

is the centrality of what is assumed marginal, many more appropriate contexts could have been cited.

One of the most engaging chapters treats the feminist fiction of Thomas, Laurence, Atwood, and Engel. Unfortunately, a serious reading error undermines the discussion of Atwood's *Surfacing*. Sabatini's argument is built around her assessment of the plight of the narrator, "who has left one baby with her former husband and aborted another" (120). In fact, the novel makes clear that the story of the divorce and the abandoned child is an elaborate lie created by the narrator to cover over the intolerable truth of her abortion. The abandoned baby is a trauma-induced code for the aborted fetus. It is a shame that neither the author, in the course of her secondary reading, nor the numerous academic readers of this book in manuscript form caught this misunderstanding. That the author has not been well served by her editor is also evident in a number of awkward quotations and factual/grammatical errors, such as the repeated use of "cliché" as an adjective.

These errors in conception and execution weaken a critical study that, in its choice of texts, approach, and fundamental argument, presents a fresh and provocative reading of Canadian fiction in the twentieth century. Many scholars will appreciate the new avenues of inquiry opened by Sabatini's work, which establishes the potential and validity of her subject.

Works Cited

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English-Canadian Women and Literary Culture Reconsidered / Cecily Devereux

Literary Culture and Female Authorship in Canada 1760-2000. Faye Hammill. Cross/Cultures 63. Rodopi, 2003. 245 pp. US\$35.00 paper. ISBN 90-420-0905-5.

As its title indicates, Faye Hammill's *Literary Culture and Female Authorship in Canada 1760-2000* is a study of women writing in Canada from the establishment of British North America in the second half of the eighteenth century to the present. Focusing on six women writers from different periods, this study undertakes to chart patterns of representation along the lines of gender and literary production and to provide ways of understanding the circumstances in settler Canada that have led to what Hammill sees as the continuity of these patterns across more than two centuries. The book is primarily concerned with the representation of authorship in works by women writers, as an index of a particular cultural problematic: all six of the writers in the study, Hammill suggests,

include literary women as characters in their fictional texts, in order to examine the experience of the author in Canada. They consider the practical conditions of writing and publishing in Canada, as well as the kinds of inspiration which may be found there, and they explore the possibility of a clearly-defined national literature and also the position of the writer — particularly the female writer — in a political and/or cultural colony. (xi)

Finding compelling similarities between the representation of gender and authorship in early and in later writing, Hammill argues that there are thus similarities between the kinds of contextual issues raised in contemporary women's writing in English Canada and those raised in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by Anglo-colonial women writers who were addressing issues of marginality in relation to the literatures of high imperial Great Britain and of the increasingly imperial United States. The first implication of these similarities is that the conditions for literary production for women are not really different "now" than they were "then"; the second is that English Canada retains a residual Anglo-colonial "identity" within which contemporary women writers must make negotiations for subjectivity and representation that are comparable to those made by early women writers "writing back" to an imperial centre in England or writing in response to the imperial pressures of the U.S.

The six writers considered in this nicely compact and coherent study represent slightly more than two centuries of settler women's writing in English Canada: Frances Brooke, Susanna Moodie, Sara Jeannette Duncan, L.M. Montgomery, Carol Shields, and Margaret Atwood are all familiar figures in the English-Canadian canon and all writers who are frequently associated in one way or another with a tradition of inscribing and constructing colonial space in relation to empires within which that space signifies and is understood to be colonial — the space, that is, of Northrop Frye's famous question, "Where is here?" This study maintains the discussion of these writers in relation to this tradition and to its established literary and cultural identifications. Frances Brooke, best known for her epistolary novel *The History of Emily Montague* (1769), is configured as a literary trailblazer who brought Anglo-imperial literary codes into the francophone culture of British North America in the years following the conquest of New France. Susanna Moodie, perhaps the most widely-read nineteenth-century English-Canadian woman writer, is generally regarded, as she is in this study, as the primary spokesperson for middle-class British emigrants to Canada, defining the "experience" of pioneering through her visceral horror of unexpected labour and class muddle. Sara Jeannette Duncan, whose canonical place in Canada rests largely on her novel *The Imperialist* (1904), appears as an intellectual bright light responding to what is represented as the vulgar and anti-intellectual provincialism of urban and semi-urban Ontario at the end of the nineteenth century. L.M. Montgomery, author of *Anne of Green Gables* (1908) and many other popular novels, is well known as a stalwart nationalist who preserved in her home and in her writing the ideologies of English Canadianness and of domestic womanhood. The chapter on Montgomery's work focuses on the *Emily* trilogy of the 1920s. Skipping over the bulk of the twentieth century to post-1967 writing, the study then considers a selection of the work of Margaret Atwood, the acknowledged primate of CanLit, and of Carol Shields, the beloved and Pulitzer Prize-winning writer, who died in 2003. The alignment of earlier and later writers foregrounds the extent to which the later writers revisit earlier representations of

women writing in Canada, which works to establish the idea of a continuum between past and present that is the object of this book.

There are surprisingly few studies of literary history by gender in Canada: *Literary Culture and Female Authorship* joins a relatively small group of books that consider the conditions for and the nature of literary production by Canadian women. Misao Dean's *Practising Femininity: Domestic Realism and the Performance of Gender in Early Canadian Fiction* (1998) is an influential recent study; a handful of earlier critical collections continue to be widely used, notably *Silenced Sextet: Six Nineteenth-Century Canadian Women Novelists* (1992), edited by Carrie MacMillan, Lorraine McMullen, and Elizabeth Waterston; *Re(Dis)covering Our Foremothers: Nineteenth-Century Canadian Women Writers* (1990), edited by Lorraine McMullen; and *Gynocritics: Feminist Approaches to Canadian and Quebec Writing* (1987), edited by Barbara Godard. Hammill's book is not based on a theoretical problem or on recuperative feminist history; rather, it considers the cultural implications of patterns of representation — women writers representing women writers in Canada — and argues that women inscribe “experience” in their own texts, fictional as well as autobiographical, and that their accounts of the experience of writing should be understood to be at one level indicative of the circumstances of their production. This experience, of course, is itself culturally specific. That is, the women in this study are representative of a particular category of authorship in Canada: they represent middle-class white women writers of various strains of Anglo-imperial heritage whose literary identities are bound up with a narrative impulse to inscribe “identity” in relation to a “New World” place and context. *Literary Culture and Female Authorship in Canada 1760-2000* traces connections between these women and makes a compelling case, less for a lineage of influence than of recurrent culturally significant patterns. This is an interesting and useful study of writing by one category of settler women and of one kind of gendered subjectivity in colonial space.

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