *récits spéculaires*, theoretical-fictions that, by means of the figures they produce along the way, stage the drama of their own (difficult) birth and thematize the conditions and limits of their own possibility, which it is the intent of this project to document and to translate into pedagogy. They are stories of/within stories, *mises en abyme*, so many "*oeuvre[s] baroque[s] ... à la fois l'oeuvre et la création de l'œuvre*" (Dällenbach 152, note 1). Linked to the history of the *Nouveau Roman* (1950-1960), and serving, therefore, as an index of a "*rupture avec la pensée representative qui domine la grande tradition littéraire occidentale*," a "*véritable sortie hors de la mimesis*" (210; emphasis added), Dällenbach describes the  *récit*

*spéculaire* as a mode of literary production, a practice of experimental prose that enables and even compels our "*prise de conscience*" about the spaces opened and the work done by its language and narrative course. Not unlike the labour of critique, in the Kantian sense, which I also ascribed to Marcotte's performance earlier, at stake in this reading of *Heroïne* as a *récit spéculaire* is a theoretical practice that wants, in an ongoing way, only to "*s'approfondir*" and "*se poursuivre*" (Dällenbach 156) – all of which is precisely what my readings here are designed to do.

Without wanting to waste time, though, insisting on *Heroïne*'s status (or non status) as a further evolution of the nouveau(?) *nouveau roman*, or *new narrative* – for such terms, Scott has noted, tend often to be only so many "attempts to pin down various flights of fancy towards new identitary possibilities at a certain moment in time" ("In Conversation" with Moyes 212) – it is worth pausing to notice how *Heroïne* is certainly of the sort described by Dällenbach as a *récit spéculaire* in the sense that Scott's "habit of stopping to reflect on the process within the text" (*Spaces* 47), which is to say, the *theoretical* nature of her fiction provides precisely such *specular occasions* to become rather more than less *conscious* of how language and narrative work on and for us, their users. Such indeed are the cracks I've been collecting, occasions to re-present, *in* the narrative, or *en abyme*, the work and the effect of the narrative. As Nicolas Royle puts it in *The Uncanny*, "every novel," in that sense, "stages its own kind of seeing" (265) and so these cracks provide means of seeing into the poetic (infra)structures that organize the passage of time in, and thereby constitute, the narrative that produces them. Just as the cracks in Canada's sidewalks, for Dr. Rajani, make visible the otherwise invisible movements in the ground beneath that cause the cracking of even our most pedestrian of urban infrastructures, so the cracks in *Heroïne* and *Un cœur qui craque*, and

elsewhere too, help make legible what Scott calls the *spaces like stairs*, the "WORK" and the "unforeseeable itinerary" of her writing ("Mrs. Beckett" 89), the doing and undoing of that subjectivity "tied" to the process of its "drift and deferral" (Moyes, "Affective" 10). They do so moreover without, for that matter, falling prey to the too easy euphoria of inclusion and tolerance, that Harel again diagnoses, but in a way instead that allows me to remain cognizant and attentive to what Elizabeth Grosz describes as the less obviously Derridean form of the question of "what links writing to violence?" : "What must violence be in order for something in it to be equivalent to the operation of the trace?" ("Time" 136).

Thus, I go on from here to show how the cracks I've collected allow me to elaborate upon the nature of that "allegiance of something in violence with writing" (136), however, by way now of the discourse of addiction and drug use which, however very legible in *Heroine*, has remained by and large as yet unread. I want to argue, in this sense, that though literary practices, like "drugs," Avital Ronell has pointed out, are "linked to a mode of departing, to desocialization," to the lack of any "assurance of arriving anywhere" and, as such, are "considered non-productive" (*Crack* 106), reading *Heroine*, through this series of cracks, as what I call a *narrative of addiction* allows me (again in Ronell's words) to "assimilate intoxication" and writing likewise (and reading) "to a concept of work" (5), a form of labour characterized by a very particular experience of time. Thus, just as the cracks that craze her narrative, and serve, therefore, her readers as keys or ways into, and means of organizing our movements (modes of our transportation) through its spaces in time – just as the bathtub for Scott's heroine serves as a "device" or a tool with which to negotiate her passage through, and her giving voice to melancholy and nostalgia, which "can be death for feminists" (*Spaces* 142), without, for that matter, drowning in the "sadness" or "despair" of it (108, 25) – they will

serve me, in what follows, as a means of answering the question of *what* the heroine has been doing in her tub all day and *how* she came to be there in the first place, as well as *how* (violently) she steps out in the end and *why* (necessarily) it took her so long to do so. Specifically, those cracks and the narrative of addiction they make legible provide me grounds for theorizing both that which in violence is equivalent to the labour of writing (and learning) as well as the temporality marking the difference and distance that remains between the practice of literature in Scott and the explosions of violence it rejects and resists.

## **Narratives of Addiction**

There is no culture without drug culture  
- Avital Ronell, *Crack Wars* (96)

By *narrative of addiction*, I do not simply mean a story that uses drugs as a "plot device," as Robert Ashton puts it, to augment the pathos, the drama, the exoticism or, even, the "word count" of a narrator's performance. Nor, somewhat more seriously, do I mean to refer to what Ashton again calls a "junkie plot," in which a drug user alternately either succumbs to the colonizing demands of the substance that he or she ingests, or again overcomes that fate and in the end is redeemed, often in an epilogue, Ashton notes wryly, and "through the love of some good woman or man" (Ashton 36). I do not mean the story of someone who gets trapped in and effectively killed by some addictive behavior or other, nor the story of someone who manages to escape that terrible fate. Rather, what I want to name here is a narrative that dramatizes the relation between such a 'junkie plot' of addiction and the practice of writing or narrative that contributes (violently and slowly) to such a range of outcomes as an increase of agency and a freedom to move or its stifling and stopping. I mean, by a narrative of addiction, a story about how a particular (and particularly reflexive or

recursive) practice of writing can have the power to make (and make sense of) the difference between Scott's heroine, as I've already noted, and all those other women in *Heroine* whose "addictive profile," as Ronell says, or "prior disposition to admitting the injectable phallus" (*Crack* 101, 103), leaves them "invested in something other than active living" (101), "parasited" by the demands (125) and stuck in "the grips of [the] temporality that pains" (104-5), and subject to that "interiorizing violence" of (104) the hierarchies, for instance, of identitary thinking.<sup>111</sup> A narrative of addiction, therefore, is a story about that power of literacy to alter otherwise tragic outcomes, which is to say, the logic, recursive temporality, and ultimately the violence upon which such power (as always) depends.

It should, I want to remark, come as no surprise then that, as the logics and economies of addiction have become the object of literary and critical representation, so may the logic and temporality of addiction in turn serve as figures for the practice and pedagogy of reading and writing (and learning, in turn). As Anna Alexander and Mark S. Roberts write in the introduction to their edited collection, *High Culture: Reflections on Addiction and Modernity* – a collection which includes discussions of Plato, Nietzsche, Benjamin, Heidegger, Flaubert, Baudelaire, Burroughs and Lévinas, among many others – the fact is that, though "the modern

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<sup>111</sup> I made use, a moment ago, of the discourse of coloniality, and will do so again, though it may seem for now a bit surprising to do so, particularly given how it is not obviously as present in Scott's earlier writing as it has started to appear recently, in *My Paris*, and increasingly in conversations taking place around Scott's fourth novel, *The Obituary*. Although this relationship between drugs and coloniality would have been much more directly addressed in that prospective third chapter that might have been, but could not, finally, be included here, it remains an important theme still in the sense that the discourse of addiction shares many especially carceral figures with that of (post)coloniality, for instance, as Curtis Marez and others have described, in terms of how the question of drugs, of the 'substances' introjected into the very muscle, lung and blood of bodies is entangled in much larger and older and more complex political, economic, even military – that is (neo)colonial – logics of Empire through the fact that "The two opium wars were spectacularly destructive events with major ramifications of international political and commercial relations ... like slavery in the United States and other parts of the world, the international Chinese labour market was a crucial fact of British life that directly or indirectly influenced legal discourse, art, religion, literature, and mass culture" (Marez 44).

referent of addiction is a necessarily pejorative one," and "addiction is [seen as] a socially deviant, unacceptable behavior that must, in virtually all respects, be feared, ferreted out, and contained. And the addict ... vilified and eclipsed," nevertheless, and for better or worse, "when seen from a broader cultural perspective, addiction emerges directly alongside modernity, haunting the various discourses of *digression*, dissent, and the transcendence of the commonplace so often associated with the modern era" (2-3; emphasis added). Consequently, "addiction can no longer be treated fully in terms of a concrete substance or system to which the subject is uncontrollably drawn, but rather as an aleatory operation *akin to that of language production itself*" (Alexander and Roberts 3-4; emphasis added). Or, as Avital Ronell puts it: "There is no culture without drug culture" (*Crack* 96) and literature, she goes on to specify, "is on drugs and about drugs ... a promise of exteriority, [a] technological extension ... a chemical prosthesis" (50). In fact, I suggest this is where it gets pedagogical appeal from.

There are, for that reason, "almost as many addictions as there are people," Dr. Gabor Mate insists, in the hopes of sufficiently broadening our understanding of addiction that we be no longer limited in our discussions of it to the world of hard-drug addicts in the downtown Eastside, in Vancouver, where he works as the head clinician of the PHS, about which the vast majority of people may have only the most exotic (and so limiting) notions (Mate xviii). Indeed, as Eve K. Sedgwick cautions, the seemingly wide and inclusive scope of this question of addiction is not – except as a regretted effect of the "taxonomic pressure of the newly ramified and pervasive medical-judicial authority of the late nineteenth century," which Foucault has famously studied – not really a matter of identities to be "attributed" (or not) to certain select people, but a question of acts, rather, of one "behavior" among other behaviors, commonplace today as both vice and pleasure have always been (Sedgwick 130). The question

of addiction here is not therefore a matter of products and identities to be consumed and ascribed (or not) to the heroine or the student of literature I am becoming and theorizing here, but a question, instead, of processes and practices, active and pleasurable or painful, recursive and slow, ongoing and affective that the writing I am reading and engaged in both performs and reproduces. Thus, just as Sedgwick used the Foucauldian "account of the invention of *the homosexual*" to address the question of addiction, so do I employ, in what follows, the logic and discourse of drug *use* and other addictive *behaviors* to think through the *practice* of writing (and reading), its pedagogies, temporality, and the implicit or other violent effects that, as Hannah Arendt explains, its power both depends upon and can be quite destroyed by (*On Violence* 242).<sup>112</sup> As I move, then, back from my detour into Dandurand towards a close reading of Scott again, in these terms, I want to pause for a moment longer to consider the relatively little known writing of Marie Gagnon for the way it illustrates, as *Heroïne* does, this purported relation between the economies, affects, and temporality of literature and violence thematized in what I am calling a *narrative of addiction*.

## Marie Gagnon's several *Héroïnes de Montréal*

Si je me suis mise à la rédaction de ces quelques pages, c'est que l'écriture aussi m'est une drogue dont j'attends qu'elle atténue un peu les souffrances du sevrage de l'autre. C'est d'ailleurs pour mettre au monde l'écrivaine que j'ai décidé de tuer celle qui dépend de la poudre.

- Marie Gagnon, *Les Héroïnes de Montréal* (18)

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<sup>112</sup> In the introduction to her *On Violence*, Arendt takes the time to properly disambiguate a series of proximate terms and concepts that otherwise, she says, remain so often confused and blurred in everyday parlance (238), including power and violence in particular, and insists that while "violence is distinguished by its instrumental character"(239), as we have seen too in Mason, and therefore "stands in need of guidance and justification through the end it pursues"(241), power on the other hand, which "belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group remains together"(239), is "the very condition enabling a group of people to think and act in terms of the means-ends category (241). The two are quite "distinct" in that sense, though they "usually appear together" (241). Thus, while "violence appears where power is in jeopardy," when "left to its own course it ends in power's disappearance" (242).



Over the course of her five published books, all at *VLB Éditeurs*, between 1997 and 2005, Marie Gagnon's writing tells, it seems, only so many different versions of the same basic story – her own – again and again, though never exactly in quite the same way for there is, Scott recalls Gertrude Stein insisting, "no such thing as repetition" quite ("There is no such Thing"). Indeed, what interests me most of all in this *junkie plot* that becomes, in the telling, a *narrative of addiction*, are the differences and distances, the variations introduced into that story, and the figurative processes that allow for them to be traced through narrative space and their significance interpreted. What Gagnon tells, specifically, is the story of a woman who has been, by the demands of a heroin addiction, both figuratively and literally, incarcerated in a kind of "*intemporalité*" (*Héroïnes* 88), or alter temporality, a place where "*le temps est entre parenthèses*" (63). Like Scott's heroine and her "grey woman," Gagnon's heroines are stuck, in a sense, in time, at the outset, though not for that matter finally or non-productively so.<sup>113</sup> Each of her five books then, in different ways, tells the same story of a woman stuck in some form of carceral space, "*ce no man's land de la drogue*" (41), a "*monde clos*" (*Emma* 73, *Bienvenue* 42), an "*univers étroit*" (*Emma* 19) where her life is strictly governed (108) and she is dehumanized (*Étoiles* 129); where an "*ambiance de peur et de violence*" rules (*Lettres* 21) and "*tout est mort*" (137); where she is all walled-up "*en elle-même*" (*Emma*, 141) so that "*je suis celle que je ne veux pas être*" (*Lettres* 17). It is a story though of a woman who, however

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<sup>113</sup> In what follows, I conflate, as Gagnon herself does, the literal and metaphorical significations of the 'carceral' that is in question here. That is, I will not work to disambiguate the many figures for the *prison* that she (her heroine) is kept in, from those more figurative versions—her addiction to heroin—that she, more obviously, has locked herself into.

"piégée" and "enchaînée" (*Emma* 12) at the outset, will draw, she says, a sort of strength from those very "*chaines réputés impossibles à rompre*" (*Héroïnes* 84), exactly as she begins to write: "*Voilà que j'y puise mes forces*" (*Lettres* 21; see also *Bienvenue* 50).

This dominant and problem-saturated story of addiction – to borrow again and not for the last time that phrase of White and Epston's – of a woman "*damnée*" (*Lettres* 12) to a "*destin*" (*Emma* 159) in which she is swallowed up (*Étoiles* 212; *Emma* 158) and by which defiled (*Étoiles* 105), is a story, finally, that she has, she writes, begun to take ownership of (*Emma* 85), "*consciemment choisi*" (45; *Lettres* 64), and even become empowered by, consequently, as she dreams up "*un langage*" for her pen to write it out with (141). Such a practice of writing that, not unlike Scott's, works to create, transform, empower, liberate, save, decolonize and (sort of) secure a (writing) subject – she writes, she says, "*pour ne pas mourir*" (*Héroïnes* 11) – remains at the same time very much implicated in the logic and violence of addiction in which at the outset, like the heroine in her tub, we find her trapped. Indeed, we are witness here, I argue, through this writing about drugs, to the drug of writing, what Derrida again calls the *pharmakon*, and through the writing of so much violence, what DeLauretis calls the "rhetoric of violence," to the violence in turn, too, of writing, the "violence of rhetoric" (240). What interests me, therefore, in Gagnon's accounts of her incarceration in the prison-house of her various addictions is the representation of literature as both a poison and a cure, or cage and key. For if writing (both the practice and the product) may well serve as a kind of balm, a cure, a salve, as it was in Dandurand, that is markedly only one side of the story, the other of which follows below as surely as the proverbial other shoe drops.

But first the balm. Note, for instance, how grateful she is for that "*solitude à trois*" that she shares with Artaud and Rimbaud, and for the ways in which, she says, through them, "*Je*

*vis l'horreur de la situation sans trop la ressentir*" (*Héroïnes* 34). Writing here is figured as a kind of drug, an anesthetic, a means of putting some distance between herself and the horror of her incarceration, between the selves of hers that are imprisoned and addicted, and the others that remain to write, that survive by writing, and which her practice of writing, in fact, produces. Indeed, recalling that "distance" that Scott's heroine seeks (not unproblematically) to provide herself in order to "control the inner chaos" (Irvine 117), writing and reading provide Gagnon's heroine with some distance, the means of becoming a "*spectatrice*" to (*Bienvenue* 34) the "*cauchemar*" of her daily life (35), her "*sans être*" (11), her "*mal d'entrailles vécu comme une peine d'amour*" (11).<sup>114</sup> Moreover, and just as Artaud and Rimbaud served her, so is she (and her literacy skills) in turn able to serve her cellmates, who seek her out, as if "Marie" were some priest in a confessional (*Lettres* 150), providing them the means and occasions by which to tell and retell their own story of dependency and incarceration and, as such, to begin the process of their own severance and "*autonomie*" (*Emma* 117).<sup>115</sup>

This anesthetic and even liberating power being ascribed to literacy here, and the distance it is seen to open up between the subject and her suffering, is represented, I suggest, as it is in *Heroïne*, by the narrative movement from first to third person narration, and from the

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<sup>114</sup> Note that the metonymical relationship between love story and junkie plot here foreshadows the basis for the argument I will make in my reading of *Heroïne* as a narrative of addiction and the heroine as a love-junkie of sorts.

<sup>115</sup> The French word for kicking a habit or weaning oneself away from substance abuse, a process I am equating here with the practice of writing, *sevrage* (severance) provides more, however tangential grounds too, for linking literature to violence. Thus, had my Ducharme chapter remained an extant part of this project, rather than only a ghost, I would have looked forward here to the moment when Bérénice decides "*que je me suis sevrée moi-même*" (*L'Avalée* 21), definitively biting off her mother's nipples with teeth that have become rusty metallic machines. What this terribly violent moment suggests is the fact that autonomy only comes at the same cost, of violence, as dependence in the first place is the product of.

present tense into the past. Thus, *Bienvenue dans mon cauchemar* is a collection of journal entries and letters to friends and to her pusher, fragments of lyrical prose and bits of poetry written while the author herself was in prison. Similarly, and very much in the first person still, *Héroïnes de Montréal* is a collection of ‘nouvelles,’ short stories amidst which is inserted some poetry, notably her "Ode au pusher," and *Lettres de prison* a collection of letters written to various correspondents at the publishing house (133); a project that she initially refers to as her "*lettres aux imbéciles*" in *Cauchemar* (47), and describes in *Lettres* itself as prompted by her editor (166), presumably, the now ironically named imbécile who likely believed in her in ways that she, herself, as yet could not. Anyway, by the time that Gagnon publishes *Étoiles jumelles* and *Emma des rues*, the first person present indicative voice that had been (re)telling her own story, with all the relative uncertainty that such a voice supposes (cf. Malavoy-Racine), has definitively been transformed into a third person past tense narrative, secure in its omniscience. The distance and difference marked by that shift cannot help but recall the similar sorts of space created in the transformation of that restrictive inaugural "Sir." in *Héroïne* into the open and ultimate "She—" (9, 183) or, again, the transformation of memory into fiction that Gilles Marcotte identifies as a condition of the birth of a new practice of writing in Marie-Claire Blais' *Les Manuscrits de Pauline Archange* (*Roman* 155, 159). By ‘narrative of addiction,’ then, I mean a story that tells, reflexively, of this power to distance, to free, and to cure, to move, as Gagnon does, from poetry into prose, from first person narration to third, and from the present tense away into the past in the process of creating an "*œuvre*" (*Lettres*, 63, 82, 148) and an "*héroïne*" (16, 6) or, as Dällenbach put it, in the course of "*la construction mutuelle de l'écrivain et de l'écrit*" (25). Just as in Scott then, Gagnon's writing appears to be, to borrow Markotic's phrase, "less about X herself than the creation of X" (42),

about the opening up of such a narrative space of escape, and about the narrative logic and violence of addiction, I argue, that such an outcome effectively depends upon.

Gagnon's project, then, can be described as a *narrative of addiction* in the sense that it informs us, *nous "renseigne"* (*Lettres* 162), not only about drug-use and prison culture, but about writing and its possible effects also, its power, specifically, to put that world at a distance and thereby create space in which the subject can move freely, as the heroine does in the end, both back and forth (161), between inside and out, and beyond the sequence of linguistic and carceral conventions (165) or through the cracks in the walls that would otherwise embalm her, etc. – the kind of spaces only through which Marcotte, for instance, was able to pass over to the other side of the wall that is the site of such violence. Clearly, literacy is here, as often and elsewhere, accorded a balmic sort of power to make the difference and distance legible between these, our literary heroines and the numerous others I've cited, who remain, in the end, incarcerated, still, and silent. The question, though, remains regarding the source of that power – as it remains at the end of *Heroine* too, regarding how, precisely, she gets out and starts writing finally, how she pulls it off, in fact, where she might have gone on, instead, suffering from that passivity – how, as Gagnon's heroine explains in the epigraph above, and as Derrida's *pharmakon* also suggests, writing could be both a cure, a balm and an escape from the violence of addiction, and at the same time *perforce* a poison too and a form of that very same. "*C'est d'ailleurs pour mettre au monde l'écrivaine,*" says Gagnon's heroine therefore, "*que j'ai décidé de tuer celle qui dépend de la poudre*" (*Héroïnes* 18).

Writing, indeed, is figured as a kind of killing, which we will see again in Fragoulis below, but so, too, is literature, in the form of the novels that Gagnon's heroine steals and

resells to other bookstores (*Emma* 10-11), made to serve as the capital invested in her addiction, the means of maintaining her addictive practices, and the efficient cause, so to speak, of her incarceration (*Bienvenue* 73, 77). Indeed, the addiction and the prison in which she has become incarcerated when we meet Gagnon's heroine at the outset is described, specifically, as a story, as "*une histoire ancienne*" and an "*histoire carcérale*" (141, 164; emphasis added)<sup>116</sup> and writing, as we have just seen, is even represented as, not only enabling her incarceration, or a further form of that incarceration, but even as depending upon that carceral world too and drawing its strength from that incarceration. The ambivalence, again, is striking and therefore, I suggest, pedagogical. I mean, in the space of difference that remains between the roles literature is seen to play here, as both the cause of, and means of escape from, her incarceration, Gagnon's narratives of addiction provide the means of thinking through the logic and temporality of literary pedagogy. As we see in *Heroine* too, that sort of silence and violence and inactivity that the prison-house of her addiction represents may even, in a sense, be the condition of possibility of the practice of writing itself (and of reading and learning too, in turn) and so, finally, as I turn now to read through *Heroine*, and then *Ariadne's Dream*, as narratives of addiction in this sense, I carry forward this ascription of necessity that is beginning here to attach itself to the intersection of literature and violence; an intersection and necessity that is far indeed from the alternative to violence that I'd hoped, for a moment in the *Nef des 14 reines*, to have found in the practice of literature.

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<sup>116</sup> For more on the relationship between literature and drugs, and particularly in the context of Emma Bovary's addiction to romance fictions that has been read as her fatal, tragic flaw (cf. Marden, and Ronell, *Crack*).

## ***Heroine 2: the Anacoluthon in her Narrative of Addiction***

What if 'drugs' named a special mode of addiction, however, or the structure that is philosophically and metaphysically at the basis of our culture?

...  
Madame Bovary I daresay is about bad drugs.  
- Avital Ronell, *Crack Wars* (13, 61)

If Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* is about 'bad drugs' in the sense that she dies in the end of an overdose or from complications arising from long-term use, then Scott's *Heroine* would have to be about good drugs given that the heroine, in the end, escapes that fate which so many others do not. However, given that there are both "good and bad addictions" and "anything can serve the function of a drug" (Ronell, *Crack* 53), or that drugs provide both "problems and solutions simultaneously ... " (Marlowe 295), as Gagnon's text has already suggested, it might, perhaps, be more useful to say, rather, that *Heroine* is what I call a *narrative of addiction*: a story through which runs a series of signs and a discourse of drugs and drug-use that provide a way of making legible the violent logic and recursive, addictive temporalities that makes Scott's experiments with fiction, I argue, so eminently pedagogical.

Margaret Webb may of course be right to suggest that the heroine is "suffering ... from a cocaine addiction" (83). The heroine does do cocaine on at least one occasion, as recorded (twice) in her diary for April 23rd, 1980 (*Heroine* 177, 173), when she was offered "a sniff" by one of Anne's "coked-out friends," enjoining her to "enjoy the agony," at which point she records that "Everything turned blue. Then the color sepia" (177), the color of nostalgia, with which the heroine throughout has a very intimate, if ambiguous, relationship. The heroine does not record any other such specific moment of her own use of cocaine, but she does have the decided habit of addressing herself in the second person again and again throughout the

narrative to "Sepia," as if to a sort of confessor or confidant, and in a way that suggests that she has each time either just done a line or two again, which would mean that she has been using all day long in her bathtub alone or, alternately, that she has instead (nostalgically) been suffering each time, again and again, from the withdrawal pain of the absence of such another hit.<sup>117</sup>

The point, though, is not so much to attribute an addiction identity to the heroine because of how often she stutters on/for "c-cocaine," (*Heroine* 42, 57, 145) or for "Seiii," - Sepia (42, 57). Scott's narrative about the heroine's drug use is nowhere near as explicit or central as it is in William Burrough's *Junky* or Jim Carroll's *Basketball Diaries*, to cite only a couple of the most recent and better known samples of what Robert Asthon calls "Heroin Literature" (35-45) and Marlowe "heroin fiction" (141). Indeed, to borrow again the distinction that Sedgwick in turn borrowed from Foucault's "famous account of the invention of the homosexual," between "questions of acts" and "questions of identities" (130), the ascription of an addiction identity here is only of interest to me to the extent that it facilitates my gathering together such a number of addictive behaviors, processes, and temporalities, which I intend to be translating into literary pedagogical practices. If Markotic and Godard are right to say, citing Scott herself, that *Heroine* "is less about x, the heroine, then the process of writing that brings x into being" (Markotic 42), so my reading of the novel as a *narrative of addiction* is much less a matter of attributing (or not) addictive identities than it is a matter of metaphorizing, by which I mean describing that process (and pedagogy) of creating reading

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<sup>117</sup> Interesting, if also different and honestly much less satisfying, the conclusion drawn by Meridith Quartermain, in her contribution to the recent special *Open Letter* issue on Scott, that the heroine instead is addressing herself to her "male ex-lover, named Sepia" (117).



and writing subjects in the same terms as are those used to represent the arguably violent and recursive logics and temporality of drug use and addiction. Indeed, what interests me, ultimately, are the pedagogical implications of the logic, temporality, and affect of addictive behaviors being staged in *Heroine*.

Certainly there are number enough references to drug use in the novel and in *Spaces Like Stairs* to suggest that this intersection of literary (pedagogical) and drug cultures that Avital Ronell (in the epigraphs above) insists on is a productive *line* of inquiry. Indeed, aside from the pun of the title itself, which seems, to me, to beg for the kind of "narcoanalysis" I have learned from Ronell (*Crack* 47), there is the way the heroine, stuck in her bathtub state and unable to write, knows that she risks remaining only "a female figure out there dressed up and walking. *Attracted like a magnet* towards the tragic of the street: *the junkie family*; the blond musician in love with his sister. His hair turning white from too much *coke*" (*Spaces* 96; emphasis added), which cannot but suggest some kind of continuity between the bathtub state that she is stuck in, the spaces and time of addiction that I want to identify it with, and the movement out there in the urban and institutional spaces that represent, collectively, the pedagogical horizon of all this metaphorizing. There is, too, the way she confesses, in the preceding paragraph, that "melodrama is another form of fake narrative to carry one through difficulty," as a result of which, she admits that for a period of time "I got *hooked* on soaps precisely when I was trying to play a female role in which I no longer believed" (*Spaces* 86; emphasis added). Scott, of course, will not have been either the first or the last to ascribe in this way to narrative (whether her own or those she has consumed) an addictive and particularly anesthetic character. It does, though, go a long way toward explaining why (and why it is significant that) she imagines starting her novel in "Bagels' on The Main" where the

kids there, she adds, are "using little 50s objects of nostalgia," like some kind of opiate, "to dull the pain" (*Heroine* 122; emphasis added), or why the heroine might be prone to remember her friend Marie once admitting that she surrounds herself "with so much beauty ... *pour me distraire du mal*," at which point, as if on cue, the heroine turns her address to "Sepia," the color again of both nostalgia and of her cocaine high, to whom she articulates her learning in this context "what modern was" (122).

Indeed, Scott's heroine, like the Emma Bovary described by Elissa Marden, is herself a thoroughly modern woman, in how she "suffers from the quintessential malady of modernity," what Marden calls "the inability to incorporate time into experience," to "live in time" (133), which is to say, from a sort of "temporal disorder," namely, the temporal bulimia of addiction and trauma (134) that is, she says, arguably "the most emblematic and paradoxically popular illnesses of our time" (135) and an emblem, moreover, of why she cannot at the outset write. Like Emma, who "can neither live in the present nor project a future" without at the same time being "incessantly subject to bouts of involuntary forgetting" and "by obsessive rites of remembering" (134), Scott's heroine seems, having withdrawn into and become stuck in such an addictive temporality, which I call her bathtub state, and so likewise remains "exiled from time," which "appears" in turn as "something that happens elsewhere, to other people" (136). In this way, Marden argues, *Madame Bovary* "remains so timely" today (133) and so, I add, the time has more than come to bring this logic and temporality of addiction to our collective reading of Scott's *Heroine* and to our consequent understanding of the heroine's modernity (*modernité*).

With this caveat in mind, then, that the behaviors, logic, and affects of addiction are more important to me here than the ascriptions of identity they perhaps permit, I note that,

seeming addicted to love, to the romance of revolution, the narrative structure of Romance itself, or simply to cocaine – though it hardly matters which, as the agent-killing logic of addiction, regardless of its object, is always the same – the heroine remains unable as yet to love herself directly, except with only "little success" (Webb 79). She is love-"sick" therefore (Burroughs, *Junky* 56) and suffering from the withdrawal pains of its loss or lack. Like the grey woman, whom the heroine fears may be nothing if not a version of her own subjectivity projected like a "monitory image" (Gilbert and Gubar 78) upon the surface of the city, the heroine is suffering from her own "slight lack" (102), is "en manque" as Sherry Simon's review of the novel put it, or in the words of Umberto Eco's warning from the novel's aptly-chosen epigraph: the heroine uses "signs, and the signs of signs" where she writes or wants to because "the things themselves are lacking" (in *Heroine*; emphasis added). Whether chasing that proverbial dragon, or being actually in withdrawal, it is in classic junkie style that the heroine perceives this lack as having been imposed upon her, from without and against her will: "Mama why'd *you* put this hole in me?" (31, 34, 125; emphasis added).

It is though unfair, to say the least, for the heroine to blame only her mother for that kind of "emptiness" in her that is "at the core of every addiction" (Maté 272). For while admittedly the heroine seems to have inherited from her mother precious little else in lieu of reassurance and security than the invective to "get down on your knees and pray" (*Heroine* 35), that legacy of lack, along with the sense that her mother had so little to give in the first place, who would have preferred all this time to have been in Africa on some Christian mission or other (135), does much to prompt the heroine's desire not, in fact, to wind up like her, trapped in a life she did not want and so to set off, instead, on a whole series of transgressions, departures, pullings away, and withdrawals for which she must herself accept

responsibility.<sup>118</sup> As we saw in Gagnon, and as we'll discuss again later, the heroine herself must at some point own that hole in her as her own. For just as Anzaldua in a different but related context "made the choice to be queer" (41), and just as Anne Marlowe insists in her *How to Stop Time: Heroin from A to Z* that her own addiction "was chosen," and that "most are" (144), or as Scott herself at this point in her career insisted, that she is the one who chose to give up journalism in favor of experimental fiction (*Prismatic*, 95), and chose, moreover, to do so in Quebec, rather than in English-speaking Canada, so was it the heroine herself who made the choice "to transgress her English-Canadian parents' goal for her" and "enter *la cité*" (*Spaces* 87), who has "consciously chosen her minority situation" (97), decided to take a bath (*Heroine* 16), and return to a relationship about which she had serious "misgivings" (*Spaces* 99) to play "a role in which [she] no longer believed" (86). It is her own "desire," in this sense, that "gets her stuck" (97), Scott admits in her "Paragraphs Blowing on a Line" (*Spaces* 77), and the question, to which I argue this discourse of addiction is given to provide us an answer, indirectly, is why.

That question – *why does the heroine withdraw and digress as we've seen to the point of paralysis and narcotized silence* – is, on the one hand, very easy to answer. She does so, I suggest, because she must; else how else could this have become the story of the heroine's

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<sup>118</sup> Other than those most significant moments of transgression and departure to which I'll refer directly below – including her decision to come to the big city and to return to her failed and painful relationship – the heroine's narrative and notes are so full of such sorts of stutters, hesitations and pullings or rollings away that make it all the easier to account for what the heroine is doing in her bathtub state and why, I'll argue, she chose to retire or withdraw into it: "Hoping the plane would- . Never mind" (*Heroine* 174); "you said you hadn't had such a good time since, since—you refused to finish your sentence" (176); "I keep putting off writing because, because [blank]" (121); "Seeing the heroine she stops short" (181); "Maybe I could write some before, before . . ." (103); "The birds were chirping as if the future . . ." (101); "I Rolled off" (32); "I-I think I rolled off" (10); "He pulled back" (34); "I pull back" (78); "I'm the type who saves herself too much" (37); "I want to take pills and run away" (25); "Sensing danger and rejecting I" (108); "Wouldn't get over her feelings" (171).

stepping out in the end into a life of writing, etc. As we'll see in the pages that follow, though, understanding the nature of that necessity, and its pedagogical implications in particular, is rather more complicated and, at some point, necessarily, depends on the heroine's recognition (and ours) of the highly contingent sort of writing-subject that is in the process of being created here throughout, and of the digressive, even violent nature of this arguably pedagogical process. The heroine needed, I will argue, to take the recursive time out represented by her stepping into and staying a while in her bathtub state because, if that modern process of self-(re)creation seemed at the outset to be waterlogged and all tripped up on the governing ambition to reproduce only an autonomous, identitary subject, suffused with the sort of willful and prideful self-control that Gregory Bateson, in his cybernetic reading of Alcoholics Anonymous' treatment of alcohol addiction, calls "monstrous" and a "myth" (Bateson 333, 319), the heroine is able to walk away in the end only by virtue of her taking the time to recognize and own, I argue, the "disastrous" and even violent effects of such "Occidental concepts of self" (Bateson 320). I mean, as I argued earlier, the heroine is able to leave her bathtub state in the end and begin writing, etc., only by virtue of her recognition of the inevitable crack up, consequently, of the wall of meaning that such identitary desires tend to erect (cf. also *Spaces* 128); or, as Quartermain puts it, "Scott concludes [that] the heroine must remain fractured" (119).

Thus, while the heroine herself clearly made all the decisions leading her into the tub and so cannot simply blame only her mother for the state we find her in, she does not do so in any sort of vacuum, as some fully willful and autonomous subject. Her mother for one, serving as a negative example or "monitory image," like the grey woman, no doubt had some kind of a positive influence too, compelling the heroine's resistance to, and rejection of that inscription

of her, of women, as lack which, as I noted earlier, is handed down to her, not by her mother only, but by her father too, that is, through the patriarchal structures that shape even the language she is given/has chosen to use (cf. Dale Spender; in Scott, *Spaces* 17, 22). Indeed, Frank Davey is correct to note that a whole system of patriarchal power constructing women as constitutionally "hollow" and "lacking" is signified here by the capital letter-M in the Mama that the heroine complains of and to ("Totally" 52-53). Like the writer who, if not dead as Barthes proclaimed, has been "crushed a priori" (*Spaces* 84) and made small ("In Conversation" with Moyes 221) or "reduced" (*Prismatic* 90), the empty-middle structure of the novel she produces (beginning 7-70; middle 71-80; end 81-183), which recalls as I said the labial structure of Irigaray's *Speculum de l'autre femme* (Blumberg 58), as well as the conditions of a city's legibility (Barthes), testifies to the pervasive sort of necessity belonging to the digressive temporality characteristic of her narrative. Indeed, I argue, *Heroine* in this way tells the story of a practice of writing that remains, indefinitely and paradoxically contingent upon it first being put off and delayed and reduced, which is another way of saying, as Ronell posits, that "some installation" of the temporal "structure" of addiction is necessary to her and the heroine's (and my own) ability to "write, or be an artist, or think" or read and learn ("Interview").

It is in this sense, necessarily, that we find the heroine suffering, I argue, from withdrawal, having "some independence problems" (*Heroine* 90), some "dependency" issues (107), or (at the very least) "seems" to (89). To make the same point "*en bérénicien*" – in which "*le verbe être ne se conjugue pas sans le verbe avoir*" (Ducharme, *L'Avalée* 337) – the heroine feels she *needs* (in order) to *be* but does not (yet) *have* enough so that for the moment (still) she isn't. She is needful, dependent, and behaving for all intents and purposes as an

addict does, shirking responsibility, and masturbating, she explains, in the hope of touching off the "tickle" that would serve as a "sign" that she will write her novel at last (50). "Then I can get out" of the tub, she promises herself, however naively (126), for when that "tickle" finally does come it is, of course, only "Damn – just a tickle" (161), which is to say, manifestly not enough. Her 'withdrawal' pains return then, stronger and sooner, and her promise, consequently, to get out of the bath and start writing, again, remains unkept and deferred still. Or, to borrow a formula from Burroughs again, the heroine's love "habit" leaves her in a *bathtub* "state of chronic poisoning for which (the poison) is itself the specific antidote" (Burroughs 140) which, *en bérénicien*, means that *elle ne peut avoir (et donc être) sans se faire avoir (et donc ne pas être)*. For this is the recursive and restrictive, agent-killing either/or logic of addiction (of which we saw a version earlier in *Marcotte*), the logical extension of which is perhaps best articulated, in Jerry Schatzberger's film, *Panic in Needle Park*, by the addict who notes, cynically, but with the terribly silent assent of his head-nodding peers, that the *best high is death*, short of which the sickness of withdrawal eternally returns and remains incurable; or so again to the addict it seems.

Another way to describe this necessity or inevitability of the bathtub state we find the heroine in at the outset and throughout is to refer to that equally inescapable "double-bind" logic governing the place of women writers in patriarchy, as Gilbert and Gubar *entre autres* have well described, referring to Virginia Woolf, who clearly could not help but feel that she must, but of course could not, "choose between admitting she was 'only a woman' or protesting that she was 'as good as a man'" (Gilbert and Gubar 64). I mean, clearly the heroine's ostensible choosing and inviting (as we'll see again in a moment) such an "invasion" of "interiority" (Gilbert and Gubar 78), which is to say, her disposition "to admitting the

injectable phallus" (Ronell, *Cracks* 103) is at least as much a choice as it was inescapable, at least for a time. Similarly, the heroine seems to be suffering as much from that kind of lack that is, again, "at the core of all addictions" (Maté 83, 272, 355) as she is from a *trop plein* of sorts, or "indwelling alterity" as Ronell puts it (*Cracks* 112), which, culturally speaking, she has been imbibing since birth and to which she is presumably dependent as if to some poison that only promises relief but never delivers. She suffers, in this sense, as much from a *whole* as from the *hole* I described above: "w (for women's difference, the unspoken) + hole (as our sexe is frequently referred to by men)" (*Spaces* 74). I mean, the sign that she seeks or the space that she's described as the problem, in this sense, is not only lacking (as in absent) but overfull of and overdetermined by the presence and interests of others, which is to say, she is lacking in room enough to move around and write in and work with freely. Indeed, it would seem that that *a room of her own* that every heroine needs to inhabit (Woolf) is, I am suggesting, increasingly hard to distinguish from her being, for a time, necessarily, "inhabited" by a "temporality that pains" (Ronell, *Cracks* 125, 104), which is also the time I suggest of literary practice.

As Bakhtin has written and deLauretis recalled, the recursive and deferent temporality in which the heroine is bathing throughout the narrative is inevitable, then, given that "language" in this way "is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated – overpopulated – with the intentions of others," so that "expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents" – or, in Scott's terms, shaping "a vehicle for her use" (*Spaces* 66-76) and, as Woolf said, finding a "room of one's own" – "is a difficult and complicated process" (Bakhtin 294). Indeed, it is even painful. For as her intention to write causes her "to rub against the 'real' ... that



‘universal’ represented by society’s institutions," like gender, class, race and national identity (Scott, *Spaces* 78), the heroine finds that the signs she seeks to make her own do not "fit her gestures" (122), do not fit her "(diffuse?) women’s ways of seeing things" (102). "I can’t find the right word," she complains. "In the dictionary *they* call it a rudimentary penis" (*Heroine* 33; emphasis added). "Pointing to the difficulty a contemporary heroine faces when struggling to name or write herself" (Markotic 42), the heroine finds that "THEIR language and THEIR laws" (Scott, *Heroine* 59; emphasis in text) hit her "like mud in the eye," says Scott ("My Montreal" 5), or with what Ronell calls "the violence of a non-address" (*Cracks* 93), and so stutter with pain her literary desires. The heroine’s "uh, small point" (Scott, *Heroine* 36), she says, her "widow's beak" (37) "after a while gets sore so I call it my *dolorous* reptile" (60). What I'd like then to suggest is that the heroine chooses, so to speak, to immerse herself in this logic and "temporality" of addiction "that pains" (Ronell, *Cracks* 104), and so to put off her practice of writing for a time, out of a kind of necessity.

Certainly, it is for that reason – to highlight that aura of necessity radiating from the forms her narrative takes – that, whereas Scott talks about the "bathtub device" ("On the Edge" 17) and the "tub-talk" or "critical approach" that her "writing" of melodrama "requires" (*Spaces* 102, 80; emphasis added), or the "narrative way" she *has* to find "to tie together the memories floating past her in the steam" (81; emphasis added), I have been referring instead to the heroine in her *bathtub state*. I do so because of the reference this latter phrase makes to Gloria Anzaldua's *Coatlicue state*, that borderland of "hibernation and stasis" (66), of "paralysis and depression" (70), of "arrest" (69) and even incarceration, as Gagnon would say, which nevertheless "precedes" and in the end produces a "political crossing" from which, I have already suggested, the heroine emerges to "take on the struggle for social change"

(Salvadar-Hull 7). I do so because of the way the "fictional device" or "critical approach" that Scott "requires" to "acknowledge whatever melodrama means in our lives" (Spaces 80) is in so many ways uncannily like the "survival mechanism" or defense strategy that Anzaldua describes as addiction (67-68) : a "rupture," she would say, in the heroine's "everyday world" (68), that "flooded" and "drowned" her in "silence" (67), "opens" up in and "swallows" the passage of the heroine's present tense, "plunging" her "into the underworld where the soul resides, and allowing" the heroine, therefore, "to dwell in darkness" (68) or, as Scott herself puts it, "under the line of pain" (161). We "need," says Anzaldua, "to be arrested" (68), to keep "the world out" (66). We "need *Coatlicue*," says Anzaldua, "to slow us up so that the psyche can assimilate previous experience and process the changes" (68), to "take the time," to "disrupt the smooth flow (complacency) of life," to "propel the soul to do its [her] work: make soul, increase consciousness of itself" (68). Indeed, Scott describes as "necessary" that *bathtub state* in time in which we find her heroine stuck at the outset and bathing until the end, that "reflexive doubling back over the texture of the text" and that "habit of stopping to reflect on the process within the text itself" (Spaces 47), very much as Anzaldua insists that her *Coatlicue state*, that form of "inactivity" that addiction represents, is "as necessary as breathing" (71), a form of "activity (not immobility) at its most dynamic," though it largely takes place only "underground" (69).

Indeed, it is for the "privilege" it affords us "of stopping time" (130), Anne Marlowe has argued, the possibility of slowing "things down" (49), however "temporarily," "to the point where you can believe you are in control" (256) that, she says, most addictions are chosen. As "a writer," Marlowe adds, "I owe to heroin ... the space to develop rigor, the ability to attack the words I have written and eliminate them if necessary" and the "emotional security that

allows you to criticize yourself" (263), which is to say, "some years free of pain, in which I was able to start writing. And then some more years free of pain," however, also "free of most other emotions too" (295). As Benjamin, in turn, suggested in his essay on "Surrealism," there is an "introductory lesson" to be got from "hashish, opium, or whatever" (179). There are "a million things you can learn from" an addiction, confirms Marlowe, warning simultaneously that these lessons may only be "fully available to you once you stop using" (264), and in retrospect. Indeed, that necessarily recursive and digressive temporality of addiction that I find figured by the bathtub state in which our heroine labours (in Marlowe's words) to critique and attack and so free herself is, I argue, of significant pedagogical and literary value. However, Marlowe warns, if that "form of mourning for the irrecoverable glories of the first time," which defines addiction as "essentially nostalgic," that "stopping your passage to the future" and that "the love of predictable experience" (9-10) may in some ways be necessary, it must (as literary study itself in many ways does) remain at the same time "deeply suspect," even violent (10). There is a "price" she says "to pay" for the privilege (283); and, thus, Anzaldua too warns that the "stopping" or "way station" that the *Coatlicue* or *bathtub* state of addiction provides for, however needful and even pedagogical, must just as necessarily "vanish when it's no longer needed if growth is to occur" (68), lest it become instead the "way of life" (68) it has become for the countless number of other women, we've seen, who never do escape its silent grasp, and which it might have become for me too had I never actually moved to Korea to finish this dissertation.

Now, I've already insisted on the fact that the heroine does in the end get up and move on out of that way station of addiction described by Anzaldua and figured in *Heroine* by the bathtub. Consequently, I suggest, it is safe to assume that she has therefore learned what she

needed to, done, confronted, and unlearned what needed doing, confronting and unlearning, and gained what distance and what control she could from that recursive and painful temporality into which, necessarily, she chose to withdraw and through which she has now passed (or is now passing) as she begins to write. She has no doubt got what "loosening of the self by intoxication" she needed in order to, finally, "*step outside*" of that identitary sort of thinking I've referred to now repeatedly (Benjamin, "Surrealism" 179; emphasis added). I mean, she has now, presumably, taken the time she seems to have needed to "acknowledge whatever melodrama means in our lives" (*Spaces* 80), as Scott herself described, "to finally face her pain, uncensored" (*Spaces* 104) and even enjoy it, as her friend's coked-out friends enjoined her to (177), or as Florence Nightingale long ago would have too, "for out of nothing comes nothing. But out of suffering may come the cure" (*Cassandra* 29).<sup>119</sup> In this "space" in time of her bathtub state ("On the Edge" 17), that "space off" that DeLauretis describes (in Friewald 65) and that "time" that Adrienne Rich describes in her account of "writing as revision" (96), the heroine has come presumably to better "understand the assumptions in which we are *drenched*" (90; emphasis added), not to say floating, the "conventions" and "internalized fears" that have burnt us (93), and the "pain and anger" that we "need to go through" (98) in the process of "making poems" (89) and short of which we cannot, she adds, "know ourselves" (90). Because the heroine's "Awakening," in that sense, is necessarily confusing and painful, difficult and dangerous (90-91), and just as "thinking" happens likewise

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<sup>119</sup> We could also say that the heroine has indeed taken the time she needed to get over the "hurdle of nation" (*Spaces* 36), the "memory of the past (the noun)" that "wipes out the present (verb)" and renders, therefore, the future (object) unreachable (*Heroine* 175), or through that space between sentences, that "abyss," she calls it, or "moment of closure" that can be "so very hard to traverse" (*Prismatic* 87; cf. also "In Conversation" with Moyes 221).

in both the arrest as in the flow of thoughts (Benjamin, *Arcades* N10,3), or just as reading too, we've seen, proceeds not smoothly along the the lines of print and down the page, but in fits and starts rather, and both forward and back (Perec 60), so I suggest that the heroine in the end steps out of the tub, however, only it seems just a moment after the narrative has for the very first time, I want now to describe, managed to actually represent the heroine stepping into the tub and below that line of pain in fact.

I mean, we can only really guess at the value and necessity of her stepping into the bathtub state in the first place, I want now to argue – and that she got and did what needed getting and doing there, and that something (even violently) has come of all this only apparently doing nothing – because, in truth, we are not given to see her actually get out of the tub finally, nor precisely how and when she does so. Her stepping out of that bathtub state in time, and the consequent birth of her writing practice and subject proper are simply not, *in* the narrative, represented. As such, we are not equipped to say as surely as we might have otherwise how precisely she does so and in what circumstances exactly, or why it took her so long, finally, to do so, and why she does precisely then and not before or later. Or, to anticipate a simile I'll be discussing at length in a moment, her getting out is so, like a gunshot, sudden that we almost necessarily miss it, don't fully experience it, the first time round. "Now I'm out" (171), she says, describing what has, in fact, already happened while the happening itself escapes direct representation. We don't get to see (or overhear) the heroine talk herself through, for example, her standing up and toweling off. More importantly (and less voyeuristically), we are not therefore given to witness exactly the *how* of it or the *what* exactly that prompts her to do only now and not earlier or later what might, in fact, have never happened. We aren't told, aren't shown, and so are not equipped, as we might have been or

hoped otherwise to be able to learn from that critical moment about what precisely she'd needed or got, etc, from the time out that her narrative spends its bulk representing in order to bring it all to a (open) close. What we get, instead, after that first and only direct representation of her definitively, finally stepping in, is a scene showing her to have already and hours ago suddenly stepped out.

I mean, when I quit smoking several years ago, after years and years of wanting to desperately and trying and failing and promising to try again, but nevertheless putting off that moment when finally I did say, 'no, no more!!' and then stuck to it, it was easy (in retrospect?) to say to myself, or explain to others how in fact I did quit smoking, by telling them and myself a story about the woman I'd recently fallen in love with, with whom I wanted to spend the rest of my life, who rightly hated smoking, etc. I could tell about the little how-to book that convinced me that all I needed was to really want to (and then that I tell the people around me of my plan to); about the kids I'd just been hired to teach, around whom I didn't want to smell like an ashtray; and about this weeklong Korean thanksgiving holiday during which time I wouldn't need to think about anything except not smoking long enough to then go on and fill that emptiness the cigarettes had filled and left behind with something less poisonous (like completing this dissertation for example). Consequently, it seems in retrospect, I found that not smoking as I got up out of bed on that first morning, and again after breakfast and lunch, and again the next day and the next too and so on, that not smoking followed perfectly from the narrative of wanting not to and picking the right moment not to, and of hating and feeling ashamed that I had as if, to invert the vector of Gagnon's account, it only really took my (re)telling a good story to kill the smoker in me once and for all (or anyway long enough to have become also a non-smoker). In contrast, the heroine's version of her own getting up one

day and out and on with her new kind of writing life does not on the surface "follow," as J. Hillis Miller would say ("Anacoluthic" 151), from the narrative present moments that came before. As a matter of fact, the direction that her narrative takes in the wake of what, in retrospect, turns out to have been her final prompting herself out of the tub suggests, instead, the exact opposite outcome, that the heroine again would stay in her tub and her promises remain unkept.

"Shhh," as I've already noted her saying, "if the heroine keeps this up she'll be sorry. I'll work better outside the tub," suggesting that she has, in fact, been in some ways at work, as I have argued along with Anzaldua, in her bathtub state of withdrawal and apparent inactivity all this time (*Heroine* 167). "I'll have more distance," she tells herself and, "especially if I leave this place and go to one of those all night cafés" (167), which may well sound like a good idea and a step in the right direction towards actually starting her novel rather than what it seems to turn into instead, namely, only the setup for the step back of yet another deferral when her musing at this point about what "I can wear" brings along with it, again as if on cue, a reference to "Her" mother (168) and a rush of doubt, in turn, about whether "a real heroine would do what she feels like doing next" (168), namely, narrating the "sugary-vinagery" course of her heroine's complete disintegration, her "final humiliation (the reconciliation)" (170), that drawing in her diary and then going definitively below "THE LINE OF PAIN" where we find her at the outset, where "we are together again" and "I can't stand it, but I'm pretending" (171). Confirming, indeed, that in order to start writing the heroine had, first and repeatedly to put off doing so, what we get here, in the very last turns of phrase prior to her actually stepping out suddenly and at long last from her tub to start writing is the first and only complete, and the most explicit representation of her choosing to step, in fact, into that bathtub

state, below the line of pain, to immerse herself in that painful and paralyzing temporality of addiction in the first place, where she has, seemingly, been kept all this time from writing, which is to say, exactly where every other false promise to get out has taught us readers to expect, still, to find her, namely, in that enamel embrace (*Spaces* 80) of her "porcelain womb" ("A Very Rhythmic" 257). Even the stutter of sorts, or hesitation that opens the very next paragraph, "No, that isn't right either" (171), is in keeping with every other moment of resolve and repression we've been witness to thus far, and yet, instead of attending to the start up of yet another such cycle of promise and deferral, as we have been led so far to expect, what actually follows, suddenly, is her "Now I'm out" and sitting at that "arborite table" that I cited earlier (171), "until dawn," she adds, over the pages of notes from her diary that she has now spent all night highlighting and copying (173-177), that so-called "pain" written "in curved letters" that seems to "change the context of the room" (180), and the account of her feeling now that she's "stepped" (back) "through a glass" of sorts, like some sort of *Alice in Wonderland* (179), in the wake of which the first person has become third, as we saw in Gagnon, and that bewildered "Sir—" of the first page been transformed into the closing, compelling "She—" (182). Excellent, therefore, and good for our heroine (and for us who are learning from her, in turn), but exactly not what we'd been lead so far to expect.

This sort of gap, or crack, or slip in the narrative line between what we would be right to have expected and what actually does, and at the very climax of the plot, moreover, is a good example, then, of what Hillis Miller calls an "anacoluthon," or "failure of keeping" ("Anacoluthonic" 153). Discussing Proust's *À la Recherche du temps perdu*, and in particular the "details" of Marcel's "endless unsuccessful attempt, prolonged even after Albertine's death, to discover whether or not she has been lying to him when she swears she does not have



lesbian lovers" (154), Hillis Miller focuses initially on the very specific example of her shifting "from first to third person in the middle of a sentence" (151), before then moving on to a much wider range of non-sequiturs and failures to "follow" (152), where the "narrative line," he says, "does not hold together" (151), like that moment, for instance, when "suddenly" the heroine "can't remember how to get to the end of the sentence" (*Heroine* 175). Hillis Miller then goes on to theorize that the "anacoluthon in any of these modes brings into the open" certain persistent but still mistaken assumptions for example about the relationship between language and identity, notably, "the assumption that consciousness has priority over language" (152), rather than the other way around. Such cracks in narrative time, if I can call them that, make legible, Miller says, our "habit" of thinking that there must be a reason and agent behind such sudden shifts in trajectory, that such gaps and cracks are problems that can and must therefore be filled and explained, fixed and smoothed over, for example, by "mechanically projecting a single mental centre as the source for any piece of language" and every decision (152).

When "something that does not quite fit calls attention to itself," Hillis Miller goes on to argue, "when there is in one way or another an anacoluthon" (153) – a sudden and unexplained turn, for example, especially at what turns out to be the climax of our narrative – which as readers we then struggle "unsuccessfully to reduce" to some form of unity or identity or continuity, or at the very least stop and think, *Wait, what's just happened and why and how?*, Miller argues that our "mind" becomes "aware of its incorrigible tendency to lie to itself in this way, to tell itself stories," narratives of identity, so to speak, "that hang together and make a single sense" (153). We are offered, he says, in such specular sorts of moments, a chance "to catch the mind at its inveterate work" (155) of creating – writing necessarily – what he calls

"the alogical, that is, something sustained only by its fictional pseudocoherence" (156). We discover, he explains, that such a "precarious unity supported ... neither by reason nor by a mind that remains continuous with itself over time" (156), therefore, "always contains within itself the traces of its miscellaneous origin," that is, "one form or another of anacoluthon" (156) or, as he rather poetically adds, "a train of gunpowder that may cause the sequence to blow up if [even] a single spark [of attention] is applied" (156). "Irony," Hillis Miller then adds, is "the rhetorical name for this explosion," for the "permanent possibility of disaster inherent in any narrative line" (156), for the "impossibility" over which the very possibility of "all narrative" remains "suspended at every moment," "unresolvable or unstillable in meaning" (157). Difference, I simply called it earlier.

With her heroine "dressed up" for that "explosion" of "stunning irony" in "robes" of the very same (*Spaces* 134), and able in that sense to acknowledge, in the end, that though "in the 80s a story must" ostensibly "be all smooth and shiny," there will ever remain in her a "terrible violence" that "in any story... will break the smoothness of the surface" (*Heroine* 182), Scott clearly is well acquainted with the crack of such persistent precarity that is the threat and prehistory of a violent explosion residing at the very heart (both the origin and now the climax, too) of every narrative practice of identity and belonging (and of learning too in turn). Thus, I suggest, her narrative is so consistently crazed, in so many different ways, and from conception to term, by so many different sorts of cracks of difference that we can well speak of an organizing principle, indeed a poetics, as I noted earlier, of imperfection and deferral. Moreover, I suggest that while the *how* of her getting out of the tub is not, and perhaps cannot be, therefore, represented or accounted for expressly *in* the narrative – if all narrative, as Hillis Miler explained, is erected over such unstillable and irresolvable equations – then the answer

to that methodological question, *how*, must be represented finally *by* the narrative as a whole instead, by that poetics of imperfection and deferral I've been tracing the contours of throughout, through the pharmaco logic, effects and temporality that her narrative shares with addiction, and with violence too I want now to insist. I mean, the whole narrative, in this way, speaks of *how* suddenly, but recursively and slow, and violently, therefore, the heroine gets out of her bathtub state, as well as of *what* she has been doing there all along : exploding assumptions, attacking and testing and cracking them open. Specifically, it speaks to the violent logic and affect, and the recursive temporality that characterizes, as I will argue also in my reading of Fragoulis now, this whole process of writing subject creation, and of learning in turn that my project is designed to document and provide a vocabulary for.

I mean, if her getting out at first seemed so very sudden, so like a gunshot that we necessarily only see it actually happen indirectly and in retrospect, it now appears to have been taking place – she seems to have been getting out – again and again and repeatedly, from the very outset and to such an extent that it now seems to follow directly, however in that ironic sort of way that is constitutive of narrativity here, from her finally first stepping decidedly into the tub. I mean, she writes her way out of the tub, but only to the extent that she first of all and repeatedly puts off her promise to do so, and could not have started writing without at the same time starting over again and again, or properly and definitively finishing lest her climax happen over and again and indefinitely too. The heroine, similarly, could not finally tell her story without, as she says herself, "rejecting the form" in which it gets told ("On the Edge" 17), for the "act of writing" is also, and first of all, and still, an act of unwriting as well (Markotic 41), a "breaking of (the) sequence" of, and an introduction of "cracks" into (Friedman and Fuchs 3, 27), or "process of deconstructing traditional fictions about women"

(*Spaces* 62), which Linda Hutcheon calls a practice of "dedoxification" (in Blumberg 58), and which I would describe, following Fanon and in line with my reading of *Heroine* as a narrative of addiction, as a process of *de-toxification* (Fanon 96). It is a process, again, that takes time, perhaps because it is violent, or otherwise more obviously would be; because the heroine cannot give birth to a new writing subject without simultaneously double-binding her to the violence of either those "romantic" and "heterosexual plots" (Irvine 116-117), those "coercive" and "uncongenial" plots that would "infect" her heroine's sentence(s) and "breed" there passivity (Gilbert and Gubar 130, 142, 117); because of the violence arguably of "the drift and deferral of writing," as Moyes has already noted, the "contradictions and vicissitudes" of its movements, which "diffuse the subject as much as [they] bring her into focus" (Moyes, "Affective" 10). In this way, and perhaps most importantly, I could not honestly describe *Heroine*, as Scott describes *Main Brides* too, as an effective response to "the big questions" ("In Conversation" with Moyes 209), or to the kinds of violence against women that the massacre at the Polytechnique in 1989 was only the closest and most blatant example of, without at the same time admitting to its being shaped by, as Fanon says "*par un juste retour des choses*" (51) and "*comme du tac au tac*" (Bergson 83), some version of that very logic and affect of violence itself. Indeed, if at the outset the practice of reading as such, like the writing of *Heroine* in particular, seemed to promise an alternative to that violent logic of identity thinking identified by Marcotte as governing institutionally the study of literature, and dangerously so, it is not, finally, by being completely other than, and innocent of, that violence that Scott has successfully done so, I argue. Certainly, this is what Simon Harel insists that we admit of in his *Braconages* and what Daniel Coleman's theorizing of "wry civility" compels us to open up to in our understandings of Canadian history and literary pedagogies (*White*

*Civility*).

Moreover, and what is perhaps most interesting about all of this intersecting of violence and writing in the wake of Miller's "Anacoluthonic Lie," is how careful he is, in the end, to add that "criticism" too, like writing (and learning to read, in turn, I am arguing) remains "suspended over" the very same "abyss" of its own simultaneous impossibility and necessity, namely, the "abyss of its inability to interpret satisfactorily" (157), the same alogic and ultimately the same violence that the form, function, and force of the fiction I have just been reading is organized by and over which it presides, contingent, precarious, but all the more so therefore effective. The "reader's interpretation" of narrative too (156), Miller insists, and the pedagogy I am attempting to derive from it, I add, is founded on and conditioned, therefore, by the same impossibility, the same crack of irony, the same strangest of recursive spaces in time, and the same threat and prehistory, logic and affect of violence as that we've seen dramatized in the heroine's project. That ostensible violence of representation, however, and of learning, in turn, remains still largely undefined here and it is for this reason that I turn, now, to Tess Fragoulis' own first full-length fiction, to the very similar story it tells, as that in *Heroine*, of the alternately productive and repressive power of narrative, and of the violence that such a power, as all power always, depends upon (Arendt, *On Violence* 242). Specifically, I want to attend to the likewise climactic anacoluthon there, through the crack of which is become all the more legible, that strange temporality of literary practice that is decidedly both unlike and continuous with that of a gun-shot.

## Tess Fragoulis' *Ariadne's Dream* and the Time of the Violence of Narrative

Language itself ... is haunted by violence encrypted in its unconscious, and the work of fiction must necessarily include the chating of this. At numerous junctures specific words trigger cracks, fissures, and gaps signaling hungry ghosts of history, seemingly innocent colonial language which actually harbours murderous impulses (as casually as fly-swatters).  
- Meredith Quartermain, "How Fiction Works" (126).

Nominated for the IMPAC-Dublin Literary award in 2003, *Ariadne's Dream* tells a modern, comic version of that ancient tragic myth of Ariadne of Crete, "daughter of Minos" and "betrayed of her people" who was, in turn, betrayed by her lover Theseus and sister Phaedra, abandoned on a deserted island, and fated, by Poseidon, "to remain [t]here as the consort of [his] brother Dionysus," the wine god (Fragoulis 318).<sup>120</sup> A modern version then, not quite the same as the others, and necessarily so, if Gertrude Stein was right to say that there is "no such thing as repetition. 'No matter how you say it you say it differently'" (in Scott, "There is no such thing" 9). Indeed, Fragoulis' performance "provokes," as Webb might

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<sup>120</sup> At least this is the version of the myth that Fragoulis' novel engages with, and even incorporates. Many other versions of the myth exist, including those that cast Theseus, rather than Ariadne, in the role of the story's hero, and those that start with, rather than end with, Ariadne's marriage to Dionysus. Fragoulis' narrator, though, limits her references to such versions as Ovid's, that end with the pain of Ariadne's abandonment (see 313-319), and Mary Renault's *The King Must Die*, in which the story of the harvest king who is killed annually and sown into fields as a sacrifice appears in Fragoulis' novel as a story Ariadne remembers her grandmother telling (26). In an interview with Joel Yanofsky, Fragoulis refers also to a collection of myths given her by her father over which she gained a sense of ownership, a sense that these ancient myths belong to her as she belongs to the tradition they represent, and a sense, therefore, of how empowered she might be to alter their narratives. Though this remains far beyond the scope of this present account, comparing Fragoulis' narrative to the many other versions of the Ariadne myth, I think, would prove a very fruitful exercise indeed, especially when it comes to Ariadne's letter to Theseus, collected in Ovid's *Heroides*, because of the ways in which Ariadne there is explicitly represented as a writing-subject, something that only happens very subtly, or indirectly, but crucially, I argue, here.

have said (81), a "consciousness of [the] differences" between old and new, modern and mythic, etc., that is as important to me here as the differences are for Scott between "the 'Paris' I had imagined" and the one that her narrator found during "a recent extended stay" there; between the "many beggars. Evicted squatters, from Africa, huddled near a metro" and the "elegantly curved walls of her studio" with "outside, signs saying *Onglerie, Maître Parfumeur, Fromagerie*," for which "I," also a migrant in Paris, feels "slightly guilty"; and between the writer's "desire to escape. To read, to write, to dream" and the much more urgent need to escape that kills the "man of African origin, soon to be pausing there" on the same bridge, to take in the same view as the white writer who, "possessing (she reads later in the paper) only a photocopy [of his papers] panics, jumps into the river and drowns" (Scott, "There is no such thing" 9). Indeed, it is significant, I argue, that Fragoulis inserts into that mythical narrative of seduction and abandon, of promise and betrayal an other, equally tragic story of addiction and withdrawal, about which I will have more to say in a moment. The most obvious and evident of such departures though, from the ancient version, is Fragoulis' reversal, indeed, her subversion of or 'breaking the sequence of' that mythic version (Friedman and Fuchs), is manifest, most of all, in how the novel actually ends where the myth began, and begins in turn where the myth normally ends. It is significant in the sense that it effectively transforms a Greek tragedy (where "the bad end unhappily and the good unluckily") into a comedy (where everyone born to live lives happily ever after, so to speak).<sup>121</sup> Indeed, as her narrator notes on the very first page of the novel, *Ariadne's Dream*

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<sup>121</sup> "We're tragedians you see. We follow directions—there is no choice involved. The bad end unhappily, the good unluckily. That is what tragedy means," explains the Player to Guildenstern and Rosencrantz in Tom Stoppard's theatrical then filmic version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (50).

will seem, to the "interested observer," much more "like something out of a Saturday morning cartoon" than the "Monday afternoon tragedy" that it otherwise conventionally is (8).<sup>122</sup>

Thus, whereas the mythical Ariadne of Crete must remain forever stranded on the island of her tragic abandon, the effect of her betrayal having permanently foreclosed any possibility of return, Fragoulis' modern heroine, in the end, "escape[s] from the ancient narrative" (337), and returns "to Montreal. Home," where "she understands the underpinnings, the subtext, and the rules," where "there is room *to make up new ways of being*," and where "you are not condemned to repeat the same mistakes forever, to travel along the same rut like a *prisoner* of fate – someone else's, not even your own" (340-341; emphasis added). Whereas the mythical Ariadne must repeat forever "I am dead ... I am killed" (319), Fragoulis' modern heroine "appears reborn and fresh" (361) having remembered now that "*He* is dead ... My god, *he* is killed" (342; emphasis added). However, if in the end the modern Ariadne is 'free' in that sense to come home and sit smiling with her friend on a bench in Jeanne Mance Park, throughout the bulk of the narrative, and even already at the outset, Ariadne seems, uncannily, already dead: already fallen, already seduced and betrayed by her lover Yannis and supposed-sister Medea; already "damned" (9), doomed, and in the midst of being "carried" off (43) upon the "cyclone" winds of a "fate" that only seems, we'll see, not to be of her own choosing (12),

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<sup>122</sup> Previous versions of this part of the chapter were prepared for Lianne Moyes' graduate seminar, in 2004; for the *Narrative Matters* conference, held in Fredericton, NB, in 2004, in which Fragoulis' novel served as an illustration and point of engagement with Michael White and David Epstein's evolution of Brief and Family therapies into what has come to be called and practiced as "narrative therapy" (cf. *Narrative Means*); and for a panel on addiction narratives convened at the *Permeability and Selfhood*, McGill graduate student symposium, in 2006. But the first and main sprout for the argument came in a graduate seminar taught by Nathalie Cooke at the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada, in 2003, called "Scripts for Women," in which as the name suggests close attention was paid to poetic and narrative forms of intervention into and revision of the roles internalized by women writers in the patriarchal and violent society and literary tradition that we encounter. The notion of a *poetics of intervention* to which we are coming below comes from that very first occasion.



a "story" that seemed "to have nowhere to go" (170) except into exile, on the island of Nysas, where she would appear to be "condemned" to remain there "the consort of the wine god" (155), her employer, the "tyrant and slave driver" (14) Thanasis, in "the abyss" (74) of his jazz club, The Scat. Ariadne seems to be reliving, misstep by step, that ancient myth, which is to say that stories, as I've suggested before, can be both powerful and dangerous.

Thus, "like a prisoner" (50), "entangled" in and "umbilically" bound by (8) the recursive temporality of an ancient narrative, which we witnessed the likes of in Gagnon, and again just now in *Heroine*, Ariadne seems, until the end, a "mute, humourless creature, stunned, blighted and possessed by a ringing in her ears ... " (65), intoxicated (71) and diseased (131), ill and corrupted (188, 172) by the *doxa* (Blumberg 58; Hutcheon, *Politics* 7) of that "coercive" and "uncongenial plot" (Gilbert and Gubar 130, 142), that "dominant" or "problem-saturated" narrative (White 18, 39), or those "toxic narratives" (Quartermain 119) that have, to borrow a phrase from Emily Dickinson, infected Ariadne's sentence with "despair" and "bred" its "crippling effects" (in Gilbert and Gubar, 52-53); or so at the outset it seems. Like Scott's heroine in her bathtub state, Ariadne, too, seems "paralyzed" (93), to have lost "track of time" (153) and so lost the ability to determine for herself the course of her own life story. Lost, she appears, somewhere along on that "singular and predetermined road that every Ariadne who has not yet reached twenty-one must eventually tread" (78) like "a character in a tale that ended badly" (124). Like an addict suffering, we've seen, from some "indwelling alterity" (Ronell, *Crack* 112), and like the heroine suffering from a language necessarily over full of the interests of others, "Something inside her," the narrator notes, "dead as she is, has taken over her actions" (12). Whether by "fate," or "whatever," something, as the novel opens, and still in the end, "had taken charge of her actions" (322), so that she

appears throughout as being "powerless against the undertow" of that mythical story of her dispossession (72) and colonized, as Fanon might have described, by a power not her own. Indeed, her *disintegration*, to borrow another term from Scott's heroine, is ostensibly so complete that the language of colonialism becomes increasingly apt here, as it was also earlier in our discussions of Gagnon and yet, and as Anne Marlowe says of all addictions, or as Marie Gagnon admitted of her own incarceration, and as Scott's heroine describes and Anzaldua recalled, indeed, Ariadne has, critically and manifestly, chosen and "chased" after her own "fate" (109).

Unlike the little gypsy girl, "no more than seven, barefoot and bare-armed to better display her twisted limbs ... [all] bruised and broken" (300), whom Ariadne meets in the subway car on her way to visit Medea (where she is about to discover the full extent of her betrayal), and who "was not offered a choice," Ariadne realizes that she has had a choice all along, and so "weeps [of course] uncontrollably" (301). Indeed, it is Ariadne who has "buried herself alive," has chosen tragically "four walls" to represent "her independence and freedom" (80). It is Ariadne who chose to exile herself into that u-topic, "fantasy city" of her own creation (81). Indeed, and as I will argue more explicitly in a moment, it seems to have been Ariadne all along that has written herself into this mythical and problem-saturated narrative, precisely as one paints oneself into a corner. Certainly, it was she who dismissed her friends' warnings about her lover-to-be, Yannis, and his heroin addiction; she who dismissed her own "dream of blood and syringes, ... convincing herself that she was in control, the one with the finger on the trigger" (109); and it was she who "had crossed the line that had been drawn for her in the dusty Athenian street" (110), knocked at the door (115) and, "like a reluctant bride" stepped into her painful fate (116). Indeed, whereas the whole narrative is framed by that

meddlesome gaggle of gods gathered round to watch the unfolding of, and to debate over, Ariadne's fate (83ff), the very same omnipotents are heard to admit, both in the beginning and again at the end, that they "don't" in fact "entirely know" what will happen to Ariadne, that "there are a number of choices" for her to make, including even the choice to have come to Greece in the first place or to have taken up with Yannis. Indeed, in setting her "free," in the end, the only freedom that those gods have the power to grant her, in fact, is a freedom she has always already had and exercised all along, which is to say, the power to "decide" for herself and so, I will argue, to tell her own story (340).

This even retrospective ascription of agency is crucial, as it is in *Heroine*, for how it makes sense, finally, of that primal scene in which Ariadne has just been fatally and finally betrayed and yet, the narrator remarks, she somehow "found the energy and the clarity of mind to remove herself from Athens so quickly and efficiently after her fall," which at this point in the story, "remains one of those *mysteries* surrounding the will to live and its powers of rejuvenation – otherwise known as *running on empty*" (320; emphasis added). I want to suggest, then, that what seems at first *mysterious* is exactly that which is constitutive of the text in question, its organizing principle, as Derrida describes: "*un texte n'est pas un texte que s'il cache au premier regard la loi de sa composition, et la règle de son jeu*" ("*La pharmacie*" 257). Similarly, "Every plot might be said to conceal a secret" (Carr and Eichhorn 29). Just as in *Heroine* her practice of writing (subjectivity) is made possible only in the temporal space and recursive distance that opens up between repeatedly putting off and then finally stepping out, *Ariadne's Dream* becomes what it is in the space that remains, necessarily, between first and third person narration, between the Ariadne whose story is being told and the Ariadne, I argue, doing the telling, between her choosing initially to subject herself to that drug plot and

then her complete inversion of what, by novel's end, has become instead a narrative of addiction. Indeed, this is Ariadne's very own dream we are reading, straight from the horse's mouth as they say, and so it has been all along.

Thus, the "secret" that "remains" at the outset imperceptible in (and constitutive, therefore, of the textuality of) Fragoulis' fiction is what turns out later to have been that "part of" Ariadne "that was still in control" the whole time (321), "that still somehow survived" (322), that didn't "make it over the rail" into the water to drown (323-4) – which is to say, that (narrating) part of her that will in the end determine "that she would never again lose track of time in that way" and, for that reason, "pulls on a white t-shirt and white pants that will be stained with Foreplays, French Kisses and Orgasms by closing" so that "the scars of the night will be *written* all over her body" (154; emphasis added).<sup>123</sup> What remains imperceptible at the outset is that part of Ariadne that would later decide "that a *marking* was in order," a tattoo, "an outer scar that suggested the holocaust within" (245), a sign that "this pain is her own" (250), that part of her, finally, that, as she washes away the "drying blood on her torso," after fatally shooting her addict-ex, Yannis (as we will see in a moment), paints "an 'A' onto the surface of her belly, skin tone on a red background" (346) – 'A' for Ariadne, Agent, Abandoned, Addict, Auteur – that part of her able still (or therefore) to make choices as she owns those she has already made. Arguably, it is that agency, that owning of responsibility, even in the face of dispossession, that enables Hester Prynne to survive or escape, as Gagnon's narrator does, and belong like Scott's heroine and go home (or get out of the tub as the case

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<sup>123</sup> As I will soon be suggesting that Fragoulis' novel too, like Scott's and Dandurand's, is a *specular fiction*, so might I point out now, in advance, that this and the next two emphases added serve as specular figures of the practice of writing embedded in the thing written.

may be), while those who do not cannot (like Yannis, and like the Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale).<sup>124</sup>

*Ariadne's Dream*, in this sense, becomes a story about what remains hidden in a narrative, although in plain sight. It is about that position (of power) from which is told and retold, in the third person, the present and the past, the indicative and subjunctive, prosaically, cinematically, and photographically her own story about the variously colonizing and de-colonizing power of narrative, the power to open up a space, to gape a crack of difference and maintain, as we saw in Gagnon too, the kind of distance that remains, *entre autres*, between ancient and modern times, mythical Naxos and fictional Montreal. It is a story, finally, about that narrative power that is constitutive of the heroine-ism that I am looking here to learn to read (and derive a pedagogy) from. Therefore, I want now to turn to a more explicit description of that position of power that Fragoulis provides a figure for in the ghostly and godly third person narrator of *Ariadne's Dream*, that power that is the condition of the possibility (and impossibility) of the practice and (re)birth of writing and subjectivity, and of the violent logic and strange temporality upon which that power depends and as a result of which a fiction becomes pedagogical.

(I should note though, at this point, just to be clear, that although the argument I am making presumes that the narrator of *Ariadne's Dream* is, in fact, Ariadne herself, there is

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<sup>124</sup> Indeed, there are many interesting parallels deserving to be drawn and further developed than I have time to here, between the adulterers in Hawthorne's classic, *The Scarlet Letter*, and the addicts of one sort or another in Fragoulis and Scott; between those gendered subjects who do in some ways wear (or assume) some version of that red A on their chest, as Hester Prynne and Ariadne do, who acknowledge what they are and aren't, that there is an alternative to the very rigid and deadly confines of an identity to be protected at all costs, and who go on therefore to live in some ways happily ever after, and those who, like Dimmesdale and Yannis, do not; but the question remains the same, namely, what is it finally that makes the difference between the one and the other.

really no incontrovertible sign, in the story itself, that this is necessarily the case. There is, admittedly, nothing at all to enable me to say definitively that Ariadne is narrating her own story, retrospectively, and omnisciently, in the third person, as if from that park bench in Montreal to her friend, for the narrator, however "chatty," remains as nameless, faceless, and placeless as every good omniscient should be! And yet, there is, by the same token, likewise no way to tell for sure that this is not actually the case, that this is not, indeed, as the title suggests, *Ariadne's Dream* from first to last, that Ariadne is not the omniscient narrator, both first person and third, at once and *au plurielle*. The question, ultimately, is undecidable and groundless, a trail of gunpowder all the more so tantalizing to my decidedly *inveterate* reading mind (Miller, "Anacoluthonic"), and particularly so as we arrive at that other simultaneously anacoluthonic and climactic moment that ultimately is the reason why we have, in the first place, taken this final detour through *Ariadne's Dream*).

That being said then, I note that Ariadne is throughout represented as being the very agent of her own dispossession and betrayal, as having the same white skin (208) and porcelain fingers (301) as Yannis' "white bride" (his heroin) does (91). Consequently, just as Yannis, hoping Ariadne's presence, her "natural intoxication," will help him stave off his withdrawal from heroin pains (126), "takes (Ariadne) into his arms" as he does the heroin he is hooked on (149, 291), so does Ariadne want, when Yannis shows up on the island later seeking revenge, "to enter him" (277).<sup>125</sup> I argue therefore, and again, though in different terms, that Ariadne, in the guise of the 3rd person "chatty" narrator, has had the power all

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<sup>125</sup> The apparent inversion here of conventional gendered distribution of vectors – of entering and being entered – is something I do not attend much to, though it would no doubt be a fruitful line to follow.

along of a drug, injected or inhaled, to intervene in, enter into, and so transform this tragedy into a comedy. She is shown to have that sort of real semiotic effect described by Teresa Delauretis in her essay on "the violence of representation" where, to fill the gap of something seemingly amiss in Foucault's theory (246), she turns to Pierce's assertion that "the problem of what the 'meaning' of an intellectual concept is can only be solved by the study of" what he calls "interpretants," a set of three interpretants to be specific, or "proper significant effects" he calls them, namely, "feelings," the consequent "efforts" we deploy in the wake of such affects, and finally "habit-changes" (Delauretis 247-248). I mean, the logic and cause of Ariadne's dispossession (heroin addiction) is, in Fragoulis' version, articulated by the same language of need and withdrawal, the same logic of intervention and affect that defines the creative and pedagogical power that I want to ascribe to the act of narration itself (and of learning to know in turn) and to its heroism, by which, I argue, Ariadne ultimately escapes.

Thus, the narrator describes at different times how Ariadne, the heroine with an 'e', "*slipped* into" the lives of her new friends in Athens (89) in the same terms that describe how the anonymous "words" that were "*slipped* under her door" she supposes by Yannis, or those too that he speaks directly to her that "*slipped* into her" (105), opening up "her insides" (105), or again his "essence" which "*entered* her pores, filling her with longing, fulfillment, exultation all at once" (120), with that "rush of new desire" (121), that same "old familiar longing" that fills Yannis' body when he "*slipped* the needle into" his arm (149). Words here, like needles, slip in through the pores of the skin, as people do, too, into and out of each other's lives and not to no effect. Therein – in this logic of intervention and interjection, of what Barthes called the *punctum* of photography – lies the power (and the poetic) "of expansion" (Barthes, *Camera* 45) that I am ascribing here to (Fragoulis') narrative and its

practice: "to seize the attention of the individual [reader], making the image inescapable," as Corey Frost describes in his essay on Scott's use of punctuation ("Punc'd 41); or, in Fragoulis' terms, to pierce and thereby blow open new spaces of creative possibility in places otherwise walled up with constraints. Just as memory, likewise, if inversely, is represented as bursting *out* "through the skin in blue-black pustules that permanently disfigure us, breaking open when we sleep, spotting our pillowcases with florets of red-black blood" (Fragoulis 30), like so many track marks along a junkie's overused network of blood vessels, the third person narrator of *Ariadne's Dream* – Ariadne herself – is seen to be constantly slipping into and bursting out through the lungs and the pores of the body of the story being told at any given moment, affective, capacious, and transformative, and thus too shall I describe the poetics at work here throughout.<sup>126</sup>

For example, in chapter five where, just as Ariadne remembers the story of Yannis' betrayal, because prompted by her friend Karina's questions, when "Ariadne's story [is about to pour] out" of her (Fragoulis 30), the narrator intervenes in the place of that *discourse of/from memory* with an italicized *discourse on memory*, on how memory, generally, like narrative itself, I suggested in chapter one, is as visceral and affective, or (de)formative as drug use is or can be. Indeed, in the course of this account of how memory, that "obsequious," "sadistic," "manipulative," and "unforgiving" "story-spinner" (30-31), is something people *drown* in, something from which nothing and no one can be *erased* (35), how it can therefore be like a disease, something that *plagues* (35) and by which she is "branded on the inside of

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<sup>126</sup> The vectors of in and out again are far less important to me than the logic and effect of the bursting and piercing of skin and bloodlines which Barthes' account of the *punctum* that photography can effect may serve as yet another, and equally violent, way of describing the logic and effect that I want to be ascribing to fiction and literacy.



her forehead" (32), "somewhere deep inside" (31), the narrator/Ariadne is careful to attend to each one of the senses of the body where memory, like narrative and addiction, operates and rules. The narrator suggests, moreover, that Ariadne "isn't the exception" in all this, "but one of the minions that proves the rule" (34). Memory, like a drug, and like narrative I argue, intervenes, violently, cutting, piercing, bruising, and insinuating, and the effects in each case are real, transformative, controlling, dis- or en-abling, and insistent.

It is in this context and in these terms that I read how Fragoulis' reviewers have (in many ways, rightly) complained of, or at the very least been so prompt to note the "author's mischievous, chatty, and omniscient (godlike?) narration" (Yanofsky); how for that reason "it takes a long time for anything significant to happen" (Yanofsky); how the narrative's numerous "celestial intrusions (by turns comic and earnest)" and its "occasional heavy-handed treatments" (Prikryl) can make a reader wonder if "the Coles Notes version had been accidentally published in the same volume as the novel" (Prikryl). Indeed, it is true that the novel (like this thesis too) at times seems longer than it needed to be, in part because of how the same story seems to be told over and over again in different forms, tenses, moods, and voices, and goes on, then, for several chapters still beyond the ostensible end and climax of the thing (to which we are coming now, presently, I promise). However right though they are, and no doubt as a result of the haste and brevity generally characteristic of their genre, her reviewers are, by the same token, not given to consider what, I argue, is the narrative function and significance of these addictive, repetitive logics and affects, that poetics of intervention that, as in *Heroine*, makes narrative time seem to stand still or anyway go around and around and simultaneously back and forth. They do not seem to suppose that there may indeed be a connection between the number of different forms taken to tell the story and the significant

differences that arise in particular between this and the ancient, mythical version as if, I am suggesting now, it were precisely by virtue of its recursive telling and retelling, and of the temporality that poetic implies (that gift of time), that the narrator is able to transform what otherwise would remain only a tragic, problem-saturated narrative. Indeed, Fragoulis' reviewers have largely omitted any reference whatsoever to what I suggest is that most significant of differences between the mythic and modern versions, namely, Ariadne's eventual escape from exile and her return, and it is no surprise therefore that they do not stop to ask, as I have of *Heroine* too, how Ariadne has managed it.

Content, it seems, to enjoy only the *what* of the story of love and addiction and betrayal, or to complain of the *how* of it, they fail to consider the relationship itself between the two, namely, the possibility that *Ariadne's Dream* is more interestingly a story about the means (ie. the violence of intervention) and the temporality (slowly and recursively) by which a body can come, in the end, to tell (and so to live) a preferable version of her own story, that is, to intervene in and interrupt, even subvert or de-doxify (Hutcheon, *Politics* 7), or detoxify (Fanon 52) her relation to an especially "dominant, problem-saturated narrative," by inserting there what Michael White and David Epston call "unique outcomes" (55) and, in so doing, open up that kind of space (of longing and exultation?) through and into which new (or ancient) forms of heroine-ism and pedagogy can emerge and step, that crack of difference, imperfection and deferral which I insist on calling simply (new) *narrative* or pedagogical *space* and which I want now to describe as being inherently, structurally, necessarily violent. And, for the occasion left me by these critics to make such a claim, and to own up, finally, to this violence of representation I've been beating around the bush of all along here, I am hereby indebted and grateful. Therefore, and by way then of a gap of good fortune again, I turn now

to the reason for bringing *Ariadne's Dream* into comparison with Scott's *Heroine*, namely, to that climactic (and anacoluthonic) moment where, in an explosion of gun violence, Ariadne finally and definitively escapes her otherwise tragic fate, where her narrative (understood as a totalizing, smooth and linear mode of representation) decidedly fails, in a poetic flash that, and in comparison with such a similar moment in *Heroine, entre autres*, succeeds in making legible the *violence of rhetoric* that is, so to speak, written between the lines of all that *rhetoric of violence* I've been collecting here and from the outset (DeLauretis).

Ariadne travelled to her immigrant parents' native Greece, initially, filled with the romance of teenage idealism, only to be disappointed by what she found there and, in the process, became embroiled in a literally toxic relationship with a heroin addict *cum* failed singer/songwriter who, as you might expect, betrays her. It is at this point that she is exiled/exiles herself off to the pleasure island of Naxos which, as I noted earlier, mirrors the fate of the mythical Ariadne. When Yannis later shows up on the island determined to kill (344) "the woman who," he decided, "has ruined [his] life" (280) but, in classic, distracted junkie style, nods off mid-sentence, dropping his gun right into her hand – where it has arguably always already been<sup>127</sup> – Ariadne hesitates, though only for a moment, before "automatically, as if directed by somebody else," shoving it into his belly (344). Yannis wakes at this point and, looking up at her a-straddle him on her bed, and at the gun she is holding on

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<sup>127</sup> Indeed, as I've already noted, above, Ariadne has had the power to determine her own course all along. In the wake of a terribly ominous blood filled dream she had had about him, Ariadne's best friend Medea urges her to hand over the piece of paper with Yannis' phone number on it, offering to throw it away, and Ariadne feels that she is being asked "to hand over the *gun*" she has been threatening herself with (98; emphasis added); and then, a few pages later, the narrator notes how Ariadne had "chased her fate, crumpled phone number in hand, dismissing the dream ... , and convincing herself that she was in control, the one with the *finger on the trigger*," which is, it turns out, perfectly true (109; emphasis added).

him, pleads for his life though mistakenly, even perhaps inevitably, calls out not her name but Medea's, Ariadne's erstwhile "best-friend" and Yannis' co-conspirator in her betrayal (283). "A dead silence rises between them," in the present tense, and then "shatters" as the paragraph breaks off into that anacoluthon where, we must assume, the gun goes off/Ariadne pulls the trigger, signifying that she is forthwith free from/will no longer continue to suffer from, or be subjected to and subjugated by the same death-desiring disease of addiction and passivity by which she seems to have been bound all along, or immersed in, so that she can now return home, to Montreal, to tell her story, a story that is now, if it wasn't before, clearly hers (131). This is the moment (or logic), I argue, in which she finally owns the role and the power she has effectively had all along (and learns to know, by extension), when the line between the modern and the mythical, or tragic and comic is definitively drawn, when the line between her writing and her addict (boyfriend) self is blurred and a heroine (a new *heroinism*) is reborn. Indeed, the gunshot is the ultimate act of intervention/introjection that, I argue, defines here the practice and pedagogy of writing (and reading) that I am after here and calling heroine-ism.

*We can only assume that the gun goes off here*, I say, because the moment itself of her pulling the trigger and murdering Yannis, however in self-defence, is never directly represented. Indeed, I suggest, it could not be. We aren't shown the finger pull, the hammer hit, the flash of fire, pierce of skin, burst of blood, or body recoil. Like that "too-bright" light of "truth's superb surprise" which Emily Dickinson noted we can therefore only "tell [in] slant" (792), and like the "punctual brevity" of that "flash" of lightening discussed by Wlad Godzich in his introduction to Paul DeMan's *Blindness and Insight* which, "even if the eye could train itself exactly on the flash, and were able to predict the exact moment and place of

its occurrence, it would remain unseeing and blinded by the force of the light" (xx), so too the always somehow too-sudden and too-terminal violence of a gunshot (or, of writing too, I suggest) cannot be directly shown. The violence of the explosion of a gunshot is traumatizing indeed precisely because, as I noted earlier, even when we can all too easily see it coming and it is no surprise, perhaps because we are holding it our very selves, the actual explosion of it nevertheless still comes as if too-sudden and too-soon to experience directly (cf Caruth, *Unclaimed*). Like the letters in the names of the 14 murdered women in the *Nef des reines* near the school, written out in negative space to mark that the women themselves are now no longer here, though their absence remains writ large upon some part of our collective psyche, and just as our blindness to the brightness of the lightning bolt itself "reveals" however "the inner configuration of the surrounding landscape and the forces at play within it," says Godzich again (xx), so are we able at this climax of Fragoulis' fiction only to imagine and suppose the gun's going off when (and this is the closest we will ever get to its representation), in what is actually a whole new paragraph, the very next sentence appears, not in the present tense narration ("rises . . . shatters") that we could well have been led to expect by the account thus far, but in the past tense rather, the shot having already been taken, and the climax already come and been in that sense missed (for t'was only a tickle?): "Ariadne *felt* the explosion of the bullet in his belly as if it had punctured her own" (345), with that instability of pronouns we have now come to expect from the explosion of violent intentions.

The gunshot itself is not represented *in the narrative* and, like the heroine's getting out of her tub and starting to write finally, perhaps it cannot be. Indeed, it cannot be represented *in the narrative* because it has all this time, and necessarily so I suggest, been represented instead *by the narrative*, by its poetic of incessant interventions and crossings of number and person,

and by its consequent cycles of recursions and reiterations, that is, by its violent logic and addictive temporality which, simultaneously, limits and enables, or "blocks" and "compels," as Anzaldua put it (96), our sense of what is happening at any given moment both in the text itself and in the pedagogical space that our practice of reading opens up around it. The gunshot is not and perhaps cannot be narrated because the act of narration – of Ariadne finally taking up that 3rd person, godlike control over what is, after all, her own story – is, figuratively speaking, that very same shot in the belly. That explosion and the blurring it brings with it – which we have seen versions of earlier, in our discussion of Brossard's reaction to the news of the shooting at the Polytechnique, and in Gail's account of the work of writing – that gunshot is a figure for that something "in" both violence and "in" writing that makes them "equivalent" (Grosz, "Time of Violence" 136), a figure for the "violence of rhetoric" that the "rhetoric of violence" I've been collecting throughout makes legible (DeLauretis 240), the violence from which, I argue, devolves the power and pedagogical promise of narrative to form and, in this case, transform the present or to blur, as we've seen, (or enforce for that matter) boundaries grammatical and otherwise, to intervene in and alter dynamics and dramas, refuse (or alternately impose) silence and passivity, and produce, to borrow Foucault's word, (and otherwise repress too) a whole new range of subject positions and pedagogical possibilities. A specular, and spectacular figure indeed, that reading *Ariadne's Dream*, only in this way comparatively, makes legible.

Thus, and just as in the wake of Scott's own similarly anacoluthonic moment of climax, when the heroine has stood up and stepped out of her bathtub state and started to write, we are witness, however in retrospect, to the power of narrative to "change the context of the room" (*Heroine* 180), so now that the gun has gone off, though too quickly to see it happen except

indirectly, that is, by way of its effects, does Ariadne get up and roll Yanniss' body into the bed sheets and up against the far wall, out of the way. She peels off her now blood-soaked clothes to bathe and, "along the curving lines" of drying blood and water paints that "'A' onto the surface of her belly" that I cited earlier, "skintone on a red backdrop" (346). Having finally become, now, the writing-subject she has arguably always been, at least potentially, and having definitively taken or cleared up for herself the space in which to act, rather than simply and perpetually be acted upon – now that the bullet has punctured his, as if it were her own, belly and killed that part of herself that otherwise she might have died from – Ariadne looks around the room to find it now "felt dank, empty, like a cave no one had inhabited for the last 1000 years" (346) and, so, dresses and steps out of that tragic fate, "heading for the village gates" and the port from which she'll leave, barefoot but nevertheless "stepping carefully around broken glass" (337), rather than be paralyzed by it lying all around or push it "deeper" into her "feet" as Scott's heroine did (*Heroine* 109), she recalls, in a not particularly shining moment, having smoked too much "dope" on a rooftop overlooking the St-Jean Baptiste Day parade during a high school trip to Montreal. Indeed, the *context of the room* has changed.



**Fig. 9: "Dangerous Art : Robert The's Book Gun" (in Waddel)**

What all is meant or not and signified by this ostensible *convergence* (to use Blodgett's word again) of the logic of violence and the poetics of narrative practice – by the fact that, as Gagnon put it, "*c'est d'ailleurs pour mettre au monde l'écrivaine que j'ai décidé de tuer celle qui dépend de la poudre*" (*Héroïnes* 18) – is, of course, a large part of the point of this project finally, and it is upon that convergence of violence and poetics that I ground the pedagogy into which I am translating my reading of Scott. One thing I certainly do not mean here to do, and

notwithstanding the horizons of metaphoricity I sought to establish in chapter one at the intersection of bodies and stories, or of literary and corporeal effects, is to wash away into the relative abstraction of a fiction, the pain and death and trauma inflicted and threatened by all the sorts of violence, the actual shooting and cutting, and killing and raping, and maiming (or bombing, robbing, and enslaving) on display in and splayed across Scott's cities, Dandurand's newspapers, and in our own. Indeed, my intention is exactly otherwise, namely, to raise, instead, the stakes involved in how we read (or not) and (even whether or not we) learn to. I mean, reading or not this book or that, and in this way instead of another, will never itself directly cause (or prevent) bodies to be strewn dead in hallways or in parks, because a book is not itself a gun, regardless of how meaningful may be an artist's sculpting of a book into the shape of one (Figure 9).<sup>128</sup> Still, the ways in which (and what) we read (and learn or not to read) do have real effects, I am compelled by Scott and Fragoulis and others to argue, on such and similar explosions, for instance, of gun violence as that which is memorialized at *La Nef des 14 reines*.

Hence the appeal of the poetic resources deployed by Alfred Arteaga in his "Foreward" to the volume in which, *entre autres*, Grosz's oft here cited essay on Derrida is collected, in which he insists that "the fact of violence" is "the spilling of human blood;" that violence, "act and event, is red;" and that even where it isn't spilled exactly or quite, it is "not apart from

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<sup>128</sup> The artist in question here, one of a series of so-called book artists discussed in an essay by Elizabeth Waddell, is called Robert The, who perhaps most notably carved Marshal McLuhan's *The Medium is the Massage* into the shape of a handgun, simultaneously to "reinforce McLuhan's theory that technology shapes our understanding by making the book's contents literally unreadable" and offering up "a paranoiac critique of McLuhan's mediated society" (Waddell); though it would be all the more so poignant and notable, I suggest, were the book being carved, instead, that by Neil Strauss, *The Game: Penetrating the Secret Society of Pick Up Artists*, in which is described the logic spouted in manifestory justification by only the most recent murderers of women to cut open our bruised and battered present (Penny).



blood, but rather the hot reticulation of it" (vii). Violence, in this way, should be thought of as categorically other than the black and blue of ink and print although, as my pun there was definitely intended to suggest, he goes on at once to add that the essays he's writing the forward for, in their ability "to invoke the memory and image of the blood act and red event," or "conjure up violence after the fact," in this way, "brings red to the fore" (vii). The black and blue of ink and print "is our link to red," he says, adding that "language transfers violence," which begs, in turn, the question that I've been taking as my own here all along: "What of violence transfers?" Is the "black text itself" only "mimesis," or is it also "perhaps itself a violence" (viii), and how and with what pedagogical effects, and in what ways does or should this awareness shape the course of our pedagogical and literary practices? Having, I think, posed the question with enough insistence throughout, I note now with Hannah Arendt, who recalls George Sorel saying, though specifically in the realms of political science, that "the problems of [this] violence," and particularly its relation to the practice and pedagogy of literature, I add, "are very obscure" (*On Violence* 236). Therefore, in the hope of presenting in conclusion not statements so much as "*le paysage d'une recherche et, par cette composition de lieu, indiquer les repères entre lesquels se déroule une action,*" to borrow from DeCerteau's preface (xxxiii), I close here with three remarks borrowed from the theoretical literature on the link between or intersection of writing (and reading) and violence.

## A Theory of the Violence of Theory ?

You think me foolish to call instruction a torment, but if you had been as much used as myself to hear poor little children first learning their letters and then learning to spell, if you had ever seen how stupid they can be for a whole morning together, and how tired my poor mother is at the end of it, as I am in the habit of seeing almost every day of my life at home, you would allow that to torment and to instruct might sometimes be used as synonymous words.  
- Jane Austen, in Guilbert and Gubar (138)

First, one thing seems clear enough, given the number of times the contiguity surfaces, as much in the literary works I have been reading as in specifically theoretical engagements with the topic, including Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse's introduction to the collection of essays on *The Violence of Representation*, that violence reaches into the business of even the most critical and careful of academic and theoretical practices and pedagogies. Neither are we in the humanities innocent of that which is *in* both violence and writing, nor is that complicity reparable. "We are directly involved in the violence of representation" (25) and, moreover, there "is no way to position ourselves outside of [that] ongoing struggle among viewpoints" (25). Indeed, Teresa DeLauretis insists, in the essay that closes the collection introduced by Armstrong and Tennenhouse, we cannot seemingly escape from the double-bind of that "relation between rhetoric and violence," which itself depends, in turn, upon the "representation of gender," because "violence is en-gendered in representation" (240). Thence, I think, derives the wisdom of Gerald Graff's call, in *Professing Literature*, to "teach the conflict" (14), the awareness informing the "wry" sort of civility (239) that Daniel Coleman attends to in his reading of the literary project of English Canada (*White*), and the direction supposed by Simon Harel's interest in what he calls our "*braconnages identitaires*" (*Braconnages* 116). Returning to a text I referred to in chapter one, but from a different

perspective now, in closing, this structure, logic and temporality of violence and writing is the reason, I think, why the study of Canadian literature can, Brenda Carr Vellino describes, be so "enriched" by the engagement with "human rights pedagogy" (136), because a "reading for the body" here becomes "essential" (141) and such "embodiment questions" in turn are "most acute when the body is in a state of *deprivation*," which is to say subject to some form of violence or other (142; emphasis added). Indeed, and notwithstanding all the time I spent in chapter one doing my best to keep up with the well-deserved focus, as Vellino put it, of 20th century body studies' on its *pleasures*, the violence for which our bodies are ultimately the canvas and the document is the more urgent, it seems to me, and politically and poetically significant horizon towards which to turn all this reading and writing of mine here.

The second and related theoretical point I want to make in closing has to do with the ways in which, as I've argued throughout, the complicity and complexity of that relation between writing (and reading literature) and violence is just as much, if not all the more easily legible in a literary as in a properly theoretical (inter)text. Indeed, fiction itself is plenty theoretical, for just as Armstrong and Tennenhouse abstract "the explanatory logic" of the violence of representation, which is to say, a definition of the violence in question here "from a well-known work of fiction by Charlotte Bronte" (3), so have my comparative and erotic readings of *Heroine*, Dandurand, Gagnon, and Fragoulis allowed me to learn about and to loosen or take control of, variously, the mechanics, violence, and the time of my literary and pedagogical practices. Thus, Armstrong and Tennenhouse go on to describe *Jane Eyre* as "a document that offers us a better chance to observe not only the power of normative culture but its tendency to *reclassify as 'not political'* such things as love, imagination, politeness, and virtue," not to mention literature itself (4; emphasis added), and then shows us too how

"violence is an essential element" to the project "of making something out of nothing at all" or "a self out of itself" (6), which is of course what I have, with Scott's heroine, been up to this whole time in our respective bathtub states of writing and addiction. Likewise, my readings I think have shown how, like a gunshot often, narrative seems so sudden in its shifts and turns, and so very needdly precise in its use of language, that it can (at the best of times) be hard at first to follow or to understand exactly "what's happened" in any linear or straightforward sort of way – as Scott says of her experience of reading Lawrence Braithwaite's *Wigger*, and as Corey Frost then says of reading *Heroine* – such that you "just feel" and "your whole body reverberates" with affect, Scott explains ("In Conversation" with Moyes 215), which is to say, a space in time opens up, like a gift, I suggest, in which repetitive and recursive cycles of reading and writing are triggered, like some traumatic process, by and in which, only, we have the opportunity to learn, *entre autres*, to read and write, or remember and belong. Indeed, there is much about the violence and the stakes involved in our practice and study of literature to learn from the spaces in time that fiction like Scott's provides.

I mean, and as I have repeated from the outset, what I have taken most of all from my simultaneously close, comparative and theoretical reading of *Heroine* here, at the intersection of violence and addiction, is a sense, finally, of the pedagogical value, nay the gift (of time) that literary studies, like literacy, both provides and requires. As Avital Ronell put it in an interview about her *Crack Wars* in reference to the "judgments" we quickly make "without having really taken the *time* to consider what a definition of drugs might be," time is always and again "the major problem here" ("Interview"; emphasis added). Certainly, Elizabeth Grosz says as much in her account of the violence that is the very condition of the possibility (and impossibility) of all our disciplines of knowledge, thinking, and writing ("The Time of

Violence" 134), her engagement with all the ways and texts in which "it is with the politics of violence that Derrida deals" (136), and with the ways in turn in which the numerous accounts of his work "as apolitical, as lacking a mode of political address, is surely the result of a certain freezing up of politics" (135). Specifically, Grosz describes how "the structure of violence is itself marked by the very structure of the trace, or writing" (137), and how violence, in this way, becomes the only form that writing can take, such that the divide between violence and its others becomes increasingly hard to distinguish (136). Indeed, she shows how "it is no longer clear" that we can, though still we must try to, distinguish the difference between good and bad, necessary and wanton, or justified and condemned forms of violence (138-141), and it is appropriate, therefore, that her articles ends with or opens out into a discussion of the economy of the gift, in Derrida, and the gift of time, specifically. I mean, to judge as we must, she writes, even where we can't, and to hone (141), which is to say sharpen (like a knife?) the reading skills needed to draw the distinctions that judgment and criticism require of us, citizens and scholars/teachers (144) means taking time, enough to learn, as Armstrong and Tennenhouse put it, "not to renounce that power [that the violence of rhetoric confers and vies for] but how to become politically self-conscious" about the ways in which the violence we enact affects the bodies it inevitably falls upon around us (26).

To sum up, then, and recollect some of what has come before, learning to read (and write and learn, too), and particularly in the context of, or in response to the explosions of violence into, the sanctums of pedagogical space means, following Grosz here, and Scott too, and others, that we must distinguish, though it is impossible simultaneously to do so, definitively, the productive and repressive forms of violence, for example, that Mason gathers up at the intersection of Foucauldian and feminist critical traditions (*Spectacles*); the

alternately colonizing and then decolonizing violence that Fanon describes, I think usefully, as veritable echoes and mirror images of one another (*Damnés*); and, most importantly, the violence of exclusion that Marcotte polemically performs, which we reject for how it defeats even its own ends and in the meantime paralyses us and, on the other hand, the avant-garde, experimental violence of rhetoric evident everywhere in Scott's project that we/I laud and strive to learn from and to reproduce, however slowly, for how it explodes the limitations and exclusions of such systems and explosions of violence as we live amidst and should learn from as we pass through every day, that thereby cracks open spaces of increased and divergent possibilities and flexibilities, even as it can admit of its own violence, its own "breaking the sequence" of things and reduction (of the subject supposed to know and learn and teach) to increasing abstraction and doubt.

Learning to read, in this sense, means learning to understand the significance of the cracks coursing through Canadian sidewalks, as well as those collected in contemporary fictions by women in Quebec, taking these as occasions to learn the hard-to-learn but nevertheless crucial art of civility in an increasingly and homogeneously uncivil space, and to distinguish first and then prefer the virtue to the vice of indifference. It means, effectively, protecting the public nature of pedagogical spaces, as well as the pedagogical nature too, of public spaces, recalling both the embodied nature of literary practice as well as the eminently literary qualities of our bodies and cities, and, most of all, remembering the violence that takes place in pedagogical spaces in ways that may protect against its return in that same way over and over again, which is to say, without presuming to deny our own ongoing and powerful complicities. All of which, again, takes time, which is precisely what I am grateful to have been able to take so very much (and surely enough) of now; time enough to read, time to learn

to read, and time to learn that reading and learning take (and are a gift of) time.

## Conclusion – On the Time for Teaching Language through Literature in South Korea

Nothing living moves in straight lines but in arcs, in epicycles, in spirals, in gyres.  
- Andrea Lunsford, in Linda Hutcheon, "Presidential Address 2000" (529)

As long as there were other rooms it seemed okay to re-write those words  
until I understood what was particular about them.  
- Renee Gladman, "from *Calamities*" (16)

She taught us the razorblade trick, and now the courageous few are Scott free  
- George Bowering, "Tiles Spiral" (139)

I cannot help at times but feel that there is something anti-climactic, so to speak, in my having taken so very long to come to such simple seeming and circular conclusions, for example, about how reading and learning to read take time, in part, because of that logic and affect of violence that matters in (and to) the institutional forms and pedagogical practice of literature, *entre autres*, in Québec and in Canada; that violence, for instance, represented by the figure of those two Canadian solitudes, and by the murders at the Polytechnique, in 1989. Indeed, it feels at once too much to say and less than enough to conclude that reading and learning to do so is only really as rewarding as it is also risky, and as the stakes involved are high. There is, I mean, nothing very "new" about these sorts of "questions" and anxieties, Donna Palmateer Pennee recalls, except perhaps in the "event of [their] return," Foucault would say (in Pennee 77), and wherein, Pennee adds, lies "the temporal opportunities for altered dispensations and dispositions" (77). Or, as Steven Slemon describes that same kind of movement and return, the "professional postcolonial pedagogue's best hope for contributing towards a future of progressive social change" resides, he concludes, in "the genuine difficulty inherent in the material[s]" at hand ("Afterword" 523) and, consequently, in the "interminable"



and untimely nature of our literary engagements (Felman, "Teaching"). I guess I am anxious therefore about the nature and exact coin of that *discovery* quotient of the doctoral equation described by the "Carnegie Report on the PhD" (Golde 10); worried that I haven't discovered anything properly new here, or that I'm not finished still doing so, or that I have perhaps done nothing other than only *conserve* and perhaps *transform* the literary knowledges a-piled already about us, including the decidedly ancient assumption that literature properly speaking cannot be taught (Frye) or reading be learned (Aristotle 1459a 3-8). All of which raises anxious questions about what it is we are all doing here anyway in this racket called literary studies. However, as it is not yet for me to determine exactly how the return on such sorts of doctoral investments is accounted for and approved (or not), there is very little left for me to do at this point than recall that I have, indeed, not done nothing here, as Scott's narratives were often accused, or that my relative and sometimes ostensible doing nothing is both intentional and a necessity, I argue, much like those sentences Scott invented in which nothing seems to happen ("Cusps" 61).

Such anyway is the lesson I learned from the disappointment lingering at the close of those literary walking tours that I described in chapter one, whereby the number of sites we actually had time to get to and talk about, as compared to what I had hoped to achieve, seemed to me to fall far short of the mark that I would have described as meaningful and worth the trip. And yet, my tourists seemed either none the wiser or more than satisfied still with the tour as it was, as if my own governing expectations had been unrealistic. Likewise, the lesson that I learned in the wake of the successful defence of my doctoral field examinations, during which I repeatedly failed, not only to have an answer for, but even to understand I felt the question being asked of me, at one point, and judging by the over activation of my nervous sweat

glands at the time, I felt sure I had failed therefore the exam itself. And yet, I was told that the manner in which I had responded to not knowing or understanding was perhaps more interesting or useful and as sure a sign of mastery as would have been whatever answer I might otherwise have produced.

Thus, and briefly, I acknowledge that I have not done nothing here, that I have, for example, closely mapped and filled in a gap left in the critical landscape and theoretical apparatus being built up still around an important and challenging body of work by the innovative writer and committed teacher that Gail Scott is. I have, in turn, introduced new comparative horizons to that work, in part, by means of that series of cracks collected from both *Heroine* and Anne Dandurand, and by way then of the discourse of addiction that Scott's heroine shares with Marie Gagnon and Tess Fragoulis, I have articulate and developed useful theoretical links between Gail's work and Walter Benjamin's, Gloria Anzaldua, Lucien Dallenbach, Zygmunt Bauman, and Avital Ronell, to name only a few. In disciplinary terms, I have engaged with and intervened in contemporary debates about the place of English language writing in Quebec, which is to say, about the nature of knowledge and the role (or exhaustion) of identity in Canadian and Québec literary studies, and I have accounted, also, for other ways of posing that question of difference, as Gail says, by making much more of the logic and time of addiction and violence already present, but sorely underrepresented in the current extent of these critical conversations. Perhaps most importantly, though, I have done so in that materialist way articulated with terms borrowed from Macherey, Grosz, Howes, and Benjamin, which is to say, by drawing on the literary forms that I am, in these ways, reading and looking to learn from.

For example, the level of close reading and attention to detail that this project has

throughout required, which I have described alternately as erotic, comparative, and theoretical, in turn, required such a constant labour of (re)framing and contextualizing that it became necessary, I realize now, to borrow something of the narrative structure itself of the fiction I am writing about, notably, the *bildung* narrative of my being stuck in and then stepping out of my own bathtub state and, all the while, coming to terms, first, with the necessarily small or porous reading and writing or learning and teaching subject that I am become and, second, with the possibility therefore that my conclusions here should remain as imperfect as my sentences are often circular and uncertain. Similarly, I owe to Scott's experimental narrative forms the ways in which that recurring sense of crisis throughout here, either of literacy, literary studies, the university, the nation, and now of my own contributions too, at each turn and almost automatically, is met with metaphors and other materials from the sensual and urban revolutions in literary studies, such figures as my titular three keywords, bodies, stories, cities or the cracks that craze my second chapter, all of which "point," as Scott says, "boisterously towards to movement towards some other meaning" (*Spaces* 81), which is to say, in ways that allow me to account for the *how* of our living nevertheless accountably in the midst of all our ostensible ruin, without for that matter drowning in despair (SLS 47).

It has admittedly taken me a long time to gather up and weave together all this learning to read and write (in) Montreal that I have been doing here with Gail Scott. I have had, literally, to come back and forth a long way. So long and so far, in fact, has this reading and writing as opposed to finishing taken that it even threatened, for a while, to become a veritable *way of life* instead of only the *way station* it was meant and needed to be (Anzaldua 68) on my way from what Marie Louise Pratt called "pupiling" to teaching ("Arts" 38). Indeed, it was taking me so long to finish that I was, at some point, removed from the active roster of the

department, so to speak, which is interesting, I note in retrospect, because of the irony that, while a PhD student is ostensibly worth more to a department than an MA student is, at least initially, a doctoral candidate that has taken longer than the median 6 or so years to complete the program begins, I guess, to cost much more than he or she is worth and so is cut away simply as a matter of *accountable* course (Readings 128-134). I don't want to sound bitter here, because I am not. For being thus released by the department until such time as I had completed my work, with the loss of my library and student loan privileges that such a change of status implied, and the consequent imperative to begin repaying those loans, when all I wanted for still was to complete my thesis that had consumed me, compelled me to find a job that could allow for both, making those payments and having still time to write and read and learn. Therefore, I found myself returned to Korea, initially only temporarily, but increasingly now permanently, given the possibility of and access to a tenure track career path that seems all the more so rarified in the so-called corporate West. Certainly, the irony that I would have had to come to Korea in order to complete a thesis, ostensibly, about the city of Montreal, an English-written project first proposed to the English department of a French language institution about a French language body of writing, seems all the more fitting a conclusion.

Therefore, and in the language again of only a different version of that same narrative of perceived crisis that has structured so many of the thematics and investments that animate this project, let me situate these concluding remarks in the context occasioned by the teaching I do of the English language in a Korean College of Education, south of Seoul, which my learning to read and write about literature has led me, in some ways, inexorably to. Where then have these literary studies taken me, I ask, if not nowhere and to no purpose, and how can my slow and close readings of narrative in/of Montreal with Gail Scott serve both myself and

my students in turn in our classroom, as ways of leaning better to know the (English language) itself as well as how, more effectively, and to what ends, to teach it? What lessons does the logic and time of reading and writing (about) literature have to offer my aspiring teachers of English as a foreign language in Korea about language and learning and teaching, except that :

Education is like liberty: it isn't given; it is taken.

...  
The virtue of our intelligence is less in knowing than in doing.

...  
Was wanting all that was necessary for doing?  
- Jacques Rancière, *Ignorant Schoolmaster* (107, 65, 2)

Korea is an interesting place now to be a teacher, in part, because of the ways in which it is not completely foreign to me who comes from a likewise relatively small nation encircled by larger and more powerful languages, cultures, and economies and so is increasingly traversed by a number of differences that may well (but need not) appear at the outset and in haste as problems (Bauman). South Korea, to be specific, is no longer anything like the setting of that sitcom I watched every night with my dad when I was a kid about that American Mobile Army Service Hospital (M.A.S.H.). Indeed, out of the rags and ruin of forty brutal years of Japanese colonial rule, followed by a superpower-assisted civil war that would leave a third of the population homeless (Tudor 101) as well as “80% of the educational facilities in the country” damaged or destroyed (Seth 105), and an armistice that continues today to partition the country along a border that remains therefore one of the most heavily guarded and potentially explosive on the planet, Korea has in only 60 years come to achieve a remarkably enviable position among small nations of the world; a position reflected, I suggest, in the number of appearances the country, its language, music, people, and landscape have

been making, increasingly, in American pop culture.<sup>129</sup> I mean, and however by force initially of Park ChungHee's paternally dictatorial hand (1961-1979), Korea has moved from having one of the lowest per capita GDPs on the planet, in the 1960s (Tudor 51; Seth 3), to being named, in 1996, one of only 34 member states in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); a donor country now where only 2 generations ago it was a heavy user of humanitarian and financial aid. In educational terms too, which are most immediately our concern here, Korea has collectively left behind that version of itself in which only 5% of the population graduated from high school, in 1945, to become instead one of the most educated nations on the planet (Seth 256), where upwards of 90% of the population finishes high school (Tudor 78) and 98% of 25-34 year olds have graduated from a college or university program (Tudor 109).<sup>130</sup> The lack of any directly comparable statistics and definitions makes the claim that the level of illiteracy here is virtually zero much less remarkable than it otherwise would be (Tudor 80),<sup>131</sup> relative to the North American situation described in chapter one.<sup>132</sup> There is though no doubt that Korean students "consistently rank at the top of the *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA) survey results in reading, mathematics, and science" (ICEF), alongside students in such progressive places as Finland (Tudor 206). Considering how strong and how integral is that Confucian injunction to

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<sup>129</sup> I'm thinking here of everything from the recent splash of Psy's record breaking wonder, "Gangnam Style;" to the subtler presence represented by Spike Lee's 2013 American remake of Park Chan-Wook's 2003 revenge thriller, *OldBoy*; the setting of some part of *Avengers 2* in Seoul; or the *Walking Dead* actor, Steven Yeun, taking Conan O'Brien on a very Korean sauna experience in Los Angeles.

<sup>130</sup> ICEF Monitor, likewise, has noted that "64% of its 25-34 year-old population had *university* degrees, the most in the OECD" (emphasis added).

<sup>131</sup> One of the reasons often put forward for this degree of literacy is the wonderfully easy to assimilate Korean alphabet, called Hangeul, that was commissioned by royal decree in 1492, by then King SeJeong, and which is indeed remarkably easy to master.

<sup>132</sup> The UNESCO world literacy factbook strangely has no data for South Korea, though it does show North Korea boasting a near 100% literacy rate, which seems rather suspicious than impressive.

self-improvement through education here, it is neither a surprise nor an exaggeration to describe the "fever" of and "obsession" with education (Seth; Tudor 50) is key to the wholesale transformation of modern Korean society (ICEF). It also, as I said, makes it a very rewarding place to teach.

That phenomenal rise has not of course come without a cost, which has perhaps been too great, risks rising still, and which Koreans are therefore in the process (again and still) of reevaluating. I mean, on the one hand, the peculiar quality of the history of Korean public education—arguably one of the "world's costliest systems" (Seth 188)—is to be found in the ways successive governments (and other powerful voices) have managed to implant, nationwide, a compulsory, disciplined, and accessible public school system without, however, directly paying for it, which is to say, by offsetting these public costs (or investments) onto the private shoulders of parents and families (Seth 172). Consequently, the rate of return on these investments, not only in the specific sense of the relative value of a college or university education, which Seth describes in his English history of the post colonial and post war transformations in Korean education (247), but in the larger sense too that as the economy changes along with the technology it is run on, so must the pedagogies we deploy in response,<sup>133</sup> lest the costs become increasingly prohibitive, even destructive. Indeed, the increasing "shortfall between expenditure and achievement" in education in South Korea is become progressively harder to ignore.

For example, while the country "is the world's largest market for TOEFL" (Tests of

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<sup>133</sup> Or, as Lee JuHo, "an academic at Seoul's KDI think-tank and a former education minister, has said it's time to rethink South Korea's intense education system," noting that while "Test scores may be important in the age of industrialization," the same is increasingly not the case today (ICEF n.pag), which begs the question still of how exactly to affect such a transformation, and in what directions (cf. also Tudor 311-12).

English as a Foreign Language), Koreans are "ranked a dismal 110th on ... global TOEFL rankings" (ICEF). Similarly, the remarkable success of students in Korea on those PISA rankings I mentioned a moment ago is contingent, admittedly, upon their having spent twice as much time studying as their Finnish counterparts do, where they might have for example been playing, and on their parents shelling out twice as much in private education fees as is spent in Finland (206), with all the consequent stresses on health, marriages, and workplace productivity that this involves. Indeed, and from as early as elementary school on into university, as many as 70% of students regularly spend 15 hours a day studying (Tudor 80) at public schools, and then in study halls, or at those the private cram academies, called *hagwons*, that can cost a middle class family as much as a third of their monthly income per child to afford (204), and all in the hopes of ranking well "on a single college entrance exam – the *suneung* – taken in November" (Hu); a test that is so all consumingly important to the future, very broadly speaking, of students and families alike, that "planes are grounded on test day for fear of disturbing the kids" (Hu) and the police, on their motorcycles, are stood at attention, ready and gladly to rush any tardy students through traffic to their testing centres on time ("Test-Taking"). In fact, the lengths to which students and their families will go in the hopes of ranking higher than others in what is truly a "zero sum game" of either excelling or being left behind (Hu), in this "winner-take-all society" (Seth 169), speaks to a level of competition that is rightly "often termed an educational *arms race*" (Hu; emphasis added), or an "*ibshichonchaeng*: entrance-exam war" ("Test-Taking"; emphasis added), which I am citing here as only one more example of that figurative intersection of violence, pedagogy and time discussed at length in chapter two, which is to say, as a marker of the stakes involved for me in the question of learning language from literature here.



Indeed, the costs are high where only 2 percent of a given cohort will 'succeed,' so to speak, and "get into Korea's prestigious SKY universities" ("Test-Taking"); where, otherwise, the "rate of graduate employment among university-educated 25-34 year-olds" is only "75%, ranking it among the lowest in OECD countries" (ICEF); where students are rather "tested and ranked" than "taught" often (Tudor 108), less interested in and satisfied therefore by school, "relative to their peers in other OECD countries" (ICEF), and so overwhelmed by the kind of stresses that are arguably "anathema to learning" (Rowan) that it becomes easy (and therefore terrible) to understand that suicide is by far the "biggest cause of death among people aged 15-24" (ICEF). Clearly, something "isn't working," insists Elaine Ramirez ("Is Korea's EFL Education"), in this place long referred to as the "land of the morning calm" but rather now defined by a *bbali-bbali* (hurry-hurry) modern urban culture rushing students (Tudor 106-7, 138), *entre autres*, on towards a minutia of information best suited to test-shaped right answers and all the more easily gradable and rankable exams therefore, which leaves them in what Rancière calls a "swamp of silent self-contempt" (101), where learning is reduced to "stagnation" (101) and the first and most common sentence spoken by students young and old to strangers, and with perfect grammar and pronunciation moreover, is "I can't speak English very well." I am of course exaggerating a bit there in the end, but only as much as clearly there are cracks in the facade and the foundations of how the English language is learned here – to borrow that figure again from my reading of *Heroine* earlier, and from that *Adbusters* cover design in 2005 – cracks, into which (again) I am pleased nevertheless and privileged therefore to find for myself a place to reside in and from which to participate in the conversation taking place (in this case) around the question of what is to be done at this juncture in the long Confucian, dark colonial and then introjected American (Deweyan) history of Korean

learning (especially) English. Thus, it is commonly agreed that an education promoting "creativity" (Seth 236) and critical thought, some pedagogy of emancipation (Rancière 12), should replace somehow the rigid, rote, and over-administered (Seth 250) pedagogies that remain like a doom here, so ritualized (29) and teacher-centered (95) as to stifle true talent (243) and innovation (252), which precisely we need more of not less. There is however very little agreement or clear sense of what that would mean, look like, or require and that, of course, is in conclusion for me, as at the outset, a question (as always) of method.<sup>134</sup>

Far, though, from presuming to think for a moment that I have anything like all the right answers here, I enter into and abide in this pedagogic space rather, like the figure of the *Ignorant Schoolmaster*, I suggest, which Jacques Rancière develops, based on the story of Joseph Jacquetot who, having no language in common with the Flemish students who had enrolled in his French classes – and as a philosophical experiment – gave them a bilingual edition of *Telemachus*, "asked them to learn the French text with the help of the Flemish translation," and then, once they could recite the former, asked them to write, in French, an appreciation (2). In some ways likewise, I have been invited here to teach reading, writing, and conversation to students who need to improve their (in)fluent use of this otherwise very foreign and sometimes frightening other language, and yet I do not for that matter know quite what I am doing or how, and so revert to the lessons I learned (above) from my writing about (and alongside, or with) Gail Scott in Montreal. Because, while their Korean teachers have

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<sup>134</sup> There is very little agreement or clarity, indeed, beyond the fact a) that whatever improvements are made would have to lessen the public costs imposed on private shoulders, b) better coordinate the graduates formed with the needs of the economy awaiting them (Seth 254) and c) that other claims to eligibility (and so upward social mobility) should obtain than only the singular grade you got on the exam you took one day, including, perhaps a student's birthplace, services rendered, grades accumulated over a whole career, writing and speaking skills and the power of sheer persuasion.

spent many years and much sweat learning precisely how and what to teach by way of a curriculum of theory evolved over the course of the long history of varied practices of actually teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Korea, for example, this Richard-teacher arrives, instead, with a decidedly other, literary baggage which it is the purpose of these final paragraphs to (re)frame.

Propelled by desires, constraints, and the “nonmethod of chance” (Rancière 11), and in the habit of engaging as if with “emancipated” students (67) who, when faced with a speaker of English say to themselves, ‘Me, too I can speak English’; or, sharing a set of assumptions with Rancière’s Ignorant Schoolmaster, namely, that a student, autonomous, always already, virtually, knows, for example, how to read or learn (a new language); that there is “no hierarchy of intellectual capacity” anywhere (27), where everyone can observe, retain, repeat, verify, and relate something new to what is already known (10), as every child does naturally with her own mother tongue (10); that people learn by themselves (46); and, finally, that learning to read and write and converse in a language (your own or otherwise) is important because “War, like all human works is first an act of words” (82), whether you have learned to use them or not; thus, I present with my materialist ways of reading, writing, and teaching slowly and reflexively, backward and forth, and in circles or in stops and starts, and therefore imperfectly, and even dangerously, because not always or often in any explicitly market driven way, but also critically and even creatively, in comparison or collaboratively, resisting closure and cracking open spaces in which to learn to know. These methods and various pedagogies still to be developed from such *emancipatory* assumptions, as Rancière would call them, and in conversation with the teachers around me and my students, are materialist, I suggest again, in the sense that we endeavour throughout to remain attentive to and contingent

upon the material conditions and economic imperatives governing the choice that Korea has made and makes still and collectively, to learn English as virtually a second language, necessarily, from the very first years of schooling through to the tests that will get them (or not) placed in good schools and better jobs and so marriages, etc., and import, consequently, *armies* of native English speakers (along with a host of expenses and returns) but, increasingly now, forming instead native Korean teachers of English to replace them. It is materialist, my pedagogy, in the sense also described and embodied throughout this thesis, whereby wherever possible the material forms of the English language itself are deployed to theorize and guide the course and content of the collective practice of learning and teaching of language that takes place in my classrooms.

That materialist pedagogy, I suggest, in closing, is what I have been hired and most valued for, rather than only for my native tongue or presumed expert knowledge of the English language and its grammars, or for my long and intimate experience with addictions to ideas that need to be unlearned for all that they may also be (or have been) necessary; ideas that pain (Ronell, *Crack*) and, literally, kill as in the case of the Sewol ferry disaster, in 2014, off the Southern tips of the peninsula, whereby a couple hundred students, governed by the idea that teachers and adults have all the answers and that their job is only therefore to imbibe without question, followed the order of the ship's captain and crew who, as they themselves were fleeing the sinking ferry, told the students to stay in their rooms and await further instructions, which is where most of them eventually died therefore, on TV moreover and the Twitter-sphere so-called, while the captain incongruously survived who has, though, since been convicted and jailed on charges of very gross negligence causing death. Indeed, it would be a gross sort of negligence, and a failure truly, to find that such teacher-centered habits of

thinking inflexibly remain the focus and fulcrum of our pedagogies without, I argue, at the very least rejecting the forms and effects they take, as Scott puts it ("On the Edge" 17). I am valued, and even marketable, I realize now, for what my students routinely call my *passion for teaching*, meaning, the number of occasions I present them with, therefore, to take the bathtub state of time out they need to stop and splash around in for a moment, while the world admittedly continues to hurry-hurry along in some ways blindly and violently, in order (hopefully) to unlearn bits of the monoculture of that zero-sum rush for right answers they are otherwise so often subject(ed) to.

Literature, indeed, and the vocabulary of forms I have learned from Scott's practice of it (Sontag) serves here as a *way of learning to know*, as Scott again put it, because of the gift of time it provides to my students to take in (introject) or give themselves up to, and thereby come to claim some portion of ownership over the language otherwise very foreign and so hard to use (let alone to teach), the time it provides to gain some measure of control, moreover, over the process of (de)formation and transformation that is always already upon us as we learn to move rather more freely than less, more flexible, and in several new different directions at once. That kind of time that the heroine takes in her bathtub state masturbating and putting off the work she had to do (in order therefore to do it all the better); the kind of time that this doctoral reading and writing program has afforded me to *bildung* and grow, or "progress" without for that matter rushing headlong either into a future that never comes or a past we can never again reach (Benjamin, *Arcades* N9a,7); the time that drugs (and addiction), simultaneously, offer up as an occasion to learn and to trap us in; and the time that violence, after exploding, takes to insinuate itself (like a discipline) into the very pores and tissues we are made of or the cities we inhabit : this is the kind of time I aim to gift through the ways I

teach, as I was gifted of it in the course of reading Gail Scott's experiments with prose, which is (if you please) what I am off to, now, and finally, do. Thank you.

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