

Editorial: The Stories We Tell ...

“The border is fuzzy between life and narrative,” writes Wayne Booth in *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction*. Indeed it is. To separate these two—lived life and narrated story—would be like trying to separate individual rain drops from the river into which they have fallen. When babies land “on the shores of time” (using a metaphor from L.M. Montgomery), they enter a space shaped by narrative, by the stories their cultures tell. These stories are found in oral form, in written texts, in the plastic image, and in lived action. If social scientists and others would understand how people are motivated to act, Booth suggests that they consider “the power of story” (25).

This issue of *CCL* does just that: it considers how we “story” our way through life. Susan Drain’s thesis that “we all story our lives, recursively, the way we read, ... [framing] the present by anticipating what lies ahead, and by referring to the past, to construct a coherent account” is perfectly illustrated in the subsequent short interview with Mary Pratt, the well-known Canadian painter who has done in art what L.M. Montgomery did in writing: she has taken ordinary female experience as a site of cultural representation. It is interesting to hear that Mary Pratt, as a child, read the “Anne” books and then asked her mother how she could make New Brunswick as important as Montgomery had made Prince Edward Island. Clearly, lived lives can themselves be narratives, and the effect of story leaps from the printed page to the artistic canvas or to the shaping of others’ lives. Elaine Naves’ interview with Pratt and Susan Drain’s article both tell narratives about how humans are connected through the stories they value, citing discussions between Rea Wilmshurst, Adrienne Clarkson, Elizabeth Epperly, Sandra Gwyn, and others.

Next, Louise Saldanha profiles a young writer from Tanzania, Tololwa Mollel, who brings Canadian children the wisdom of tribal legend, as well as other stories that he has invented to blend “tradition, history, culture, and audience.” He talks of the difficulty of moving from oral legend into printed texts, again reminding us of the shifting shapes of narrative form, some of which are appropriated by Disney films. No lives are untouched by narrative. The unnarrated life simply does not exist.

What about the many Canadian children today who come from war-torn countries, and bring memories of terrible hunger, brutality, and killing? How will they “story” themselves into their new culture? Eventually, they will tell their own stories, but in the meantime, Robert Munsch’s recent book for little children (*From Far Away*) and Donn Kushner’s newest novel for older children (*The Night Voyagers*) both present youngsters who come from violence in another land. It is unfortunate that cultural narratives can encourage and perpetuate hatred. However, the act of telling, as well as the story told, can also heal and empower. *Mary Rubio*