

## Access, Responsibility

*Barbara Godard*

Liminal notes these certainly are, written at the in-between of process, of transformation, as identity fictions are being negotiated in the fray of symbolic exchange in the “national” marketplace. What are the cultural discourses “properly,” that is legitimately (authoritatively), “Canadian”? Which will in/form “Canada”? Newspaper headlines punctuate the fray. Canada round produces agreement on new constitution. Confederation, a union of ten provinces. From Quebec, Lise Bissonnette replies with a single word: NON. Isn’t confederation a pact between two “Founding Nations,” “indigenous French” (Rioux 20) in treaty with their English “conquerors”? Ovide Mercredi protests behind-the-scenes discussions which may eliminate previously agreed-upon guarantees to self-government for the “First nations.” As the head of the Assembly of First Nations, a representative of the “indigenous peoples” or “Natives,” whose essentializing fiction strategically asserts their presence on the land prior to the arrival of the European settler “founding nations,”<sup>1</sup> Mercredi’s presentation to the Quebec National Assembly this spring exposed the ethnocentric implications of Quebec claims to “distinctiveness” founded in a fiction of an “indigenous” French culture. This speech prompted a member of the National Assembly, a more recent immigrant of non-francophone descent, to ask whether he was a Quebecer.

The stakes are high: who is a “Canadian” subject. What cultural forms and languages will legitimate this subject’s identity? Whose fictions will “make up” the face of the country? Whose looks function as the visible face of the country, its symbolic figuration? Which categories, classifying principles, will be used to order it? Territorial rights, land and the political control over it – access to economic resources are disputed through the figurations of the “national” subject. Representation involves the production of exchange value in a specific economy of meaning. Representations, producing “effects of the real,” have political

effects. Presently, the abstraction of neutral state apparatus with a fiction of regionalism grounded in a geographical imperative (nation-state) is contested by various personalized, ethnically diverse fictions grounded in temporal imperatives of "priority" (nation-culture).<sup>2</sup> In turn, these latter divergent figurations of occupancy are in conflict, mobility over large areas contrasting with stability in a limited space. The "nomadism" of the amerindian is opposed to the French "squatter's" development of the land and consequent proprietary rights that made the cultures equally indigenous.<sup>3</sup> Such different understandings of relation to the land and of "law and order" came to a crisis in the *différend* of Oka in 1990.<sup>4</sup>

The question of gender was forgotten in this contest over who was (t)here first, who has the greatest right (truest or purest claim) to the term Canadian, and how political and cultural institutions will be ordered to produce and sustain this specific subject and its identificatory fictions. That the national subject in question is a masculine subject has been pointed out by feminist groups who contest the constitutional accord agreed to by the provincial premiers as a denial of equality to women, a reversal of the gains achieved in the recognition of gender equality in the 1982 constitutional accord (Clause 28), and a selling-out of the principle agreed to in earlier forums where gender equality was to be enshrined in the Triple-E Senate along with the recognition of regional difference.

Moreover, the Native Women's Association, supported by the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women and the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, has criticized the current proposals in that they undermine equality provisions for Native women by enshrining self-government in the collective rights of Natives whose governments, currently "male-dominated," will be excluded specifically from these provisions for gender equality. Conflict among the diversity of "fictions" of "national" identity, each with their different ordering of scarce resources – land, money, language, and other symbolic forms, in short of power, – is monopolizing news columns in the press while "lifestyle" stories in Sunday editions announce that by the year 2001, the population of Toronto will be made up of 45% visible minorities. ("The Minority Report." *Toronto Star* 7 June 1992.)

The face of Canada is changing. Indeed, it is changing rapidly in ways the constitutional conflict overlooks. Are these "other looks" accompanied by a/n "(other) look"? Possibly not, as this opposition between

news item/lifestyle story demonstrates. The binary fact/fiction it establishes accords the status of the "real" to the representations of nationhood relegating to the realm of the imagination, to the category of Other, and so camouflaging, everyday instances of racism. This erasure, (re)produces such racism. Institutions ordering symbolic values may not be changing fast enough. Are there in the interslices new ways of looking at the questions of land, language and cultural rights? Are there alternative economies of the gaze that might be brought to bear on the regulation of symbolic forms, and consequent access to economic and political resources? Does looking differently "make a difference"? Can these different ways of looking accommodate the complexity of differences of race *and* gender? Is it possible to move beyond a telescoping of "woman/native/other" (tempted as one might be by the narrative of the current constitutional debates), to examine the overdetermination of their intersection, by examining conceptual frameworks and specific writings for both their gaps or silences and their contradictions?

*L'autre regard/Other looks* takes up this challenge to look otherwise: the essays variously explore the inscription of women of racially different histories in the Canadian literary institution. As "visible" minorities they look different and so foreground the issue of representation, traditionally ruled by an economy of the same, by *mimesis*. Paradoxically, though, they have been "invisible visible" minorities in a Canadian culture that systematically practices "pretend" and "deny" (Brown 168) to perpetuate social "cohesion" through constructing sameness. Strategies of alibiing single out instances of racial discrimination as exceptional. In this, they deny the profound racism of the society in question, carrying out the policies of oppression to produce certain groups as subordinate so that others may enjoy enhanced power. These policies function in the normal(izing) ways of doing things. "Glass ceilings," transparent symbolic boundaries render invisible, and hence deny, systemic "white privilege." The consequent apparent homogeneity reinforces the myth of a tolerant, egalitarian society, and places the blame for a failure to achieve or to fit in on the very victim it so excludes.

Taking up the question of the exclusive nature of feminism, the way in which feminism in Canada has been oriented around the concerns of middle-class white feminists and has thus organized structures that deny the validity of the issues and questions of other groups of women, is difficult for the same reason. The very presuppositions ordering the cohesiveness of the group as feminists are that which goes without

saying, the “common sense” understanding of what the concerns and modes of address appropriate to feminism are, invisible barriers whose exclusionary effects are nonetheless felt as concrete by those who do not share the “common ground,” the general view.

One of the barriers to taking such a second *critical* look at common assumptions has been those very assumptions that consider feminism’s primary question to be sexual difference, a focus on the difference between man/woman, that presupposes an order regulated by a masculine economy, all other questions subordinate to his interests, and considers the pursuit of women’s equality with (or difference from) men as the primary objective of feminism. This assumes that woman’s oppression is exclusively grounded in gender. That this is a fiction of middle-class white woman has been addressed with increasing force by women who must confront multiple oppressions in a society that discriminates against groups on the grounds of race, class and sexual orientation as well as gender. To change the priorities of feminism so that gender is not seen as a universal oppression to which all others are analogous – this has been the task undertaken ceaselessly by women of racially different groups. They start with what has hitherto been “just another question,” an additional, hence marginal question, racial difference as a fundamental symbolic system regulating access to scarce resources. “From margin to centre,” as bell hooks frames the swerve. An “aesthetic of opposition” (Mukherjee) or resistance it is, for it refuses the “common ground.” This has provoked another question for feminism, the exploration of the valences woman/women, of how the diversity among women has been inscribed into the category of “woman,” a limiting one, it consequently appears, for it has prevented discussion of the complex relationships of oppression among women. The privilege of some women is at the expense of other women.

Such a debate would be one mode of symbolic exchange between women should the “commodities” organize amongst themselves, the “goods go to market,” enter into a symbolic order, as Irigaray advocates (Irigaray 1985). This entails a new way of looking at the questions of gender and race, an abandonment of binary models grounded in an order of the same, (an order of metaphor or substitution), for an open system of exchange or field of relational differences (an order of metonymy or combination) (Godard 1991) that would attend to the processes by which relations described as “ethnic,” “racial,” “cultural,” “class,” and “gender,” intersect and interact with each other in complex

and specific ways, including those of irreducible difference. These models require new methodologies to accommodate such messy situations, often not compatible with an institutional critical discourse that values clarity, distinction, purity, over contradiction, heterogeneity. Groups are not unified, conditions not homogeneous. Practices cannot be grasped from the outside as completed, but must be approached through examination of the theoretical and social conditions within which practical knowledge is developed. Grasped objectively, structures of interaction must also be approached reflexively, since the perspective (angle of vision) of the viewer as well as the viewed is also at stake.

Presently, in the Canadian literary institution,<sup>5</sup> the relationships between ethnically different groups constitute agonistic relations within an apparatus of struggle ensuring the marginalization of certain ways of seeing and guaranteeing the conditions of exploitation and its reproduction. This the institution does by taking the partial and conditioned knowledges of some and making them a general Truth-for-all, a speaking on behalf of or representation of another that effectively precludes the circulation of the different partial knowledges of others as interlocutors by presuming a homogeneity of audience. Within present power alignments in Canada where race is a category for making distinctions, any statement of a white person on the question of racism will participate in white privilege by framing the terms of utterance, taking up the space that might have been occupied by an oppositional discourse from a person of colour, denied that specific privilege of establishing the "common ground."

"Appropriation," or representing the other, that is using the material or preempting the place of another, is how this debate is currently being framed in the cultural institutions over the issue of who may use the representations of specific minority ethnic groups and under what conditions. This entails two other terms and issues that frame the debate somewhat differently, in terms not of property but of power, those of "access" and "responsibility." The ability to frame the grounds of the sayable, which is the power of the dominant in a discursive configuration, organizes access to articulation for everyone in ways which may limit it for those who do not share the "proper" way of saying things. "We appear silent to people who are deaf to what we say," is how Himani Bannerji phrases this (11). Speaking "right" means "speak white." This power to limit foregrounds the necessity of ethical "respon-

sibility" on the part of those constituted as speaking subject within/by a speech act. The problem of closure of the "I"/"you" of the exchange into a "we" that presupposes the homogeneity of speaker and audience is always a risk. Attentiveness to an other as other in a way that does not subordinate the other to the same (the other as the differentiating unit against which the "I" affirms its identity), and subsume the other into the same, this is what Irigaray asserts as an ethics of difference (Irigaray 1984). Responsibility involves taking care that one's speaking or writing does not silence another. Recognizing the need to be silent so that another may speak. No longer "going squaw," as so many Canadian women writers have, eclipsing the different speech of Native women storytellers (Armstrong). Discursive practices are oppressive when the group in power exercises a monopoly over the discursive formation and there is no debate or discussion along horizontal axes among differing partial knowledges.

How to go about addressing such heterogeneity? This is the question raised by the essays in *L'autre regard/Other Looks*. A range of options is outlined in "Bad Words," the story of Marlene Nourbese Philip analyzed by Leslie Sanders, in the divergence between the parents who have carefully learned the words of the discourse of educated citizens to take up the place of equality long denied them as slaves, and the daughter, who practices the "bad words" of the loose woman, the "jammette," whose free-wheeling boundary-breaking mode of discourse "jams" the discursive mechanisms with her (im)proper behaviour, to break everything wide open in a liberation that moves beyond a valorization of the order of the same to create possibilities for radical difference. For something not yet imag(in)ed. The ordering of space, the transformative potentials of the liminal in-between, the superposition of opposing languages/cultures, the need to sustain the consequent contradiction – all these issues explored by Nourbese Philip in the situation of the New World African attempting to move beyond the subaltern position of slave girl are raised in different ways in other texts. Sanders emphasizes the importance of Philip's double project, to introduce issues of gender into the historical account and the discourse of emancipation as a corrective to the neutral language of the parents' perspective that overlooks the way in which imperialism has been played out on the female body.

This play, the body as signifier in the discourses of imperialism, of racism is what Busejé Bailey explores in her work "Opening Up To a Lot of Pain" from "Body Politic." Pain is the key word associated with the

500 year history of slavery for Afro-Canadians. So massive has been the wound that it has not yet been addressed, let alone redressed. For some Afro-Canadians, it remains a taboo subject. Yet the suffering is traced in the bodies of Black women. Bailey explores the work of representation in the coding of colour in the symbolic marketplace especially in "Black Label," whose ironic title points out the relative value of black, a chic colour on a beer bottle, opposed by the total invisibility of the Black woman from the scene of representation. In other work she literalizes the metaphors of domination, exposes the "skin/screen" of representation, when tattooed by racist slogans, the Black woman suffers the violence of racist discourses. Bearing the burden of pain literally on her back.

Theoretical issues of approaching the writing of women of racial minorities are raised through examination of specific texts in other contributions too. In "Je voi(e)s double(s): L'itinéraire de Nadine Ltaif," Christl Verduyn underlines the theoretical necessity of discussing specific texts in order to develop new frames for the analysis of a growing corpus in Quebec literature by minority women writers because of the diversity of their histories and affiliations. Ltaif, an Arabic-speaking writer of Lebanese origin, has focused on the question of coming to writing, of forging a new language from contact with the mother/sea, from a place of passage in-between the waters, where the double langscapes and landscapes of her exile becoming fluid, mobile, self-division may be transformed into self-articulation through a double angle of vision that dissolves the rigidities of separation between old home and new. The place of perpetual movement, of being always different, always outside, as exile or madwoman, is "under Hecate's shadow." The text of Nadine Ltaif included in this issue is, significantly, "Le lieu d'Hecate," where she explores her self-division and the breaking of conventions of the proper in her alienated space as she tentatively notes a new subject in/by writing.

The question of writing by women of minority cultures in Quebec is framed in more general terms by Lucie Lequin and Mair Verthuy in "Sous la signe de la pluralité: l'écriture des femmes migrantes au Québec." Noting both the historical conditions that produced it, and its pervasiveness in the literary institution, they analyze the foundational myth of Quebec culture that emphasized the biological, linguistic and religious homogeneity of its ancestral figures, a fiction of identity that has functioned to produce as different and peripheral all that which is not indigenous Québécois. This myth has shaped the canon of Quebec

literature, misshaped it in fact, since the homogeneity of this fiction masks the reality of the long presence of many different ethnic groups in Quebec and bodies of writing in English, Yiddish, Hebrew. The passage of Bill 101 in the 1970's included a new group of immigrants of non-European cultures within the parameters of francophone culture making it more difficult to assimilate this difference to traditional Quebec culture. Writing is now being produced in Quebec in Italian, Greek, Native languages, and more. The Other is no longer just an English speaker, but possibly a speaker of Tamil or Korean. The challenge this poses to the literary institution is how to situate the myth of a monolithic francophone Quebec in relation to these many languages and cultures. It may continue to pose this as an oppositional relation. Lequin and Verthuy, however, advocate the necessity of considering French writing relationally *with* writing in other languages. Consequently, the perspective of their study of migrant women writers is a temporary one, since this new conjugation will lead to a realignment of borders, a shift in centre and periphery, mobile, relational sites.

In the present phase of this study they have focused on four women writers who speak several languages and belong to several cultural communities, long time wanderers. Mobility is crucial to their framing of this study of "migrant" writing as the production of change. The choice of this term also reinforces the perspective of the writers in question, intellectuals highly conscious of their *métissage*, of the superposition of languages and voices in their lives, their writing, aware too of the multiple landscapes of their cultural inscription, the country(ies) of nostalgia from which they emigrated, the country to be made to which they immigrated, both claiming them equally. This opening of the space of belonging stimulates them to forge a space in their new country that will break open its boundaries. Briefly, Lequin and Verthuy focus on the work of Mona Latif Ghattas and her exploration of the landscape of exile, searching her family roots in Egypt to find there already a mixed cultural heritage, enlarging her probing of the complex ways of suffering and revolt to contrast her exile played out in two countries with the exile of an amerindian woman, a refugee in her own country.

In "Élégie Egyptienne pour la mère du silence," her contribution to this issue, Mona Latif Ghattas continues this stereoscopic vision through a superposition of double landscapes, the lamented landscape of the oriental childhood viewed from the distance of a snowy land and adulthood, to examine the silences and gaps, the wounding and distortions of



(hi)story. The narrating "I" is dislocated here, set adrift from a familiar "you." From this shift in narrative stance, something new may emerge beyond the remembered failure to act. Writing about the interminable loss of exile, Latif Ghattas looks through a realignment of geopolitical entities for a transformation in languages and bodies. Knowing in a contingent world that homes are provisional, constructed, the exile passes a life creating a world. Consequently, the only life is in writing, a process connecting past and future.

In Nadia Ghalem's text, "*L'inconnue*," the emphasis is on the process of self-creation through which the future comes to be. This text breaks out of the binary categories of the migrant topographical system. It juxtaposes three places, three times, to project a transformation in the future through a re-membering and realignment of the past. The third space, "between," allows the subject to be everywhere and nowhere, to engage simultaneously in acts of conjunction and disjunction, in an economy of con-fusion. Paris, where the narrator travels from Montreal, becomes the place in-between, gathering people from different parts of the world, collecting and holding objects from many temporal periods superimposed, as in the Musée Cluny visited by the narrator. This is an occasion to reflect on the history of Algeria, to remember its strong female leaders from the past, to consider the successive waves of migration that brought many different peoples to coinhabit the country. The narrator also meets other women from Algeria in exile some, like her childhood friend, because they have gone against its strong patriarchal code and been cast out by their family. In her exile, the protagonist finds herself more liberated as a woman. Her review of Algerian history shows her that nations need not be ethnically pure, a vision she projects as a possible future for Montreal whose citizens are equally diverse. This vision enables her to inhabit Montreal imaginatively and she makes a pact to meet her old friend in her new city sometime in the future.

Jeannette Armstrong's interview with Janice Williamson, "what I intended was to connect ... and it's happened" exemplifies this approach of "applied theorization" in its form. It's title foregrounds the issue common to all these texts, to establish new lines of connection, new ways of relating, to make of the space between cultures, languages, races, a productive space by bringing together the unexpected, the non-equivalent to produce something new. The ambivalence in the co-presence of two cultural models, and the reversibility between them, breaks up the unidirectionality of official cultural discourse. The discussion moves in

different directions from the essays on Quebec writers, however, to considerations of the literary institution and analysis of politics. Feminist politics explicitly, in the dialogue about Armstrong's novel *Slash* and her decision to make her protagonist a young man, as a teaching story for Native men, on the need for developing both the feminine and the masculine in themselves, and in the context of the American Indian Movement whose history she was trying to write. This is a feminist critique of the Movement, for Armstrong feels that it ignored the traditional importance of women in Native cultures. The coequal presence of feminine and masculine powers is for Armstrong the important element of traditional Native philosophy for both creative and political activities.

Access to a readership to present her perspective on events is critical, according to Armstrong, for Native peoples to have a chance to shape the ways of seeing and thinking for their own communities and others. The establishment of a Native publishing house. Theytus, and the development of the En'okwin International School of Writing for young Native writers are important steps in this process. Armstrong talks at length about the curriculum for this programme which will involve research into traditional oral oratory, from which she draws her images, technical devices and aesthetic, that of attempting to build bridges across differences. As well, the school will teach students how to write criticism of Native texts in order to develop an informed readership.

In *Being White*, Luanne Armstrong addresses this issue from the other side, as a white teacher of creative writing to Native students. Responsibility of those who hold greater power is what she advocates. This entails the necessity of self-interrogation on the whiteness of white, on complicity in the privileges of white power. The process is a difficult one. How to learn the fine distinction between being a guest and being an intruder in another culture? Learning that another culture is not necessarily interested in one's own is important in unlearning ethnocentrism, in opening a space for an other. This interrogation of power by those who enjoy its privileges is necessary for the negative effects of power to be minimised, for change to occur.

The will to change through hybrid forms that mix cultural codes, producing semantic excess in a system based on fixed equivalencies and the law of non-contradiction, is not enough: the new cultural forms, the different cultural voices, may never be heard if the literary institution refuses to acknowledge them, excludes them as nonsense, makes no

changes in order to value their ways of saying. This focus on asymmetrical power relations among groups of women on the grounds of race is distinguished from the more familiar terms in the analysis of ethnicity: "multicultural," "intercultural," "transcultural." These have all been critiqued in various contexts for the ease with which they may be assimilated to modes of pluralism that maintain the status quo, especially in the case of "intercultural," developed in the context of European relations with former colonies (Marranca 12) and "multicultural" which also functions as a European charter myth of origins, a depoliticized and homogenized display of difference effectively recuperated through its orientation to the past. As Marlene Nourbese Philip argues: "multiculturalism is not anti-racism" (1990 A 21). Though some of the essays call for pluralism, none uses these concepts, seeking for a framework that will not lock culture into binaries, will not abolish the "other" along with the subject as happens in emancipatory theories, but will account for a process through which culture circulates continuously, producing change through contact(s).

Questions of power are raised too, though more obliquely, in the texts of Suniti Namjoshi and Leila Sujir. In "Tis the Eye of Childhood," Namjoshi stages defiance in a satiric rewriting that attempts to deflate the power of a patriarchal, imperialist myth. She writes a humorous fable about a female would-be saint with an Indian name who tries to imitate St. George, mythical patron of England, and slay a dragon. With a difference, however, of both race and gender, for she winds up consoling a dying dragon as it gives birth. Meritorious though the deed may be in saving the world from potentially destructive dragons, it is acknowledged by no prize, only an apple. Myth suggests this is highly problematic. The established forces of order, police and politicians, would be more richly rewarded, the fable conveys, emphasizing the problem of recognition for the outsider who works with different rules.

In "My Mother's Eggplant Story," from "The Dreams of the Night Cleaners," Leila Sujir also launches a challenge to the existing social order, enlisting among the "night cleaners" those oppressed economically, the part-time workers, and those oppressed racially, (im)migrants from India. The question is more complicated though, for this group also involves the child born in Canada of mixed racial parentage. Night cleaners – the un(der)privileged, the underclass – are tidying up more than buildings: they are cleaning up history, addressing the nightmares of history that abuse so many dark-skinned peoples, whether in exile in

the diaspora, or under siege at home where the mistaken dream of Columbus has brought about their displacement. This too is a fable of revolt against an order of death and oppression, a fable narrated by a mother who dreams of a new history, one with no closure, one that will not cramp and/or distort the representations of the dark-skinned people. Aubergines, she names them, a dark shiny fruit of many hues. Difference there is too among so-called "people of colour."

Like those of Ghalem, Ghattas and Latif, this text explores the problem of living between countries, the nostalgic desire to repeat the same familiar old story in this new place, dis/placed through the stereoscopic vision. Not just emigrant's nostalgia, Sujir's text has moved beyond the conventional valences of the syntax of ethnicity, the oscillation between reclaiming home through memory and intervention in the new country through dissidence, that is, between a syntax of "retentive" and one of "restitutive" particularity. Instead, Sujir and Namjoshi, engage in anticipation or development of a transformative project. While all look towards the emergence of the new through the conflation of old and present topographies and languages, Sujir in particular creates a new hybridity, or what has been called a "syntax of invention of a syncretic particularity" (Sekyi-Otu 194-7).

Defiance in/as humour. Sujir and Namjoshi invoke the revolutionary power of laughter, of wit, through which the unconscious surges as excess to produce a break or disjunction between subject and object, to disrupt the syntax of narratives of racism. Working on porous boundaries, wit engages the play of dissimilarity in similarity and of similarity in dissimilarity, focusing on differences (Freud 41). The carnivalesque topsy-turvydom of their child's eye view and aubergine's view, defamiliarizing mythical topos (common place) and prairie topography, focuses on the absurdity of the familiar, making it laughable. The mimicry of the rewriting of cultural icons, a writing back of the outsider, is a doubling or repetition that effects a dis/placement (Freud 89). "Making up" faces, foregrounding the constructedness of looks. In contrast, the syntax of "retentive" particularity with its dominant mode of nostalgia, inscribes the abjection of a melancholic subject given over to memory, situated in a period of indistinction of subject and object, bound into the imaginary, the maternal. Through the veil of memory the familiar topography of home is rendered "unheimliche," uncanny or unknown. The litany of familiar place names is a doubling or repetition that functions as a re-recovery of or "replacement" for what the speaker

perceives as an archaic mother," an ambiguous and unending confrontation with her (Kristeva 291), in an effort to lift the veil and discover her looks.

"Making faces" at the dominant cultural discourses. "Making faces" at their white readers too, mimicking them, laughing with not at them – this is a way of living with difference. Humour is a way of performing the appropriate gesture in mimicry, while keeping at a safe distance. Open to the contact of cultures while avoiding assimilation, homogenization. Defiance through humour is a mediation of oppression especially effective in Native writing (Vangen). Defiantly "making faces," the writer must also create "new faces," showing how "migrant" or "halfbreed" can become a respected word, the in-between a valued space, instead of nowhere. Taking responsibility for that space between the legs, for the "bad words." Giving them another look. "Making new faces" engages the project of "making history." In these texts, it is a question of making (her)stories. Fictions to be circulated. Provisional fictions to be transformed in the exchange, in the (re)making of cultures.

### Notes

1. Strategically, this fiction of "firstness" supports the legal struggle over land claims by foregrounding the fact that many Native groups never signed treaties with white governments and so have the rights of independent states with continuous occupation of the land. The indigenous peoples in the United States use the term Indian more frequently since it offers them greater legal purchase to rights under the Indian Act.
2. According to Tzvetan Todorov, a culture is a "preorganization of the world," "a collective memory of the past that grounds a code of behaviour in the present directing our search for ways to the future" (7).
3. This particular formulation is Claude Jasmin's response to Elijah Harper's filibuster that prevented the signing of the Meech Lake: "Un squatter qui s'installe sur une terre de la Couronne et qui y travaille, la développe, y construit ses foyers devient propriétaire de ce territoire ... Les populations autochtones d'ici ... étaient des nomades. Ils (sic) vivaient de pêche, de chasse et l'idée même d'un territoire à développer les laissait de glace." The violence of occupying this "empty land" is erased in this figuration which concludes with the trope of "Native Québécois": "Qu'est-ce à dire sinon que la culture québécoise est devenue une culture autochtone au même titre que les cultures aborigènes?"

4. I am using *différend* in the sense of Jean-François Lyotard as an “irreducible difference” or heterogeneity.
5. This issue has been the focus of much debate within the Writers Union of Canada and the Canada Council. Its guidelines concerning the composition of juries and panels were developed in response to the *Recommendations of the Advisory Committee to the Canada Council for Racial Equality in the Arts* (Ottawa, 1992).

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