

McCaffery, Joseph Tabbi, and Patrick O'Donnell. Rigorously argued and elegantly written, *Memorious Discourse* is sure to become, in Moraru's felicitous terminology, a key intertext in the cultural archive, one to which subsequent commentary on postmodern fiction will be memoriously indebted.

Paul Maltby

**Works Cited**

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Jennifer Blair, Daniel Coleman, Kate Higginson, Lorraine York, eds.  
*ReCalling Early Canada: Reading the Political in Literary and Cultural Production*. Edmonton: U of Alberta P, 2005. Pp. 412. \$34.95 pb.

Over the past few decades, scholars working on early Canadian texts may well have had reason to feel that their area of research has been unduly neglected within the field of Canadian literary studies. A lingering Modernist bias in Canadian literary culture against things Victorian, and the influence of post-1960s Canadian literary nationalism are two factors that have contributed to a general privileging, in many Canadian English departments, of contemporary writing over historically-based inquiries into older forms of cultural and literary production. As the editors of *ReCalling Early Canada* point out in their introduction, there are in Canada "no scholarly journals or professional associations dedicated to . . . historical areas of research," or at least none that direct themselves specifically toward an audience grounded in the disciplines of English or Cultural Studies. It is this relative inattention to the study of early Canadian texts that this volume seeks to redress and it does so admirably.

The book is the product of a 2003 conference hosted by the Department of English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University. Not surprisingly,

the essays testify to the impact of Cultural Studies upon English scholarship in recent years. Most contributors hold positions in English departments, yet their essays are not confined to strictly “literary” topics. Included, in addition to papers on poetry and fiction, are papers that consider the historical and cultural importance of paintings, carvings, letters, captivity narratives, family photos, journalism, census returns, and animals. While some readers may be unsympathetic to this kind of approach, for me, the scope of the collection made it exhilarating to read. Its well-written essays consider canonical figures such as Charles G.D. Roberts, Emily Carr, and Isabella Valancy Crawford alongside lesser known ones like Frederick Alexcee and Letitia Mactavish Hargrave in order to expose the kinds of suppressions and erasures upon which Canadian cultural nationalism is founded.

The de-naturalization of nationalist narratives of unity is itself the central unifying concern of the essays collected here, many of which approach Canadian texts produced during the so-called “nation-building era” of the late nineteenth century as sites that offer a privileged glimpse into the “gains and losses of the imposition of the nation—with its demands of cohesion and homogeneity—upon the many and various preoccupations of artists, writers, and cultural commentators” (xxvii). Scrutinizing its own complex involvement in the politics of recollection, the book positions itself amidst the recent controversy surrounding the teaching and researching of Canadian history, exposing, for example, historian Jack Granatstein’s lament for the “death” of Canadian history as instead a lament for the passing of a particular version of that history, namely, the version that celebrates British North America’s progress from colony to nation. The essays in *ReCalling Early Canada*, by contrast, collectively question this triumphalist narrative by utilizing a strategy, which the editors term an “embracing” of nation. That is, “they both turn to the nation as a privileged unit of analysis ... and critique ... the nation’s *braces*: those structures and mechanisms which gird, support, invigorate, and animate the nation” (xxvii).

Initiating discussion of the problematic relationship between historical work and nation-building work is Paul Hjartarson’s essay “Wedding ‘Native’ Culture to the ‘Modern’ State.” The paper focuses on the 1927 Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art as a foundational moment in Canadian art history, one that mobilized colonialist binaries of art vs. artefact, modern vs. primitive, in such a way as to establish Emily Carr as a central figure in a nationalist canon that excluded the work of so-called “old Tsimsyan half-breed” Frederick Alexcee (27). The distortions and appropriations of aboriginality that accompany the construction of Canadian national identity are examined in other essays including Cecily Devereux’s elegant analysis of how

Crawford's celebrated long poem *Malcolm's Katie* affirms a colonialist ideology, using aboriginal myths not to represent aboriginal experience but instead to indigenize the white male settler by connecting him to his own "primitive" self (298). In her essay on *Two Months in the Camp of Big Bear: The Life and Adventures of Theresa Gowanlock and Theresa Delaney*, Kate Higginson examines the way in which this dual captivity narrative mobilizes the rhetoric of the "colonial rape scare," feeding fears of First Nations men as threats to white settler women, justifying "the Dominion's territorial expansion and repression of the rights of First Nations peoples" in the years immediately following the North West Rebellion of 1885 (41). Kathleen Venema's paper reads the letters of Letitia Mactavish Hargrave, wife of Hudson's Bay Company officer James Hargrave, as a record of the domestic politics of fur-trade society, and addresses the consequences for aboriginal women of officers' post-1830 practice of enhancing their social status by bringing "genteel British wives" into Rupert's Land (147). Julia Emberley contributes a meditation on the photographic archive of the Royal British Columbia Museum as a site of representational violence that includes photographs of aboriginal families in such a way as to affirm the hegemony of the normative colonial bourgeois family.

The rest of the essays concern themselves with English-Canadian, French-Canadian, and (with Jennifer Blair's and Nick Mount's contributions) more broadly North American texts and cultural formations. To some extent, the selection contradicts the book's stated view of itself as a contribution toward a "new nationalism" grounded in heterogeneity (xxxi). Readers looking for accounts of African-Canadian or Asian-Canadian experiences in "early Canada," for example, will be disappointed. This said, these chapters do not simply reinforce a tired mythology of "two founding nations." Andrea Cabajsky's paper on Napoleon Bourassa's *Jacques et Marie* emphasises the importance of comparative studies of early Canadian historical fiction, the lack of which has, she argues, perpetuated a "two solitudes' view of Canadian literary production that overlooks the genre's complicated internal dynamic of intercultural dialogue" (76). Historical fiction is also the focus of Robert David Stacey's excellent essay that questions the traditional estimation of romance as the dominant mode of early Canadian literature and reframes *The Golden Dog* and *Les Anciens Canadiens* as *pastoral* romances that "speak to a tradition of Canadian political compromise" (97). The remaining chapters are, for me, all highlights. Janice Fiamengo's paper on a selection of Sara Jeanette Duncan's newspaper writings brings much-needed attention to this underappreciated aspect of her work, and reveals Duncan's ambivalent engagement with the rhetoric of 1880s feminism. Anne Milne's chapter reads Federal Bill S-22, which declares *le petit cheval du fer* the national horse of Canada, as an

ethically questionable imposition of a nationalist narrative that not only suppresses important bio-regional differences, but also compromises the horse's "biological essence" by appropriating it for symbolic use (212). Official attempts to read the horse's tough but gentle nature as somehow representative of an essentialized Canadian national character speak to a desire that is also addressed in Adam Carter's essay, a fascinating critique of how Charles G.D. Roberts' "Canada" and "An Ode for the Canadian Confederacy" trope the nation as a human (white, male) subject in a way that "falsely covers over ... structural inequalities and differences of race, gender, and class" (127).

This is a highly readable and important book that should prove invaluable to scholars and enjoyable to anyone with an interest in early Canadian literary, historical, or cultural studies.

Sara Jamieson

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Lee M. Jenkins, *The Language of Caribbean Poetry: Boundaries of Expression*. Gainesville: Florida UP, 2004. Pp. 232. \$55 cloth.

Lee Jenkins is a faculty member at Cork University in Ireland and, while holding this position, she has contributed to the renown of what is now known as the Cork School of Poetry: a critical grouping also comprising such members as Graham Allen, Patricia Coughlan, Alex Davis, and formerly Anne Fogarty and John Goodby. The group is primarily recognized for its groundbreaking studies of Anglo-Irish poets ranging from Davis's watershed account of such Irish modernists as Denis Devlin, to Coughlan's pioneering feminist approaches to the poetry of Seamus Heaney and John Montague. Jenkins's latest book would seem to depart from a focus on Irish literary matters by dealing with another area of the postcolonial nexus, but this is only partly the case as one of the most remarkable aspects of her criticism is that it draws attention to numerous points of contact between the apparently unconnected islands of Ireland and the Caribbean. In fact, Jenkins's work centres on intertextual kinship between Caribbean and European writers as well as the now sizeable tradition of local Antillean literatures, which examines uniquely Caribbean genres and subgenres such as the Letter Home poem, the Antipraise poem, the Apostrophe to the Nation poem, and Caribbean poems about America. The study offers lengthy accounts of Claude McKay, David Dabydeen and Kamau Brathwaite and closes on a highly invigorating discussion of three female poets, Una Marson, Loma Goodison and Marlene Nourbese Philip, thus giving this panoptic study a gender balance too.