University of Nebraska - Lincoln
DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Quarterly | Great Plains Studies, Center for

1-1-2009

# Review of *Trans.Can.Lit.: Resituating the Study of Canadian Literature* Edited by Smaro Kamboureli and Roy Miki

J'Nan Morse Sellery
*Stanford University*

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly

Part of the Other International and Area Studies Commons

Sellery, J'Nan Morse, "Review of *Trans.Can.Lit.: Resituating the Study of Canadian Literature* Edited by Smaro Kamboureli and Roy Miki" (2009). *Great Plains Quarterly.* Paper 1222.
http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/1222

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

*Trans.Can.Lit.: Resituating the Study of Canadian Literature.* Edited by Smaro Kamboureli and Roy Miki. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007. xviii + 233 pp. Notes, works cited, index. $36.95 paper.

Encompassing an approach to the study of Canadian literature that resulted in a conference held in Vancouver in 2005, this collection of a preface and thirteen chapters begins with Diana Brydon's keynote address setting up the "superordinates"—Literature, Institutions, and Citizenship—to explore a discourse on Canadian literature's future. That process leads toward "our national literature in global contexts and in dialogue with Indigenous concerns." In effect, *Trans.Can.Lit.* means translation, transcontinental railroad, travel, trance, and globalization.

Lee Maracle's chapter on Salish thinkers and orators who help their people to see "Ourselves Through Story vs. Western Models" criticizes

the Institutions of the diaspora that claim the right to establish dominion over other people's educational and literary values. Dismissing the preponderance of global privilege, she claims the Salish are free to challenge the powerful by claiming their own narrative history which "has created the body of knowledge of the nation and shaped the oral tradition, which then the listeners use to govern themselves." Thus, the past leads to the future.

Similarly, noting academic Insitutional flaws in its discourse of literature, postcolonialist Stephen Slemon identifies with the TransCanada "rage" over "the established methods of our discipline" because of "the many and multifarious literatures in Canada." Because Institutions are ineffective to deal with Trans problems, he challenges "the progressivist narrative" that "generative political effectiveness" can be achieved through "disciplinary reformation" or "criticism." Slemon insists "the true place of literary critical studies in Canada is open-gated and future oriented." Daniel Coleman confronts the unexamined assumptions of English Canadian civility by shrewdly asking for a "dynamic self-questioning concept of civility." Peter Dickinson focuses on the keywords of psychoanalysis, affect, and performativity leading to the racialization of the body that is both "positioned" "outside the law"and through the act of negation "sustains and props up the law." Richard Cavell admits theorizing Canada in cultural terms has failed, for through the "dynamic" "global village" critics assert "the most transCanadian values of all."

In effect, globalization leads to redefining aspects of immigration, gender, race, politics, society, class, culture, and the arts through significant arguments on racial multiculturalisms, on how writers of color become CanLit, on the competing demands of citizenship, the desires of the diaspora, and on TransCanada Collectives and economics of the Multilateral Sublime. In her preface, Smaro Kamboureli writes, "CanLit has the potential to challenge the presumption of its intelligibility." On the other hand, CanLit "is a troubling sign; never fully released from the various ways it is anchored, it can disturb and alter conditions that affect it." This volume manifests the complexity of its overarching desire to incorporate the disparate tentacles of Institutions and Citizenship through its immigrants, Aboriginal and Indigenous people, Multiculturalism, Treaty Federalism, as well as globalization in its Literature.

J'NAN MORSE SELLERY
Department of English
Stanford University