

Symposium Transatlantica (3)

14-15 January 2013

First Narratives:

Literature on First Nations and Literature by First Nations

The third Transatlantica Symposium, which will take place at the University of Toulouse-le-Mirail, will continue to explore the tension between minority and majority discourses by adopting an endogenous and exogenous perspective on indigenous literature in Canada and the Americas. It will focus on the representation of First Nations by writers from the ethnic majority and investigate this exogenous discourse in parallel to the endogenous discourse of the First Nations themselves. The works by First Nation writers and those by writers from the ethnic majority will be examined together, not in a spirit of confrontation, but through a relational angle derived from a transatlantic perspective.

It will be the aim of the symposium to construct “a literary relationship,” that will instigate a dialogue between, in the Canadian context for example, Tomson Highway and Hugh Garner, Thomas King and Alexander Mackenzie, Rudy Wiebe and Yvonne Johnson, Pauline Johnson and Catharine Parr Traill or Anna Jameson, Eden Robinson and Alice Munro, Lee Maracle and Margaret Atwood, Maria Campbell and Susanna Moodie, Farley Mowat and Jeannette Armstrong, Sheila Watson and Mordecai Richler, or Robert Kroetsch, Gail Anderson-Dargatz and Lenore Keeshig-Tobias.

The Canadian context will not be the only one to be examined: the works from indigenous writers from the United States (for example Scott Momaday, Gerald Vizenor, Sherman Alexie or Louise Erdrich) and from Latin America (Rigoberta Menchu, not to mention others) will be equally investigated. Instead of envisaging « AlterNatives » and exploring alterity in indigenous narration, the similarities between narratives will be highlighted.

Critics will bear in mind that the eclipsing of differences and imposition of a Eurocentric critical discourse upon indigenous literature can be considered a colonization of the text or a cultural appropriation. Critical responsibility will consist in listening closely to the indigenous text so as to foster dialogue and suggest the possibility of contact zones to be cross-examined. In her essay on the Algonquin Wendigo myth, Margaret Atwood demonstrates how it has fertilized indigenous and exogenous narratives beyond its original place of inception. We will make it our task to try and find the traces of the dissemination of indigenous myths in the multiplicity of stories from the Americas, for example the Wendigo myth in Eden Robinson and Alice Munro or the Cree myth of O-ma-ma in Tomson Highway, as well as the sometimes contested and disquieting presence of Coyote and Nanabush. (Deanna Reder and Linda M. Morra (eds). *Troubling Tricksters Revisioning Critical Conversations*. Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2010). We will draw upon what Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben calls the anthropological machine of the Ancients to highlight the similarities of construction between « the man-ape, the *enfant sauvage*, the *homo*

ferus, but above all the slave, the barbarian, and the foreigner » (Agamben, Giorgio. *The Open. Man and Animal*. Trans. Kevin Attell. Stanford UP, 2003) .

Our examination of literature by First Nations and on First Nations will thus adopt a bio-cultural and transatlantic perspective that remains coherent with the place where the study is conducted, and that re-imagines, thanks to a relational paradigm founded on spatial and temporal enlargement, the critical outlook on exogenous and endogenous production.

Proposals with biographical notes should be sent to heliane.ventura@univ-tlse2.fr before October 30th, 2012.