

MOISAN, BLODGETT, AND BEYOND:

RETHINKING COMPARATIVE CANADIAN
LITERATURE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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In the spring of 1966, the Imperial Tobacco Company of Canada launched an essay competition with the theme “Canada—An/Year 2000.” The call for papers was intended both to commemorate the 1967 centennial of the Canadian Confederation and to “inciter les Canadiens à réfléchir sur l’avenir de leur pays et à proposer des solutions originales aux problèmes d’aujourd’hui” (Moisan, *Âge* 7). The first prize was awarded to the Québécois comparatist Clément Moisan for his essay, “L’Âge de la littérature canadienne,” which was expanded and published in book form in 1969 under the same title. The objective to envision an inclusive image of Canada, in a present and a future tense, is a challenge that held the attention of many early comparatists. Cultural diversity, existing then much as it does now, complicates this pursuit for a singular reflection of a Canadian identity. The paradox that emerges for comparative Canadian literature is the simultaneous drive towards and impossibility of such an all-encompassing study. The works of two prominent Canadian comparatists, Clément Moisan and E.D. Blodgett, demonstrate limitations in their ability to address the full scope of this country’s literatures. An analysis of the pitfalls of both Moisan’s and Blodgett’s approaches sheds light on what stands to be gained from a broader ground for comparison, one that relinquishes the need to capture all expressions under the net of a single study. Comparative Canadian literature in the twenty-first century must push its methodologies beyond the confines of linguistic and cultural groupings to incorporate an unbounded diversity. As will be explored

here, recent publications in the field demonstrate the possibilities that arise from such a widening of scope and narrowing of focus.

THE NATION AND THE NECESSITY OF DIFFERENCE FOR THE COMPARATIVE PROJECT

12 Numerous cultural groups in Canada make claims to their status as particular *nations*. Since both Moisan and Blodgett mention the nation, it may be useful to further explore this term before turning to each comparatist's particular works. There is a peculiar duality at work in Canadian identity politics, one that sees a simultaneous desire to recognize cultural plurality while unifying these under a single Canadian identity. For its importance within the project of comparative Canadian literature, however, the "nation" is a term that carries multiple meanings. Ernest Renan, in his well-known speech "Qu'est-ce que la nation?" refers to the nation as "une idée, claire en apparence, mais qui prête aux plus dangereux malentendus" (9). Canada has a stratified history of immigration, leading many people living here to claim their own cultural distinctions that extend beyond a shared Canadian citizenship. Taking "the many as one" (Bhabha, "DissemiNation" 142) insufficiently addresses groups that are "disrupted by an internal dispersal" (Sugars 1). This, however, is what the multiculturalism policy suggests in attempting to unite a diverse Canadian identity under a single image of Canada.

One may question whether the notion of the nation helps or hinders the comparative process. To conflate the nation with the state, for instance, can lead to structuring comparisons along federalist lines. English-French bilingualism, granted under British colonial rule, both eclipses other cultures and creates a subaltern position for French Canada. The multicultural policy further complicates matters by simultaneously encouraging the expression of a multiplicity of cultural identities and upholding British colonial dominance. An overarching requirement for Canadian citizenship casts a long shadow over other identity factors, such as ethnicity.

In the introduction to his recent work, *Five-Part Invention: A History of Literary History in Canada*, Blodgett defines comparative Canadian literature as having "a didactic purpose that is aimed at constructing an idea of a nation [...]. It requires clarity of origin and precise delimitation [...]. Difference and meaning come into being through procedures of exclusion and the providing of direction" (10). Given this fundamental role of differentiation, the comparative project itself complicates the existence of a single understanding of Canadian identity. Whereas certain comparative studies approach literatures of contrasting countries, languages, and cultures, comparative Canadian literature takes as its focus the internal literary variances of an individual country. While Canadian literatures are, on the one hand, understood as being held together by shared commonalities, this alone does not override the

immense variety within these texts. The challenge facing comparatists is to develop a methodological approach that can contribute to our understanding of Canadian literatures without overlooking their immense diversity.

In order to define what is and is not included in an analysis, Canadian comparatists like Moisan and Blodgett have sometimes relied upon binary systems, despite the risk that these may conceal internal particularities. One such framework is the *two solitudes* analogy of French and English Canada. This bilingual positioning mirrors the constitutional make-up of the country, but is not able to accommodate the significant number of literatures that thrives outside of these parameters. The oppositional units employed in the comparative process are by no means exclusive, and can change from project to project. The indeterminacy of binary identifications complicates the comparative process. For a poststructuralist theorist like Homi Bhabha,

the encounters and negotiations of differential meanings and values within "colonial" textuality, its governmental discourses and cultural practices, have enacted, *avant la lettre*, many of the problematics of signification and judgment that have become current in contemporary theory—aporia, ambivalence, indeterminacy, the question of discursive closure, the threat to agency, the status of intentionality, the challenge to "totalizing" concepts, to name but a few. ("Postcolonial" 439)

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One must not rule out the limitless other means by which Canada's literatures could be organized by selecting different criteria, such as geographical region, culture, class, gender, sexuality, thematic references, and the like. Thus what emerges is a body of Canadian literatures that, like a multi-threaded tapestry, comes apart the more that it is handled. It is this shifting, ungraspable nature of Canadian literatures that has posed the majority of problems for comparatists attempting to contain the multitude expressions within a single study. Both Moisan and Blodgett have employed culturally-defined methodologies that are necessarily limited in what they can address. The first step in tackling this malaise in the discipline may be to release the perceived necessity for completeness and rather construct a composite understanding of Canadian literatures through a collaboration of efforts and perspectives.

There is a noticeable expansion of the comparative field from Moisan's analyses to Blodgett's which opens up a possible trajectory for future analyses. Moisan was among the first Canadian comparatists to insist on stepping out of the monolingual study of Canadian literatures. Blodgett shared Moisan's pluralistic valorization but added to the French-English binary the study of First Nations, Inuit and Immigrant literatures. While new developments in the discipline can capitalize on the momentum established by Moisan and Blodgett, the future of the discipline requires not merely an annexation of additional identity groupings. Rather, when the necessity to assess Canadian literatures on the basis of linguistic and cultural groups is ceded to the possibility of infinite other approaches, growth may appear in the most unlikely of places. A number of contemporary Canadian comparatists are exploring the possibilities of such an expanded scope. Among these are Sylvia Söderlind,

Peter Dickinson, and Lianne Moyes, who have made efforts to reconsider comparative methodologies, as I will discuss further on.

THE COMPARATIVE WORK OF CLÉMENT MOISAN

14 Moisan's critical works seek to demonstrate the relationships (la parenté) between Canada's literatures, with the objective of broadening their readership beyond unilingual, unicultural perspectives. As Moisan justifies his enterprise, "Mais, tout compte fait, l'étude comparée des deux littératures du pays, à partir d'un même point de vue, ne peut qu'aboutir à d'heureux résultats et fournir des lumières nouvelles sur le caractère marginal de leur situation présente" (*Âge* 14). The commonality that Moisan set out to demonstrate, however, was divided along many lines: "les frontières existent donc, d'abord linguistiques, puis culturelles, intellectuelles, historiques et géographiques" (*Poésie* 7). His approach was to examine the interaction of Canada's literary works along these borders, with the belief that "les frontières peuvent aussi devenir, outre des endroits de séparation, des points de rencontre, qui permettent de connaître l'autre, voire de la comprendre" (*Poésie* 8).

Moisan, who was prominently situated at l'Université Laval for the duration of his academic career, was influenced by Québécois cultural and political events. Dissatisfied with the use of the term "Canadian Literature" to describe the writings that originate in a country of "deux langues et deux cultures" (*Âge* 17), he elected to focus primarily on the French-English divide. Moisan's comparative analyses of French and English literatures in Canada have marked significant developments for the discipline. His 1979 book *Poésie des frontières* takes a thematic approach to the formal, linguistic, and historical aspects of Canadian poetry. Moisan makes an effort to avoid recreating a socio-political analysis by placing his emphasis on the technical, literary components of the poetry. Following a general overview of each language's poetic history in Canada, there are four thematic sections: *poésie de la clandestinité; de la résistance; de la libération; and la nouvelle culture, la contre-culture*. Each section features up to three poets from each language (eighteen poets in all), whom Moisan reads as addressing the section's theme. Antoine Sirois points out that, by thematically juxtaposing French and English poets, Moisan demonstrates how both contribute to contemporary Canadian culture: "Le sujet est bien situé dans le contexte des études actuelles, la comparaison des auteurs spécifiques s'inscrit dans la continuité des panoramas de chacune des poésies en question" (413). It is questionable, however, to what extent Moisan was able to escape the political implications of his objective, given his portrayal of the similarities between a much fraught French and English Canada.

The thematic approach of *Poésie des frontières* resembles those of Ronald Sutherland, D. G. Jones, and Margaret Atwood. Moisan acknowledges the influence that Atwood's *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* has had on how he

considers Canadian literatures: "On ne saurait trop insister sur la parution en 1972 de *Survival* de Margaret Atwood. Ce guide thématique de la littérature canadienne [...] fourmille de notations heureuses sur les mentalités collectives et les attitudes particulières des Canadiens [...] à partir d'une étude de leur littérature respective" (*Poésie* 22). Moisan formulates the thematics of his analyses out of what he sees to be the common points in Canada's literatures. *Survival* and the role of the victim figure prominently in Moisan's work. "La *survivance* que Margaret Atwood a expliquée dans *Survival*," he writes, "est bien le thème d'élection des poètes actuels du Canada et du Québec. La question qui se pose maintenant à eux est celle-ci: survivre, mais pourquoi? et pour quoi faire?" (*Poésie* 9). For Moisan, survival applies across linguistic boundaries not only to the writer's relations in the physical world but also to his or her struggles with publishing, and in establishing a readership.

15 A tension exists between Moisan's argument for the plurality of Canadian literatures and the internal limitations he places by naming these as French and English. From his first work, Moisan acknowledges Canadian cultural and linguistic plurality. It is his contention that "Parler d'une littérature canadienne n'implique pas d'ailleurs qu'il faille postuler au Canada une seule littérature ou une seule culture. La vie canadienne démentirait cette affirmation" (*Âge* 14). This variety is stopped short, however, by Moisan's focus on linguistic duality instead of on a broader cultural plurality. This approach, asserts Joseph Pivato, "is essentially binary and does not include the possibility of a third group" (24). Beyond Pivato's suggestion for a third group, methodology must be further expanded to include the limitless possible approaches that extend beyond those of nation, language or cultural group.

Moisan, like other Canadian comparatists, has had to face the inherent challenges of discussing literature in a country where language and culture carry with them significant political implications. Due to the relational nature of selecting comparative units, there is necessarily content that is not addressed in a single comparative framework. In dealing with the Canadian situation, and literatures written in French and English, the scholar runs the risk of being perceived as supporting or denying Canada's bilingual, federalist agenda. Moisan's intentions to avoid political commentary in his works are underwritten by the comparison itself. Moisan claims that his writings "ne proposent pas de solutions politiques, car les poètes, s'ils ne se désintéressent pas de solutions politiques comme telle, on le verra, n'ont pas pour fonction d'éclairer la lanterne des gouvernants" (*Poésie* 9). Both the generalizations inherent in a thematic approach and the consistent use of a French-English binary suggest a unity in Moisan's comparative frameworks that does not coincide with the lived reality of many Canadians.

E.D. BLODGETT'S COMPARATIVE WORK

From early on in his career, Blodgett has engaged in comparisons that reach beyond the French-English binary, seeking a more complete picture of Canadian literatures. He claims that "he who would compare the Canadian literatures, either with themselves or with others, ought, if I may borrow Jacques Maritain's phrase, to 'distinguer pour unir.' When we survey the literatures of Canada, whether they be francophone, anglophone, or allophone [...], all voices ought to be heard" ("Canadian Literatures" 24). Blodgett's primary challenge has been to develop a methodology that can accommodate many literatures, even those that extend beyond his own area of expertise. Despite these best intentions, however, the addition of clearly defined cultural boxes may still prove insufficient when faced with a multitude of hybrid identities and perspectives that thrive within Canada's literatures today.

- 16 Blodgett's comparisons depend on both similarity and difference. His objective is to address the plurality of literatures, while taking into account "Canadian realities and the Canadian sense of distinctiveness" ("Canadian Literatures" 20). Employing the same terms "Canadian" and "Québécois" as Moisan, Blodgett states, "if we pretend to the full view of the Canadian literatures, we mean the fiction for the most part in French and English" ("After" 63). Blodgett's ideal comparative framework "would require some unifying *fil conducteur* as a principle of organization which would, in the end, so transcend linguistic and cultural differences as to leave difference behind" (20). While I would argue in favour of moving beyond linguistic and cultural differences as the basis of comparison, it is the need for such a connective line designed to assemble a complete vision of Canadian literatures that I question. The first step Blodgett makes towards deepening the nuance of his comparative methodology is to transcend the French-English binary. At the time that he entered the discipline, few scholars were writing about Canadian literatures that fall outside of this construct. As he notes late in the 1980s, "there is only one dominant consideration [...] which is the relationship between the anglophone and the francophone literatures of Canada" ("Canadian Literature" 905). There are, however, aspects within these categories that destabilize comparative units. Canadian bilingual and multicultural legislation promotes cultural pluralism that challenges the French-English binary. Blodgett recognizes that there are other literatures being written in Canada "in their native languages—German, Icelandic, Italian, and Ukrainian, to name the dominant languages." He continues by mentioning "a fact that is rarely taken into account, even in studies of other New World literatures, and that is the presence of native literatures, both Inuit and Amerindian" ("Canadian Literature" 905). Despite the complications plurality poses for comparative frameworks, it is not sufficient to act as though those problems do not exist. To ignore the distinctive factors within Canada's literatures would be to focus only on shared similarities and to dispel difference without properly addressing it.

By 1988, Blodgett had firmly established his perspective on "Canada's heteroglot cultural situation" ("Canadian Literature" 907). With the release of *Configuration: Essays on the Canadian Literatures* in 1982, he contends that no single study can do justice to the plurality of Canadian perspectives. Réjean Beaudoin, in his essay "Axes de comparaison entre deux littératures," describes how Blodgett has altered his comparative method by seeking out examples of cultural plurality other than the French-English binary: "Blodgett réfute cette idée commune à diverses stratégies de comparaison [...]. Il montre que cette idée est impuissante à fournir un modèle opératoire pour comparer les littératures canadiennes, dont le pluriel, dans le titre de son ouvrage, veut affirmer la multiplicité réelle et non la binarité admise des langues et des cultures du Canada" (487). Dissatisfied with a purely English-French approach, Blodgett adopts the example of Canadian German writing and its relation to works in the two founding languages.

The subject of literary history is one that has interested both Moisan and Blodgett throughout their careers. Both comparatists, in doing so, demonstrate their faith in the potential for a unifying grasp in the discipline. At the same time Blodgett asserts that the way a history is told affects others' perception of the country: "my history of the literatures of Canada would not aspire to some ideological pan-Canadian ideal, a place where those literatures would meet in (mutually) self-contained unity [...] unifying ideologies can only be developed at a cost" ("History" 3). This points to a tension in Blodgett's work, where on one hand he wishes to recognize the plurality of experience in Canada while on the other hand his methodologies serve to further contain Canada's literatures within distinct cultural groupings. In 2003, Blodgett published a major study of Canadian literary history. *Five-Part Invention: A History of Literary History in Canada* is his contribution to writing about Canada's literatures within a framework that is as open and comprehensive as possible. The five "parts" or cultural groups that Blodgett discusses in this work are First Nations, Inuit, French, English, and immigrants. With this text he denies the very potential for unity in Canadian literatures: "the trans-national frame is not designed so much to internalize Canada as to open it to its several selves" (20). This fissured nature serves as a springboard for the rest of his work: "[W]e are still not in a position to speak, as we all do, of a Canadian literature and agree on a topic. I insist upon speaking of our literatures in the plural and continue to support another position of Northrop Frye that 'there is no Canadian way of life, no one hundred per cent Canadian [...] no symmetrically laid out country'" ("After" 906). The methodology that Blodgett developed for this analysis was one based on cultural plurality. "[M]ore is to be achieved through recognition than competition," he explains, "and one way of easing polarized conflict is by bringing more players into the game. One of the first players who ought to be invited, of course, is the native. The next is the immigrant" (908). Despite Blodgett's stated openness to the breadth of Canada's literary production, much of his considerations perpetuate a compartmentalized conception that in reality needs to be much more complex.

Blodgett does structure his approach in a way that moves beyond Moisan's. He does not, however, elaborate sufficiently on the areas in which these divisive lines become permeable borders—the continuous sub-divisions within cultures that fuse multiple cultural and linguistic groups. Hybridity counters the polarity of “either/or” by introducing “both/and.” These identities are multiple, performative, and in flux. As is demonstrated in the works of many comparatists today, which will be discussed below, embracing this plurality is a potential answer to the type of binary struggles commonly encountered in the comparative process. The categorization of Canadian literatures is, to a large extent, indeterminately divisible. By putting forth as complete something that could be expanded by cultural and other nuances, Moisan and Blodgett have compromised their contributions to the field. The “thrust towards a unifying thesis for Canadian writing,” explains Pivato, “fails to deal with the minority status not only of French-Canadians but of other ethnic groups as well” (23). Pivato, who completed his PhD thesis in 1978 under Blodgett's supervision, demonstrates Blodgett's influence as he expands the French-English binary to consider Italian Canadian writing in his collections *Echo: Essays on Other Literatures and Contrasts: Comparative Essays on Italian Canadian Writing*. The collection of essays, *Adjacencies: Minority Writing in Canada*, edited by Domenic A. Beneventi, Licia Canton, and Lianne Moyes, came as the result of a conference held at l'Université de Montréal in 1998 on the theme of “The Third Solitude: Canadian Minority Writing.” In her introduction to this collection, Sherry Simon explains how the essays “confront and complexify issues of minority writing,” and “open into new zones of critical investigation” (10).

There is a noticeable move among comparatists writing today to take up the task of representing specific multicultural perspectives in Canadian literatures. These publications include Linda Hutcheon and Marion Richmond's *Other Solitudes: Canadian Multicultural Fictions*, Sylvia Söderlind's *Margin/Alias: Language and Colonization in Canadian and Québécois Fiction*, Smaro Kamboureli's *Making a Difference: Canadian Multicultural Literature in English*, Peter Dickinson's *Here Is Queer: Nationalisms, Sexualities, and the Literatures of Canada*, Winfried Siemerling's *Discoveries of the Other: Alterity in the Work of Leonard Cohen, Hubert Aquin, Michael Ondaatje, and Nicole Brossard*, Marie Vautier's *New World Myth: Postmodernism and Postcolonialism in Canadian Fiction*, and Marie Carrière's *Writing in the Feminine in French and English Canada*. These authors have chosen to carry out their comparisons in a way that seeks a more in-depth look at a particular section of Canada's diverse literary landscape, rather than attempting to address the entire body of work within a single study.

BROADENING METHODOLOGY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

As we near the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Confederation, the opportunity presents itself to reconsider the impetus behind the 1966 call for papers that began Moisan's career in this field. The future that Moisan first addressed is our present reality—Canada in the twenty-first century. While comparatists continue to strive toward an understanding of Canada's literatures, the internal variety being studied and the methodologies employed often complicate this goal. Both Moisan and Blodgett value the reading of Canada's literatures comparatively: “the distinctiveness [of the literatures written here] is not allowed to appear [...] as long as the literatures of Canada are studied separately” (Blodgett, “Canadian Literature” 909). While each address the necessity of inclusion in their works, their projects are stalled at different points towards and because of this goal. A primary source of the paradox that has stood in the way of some early comparisons is the assumption that on the basis of Canada's unity of statehood, the literatures produced here should be similarly unified. Beaudoin reiterates this need for comparative methodologies to move away from national and political concerns:

C'est que la discipline est née d'un dialogue ambigu et qu'elle n'arrive pas à l'élucider sans risquer de dissoudre son objet. Je dis que ce dialogue est ambigu parce qu'il s'est engagé sur le terrain d'un conflit politique que la littérature ne peut ni transcender ni dénouer [...], mais considéré globalement et en tant que champ spécifique, le comparatisme n'a pas encore complété la mise au point de ses méthodes et de ses objectifs, et surtout, il n'a pas su détacher suffisamment ses enquêtes d'un débat national qui a trop inspiré sa théorie. (493)

In response to Blodgett's stated intentions to carry out the analyses in *Configuration* “on a fundamentally literary ground” (8), Beaudoin retorts: “Voilà une orientation qui méritait certainement d'être tentée” (488). Language and cultural groups in Canada are the foundation of comparison for both Moisan and Blodgett. Given the inability of their methodologies to address the varied depth and breadth within Canada's literatures, I suggest that it may be time for comparatists to assign language and culture a less prominent role in their studies, focusing rather on new ways of structuring their arguments.

Translation emerges as a promising component to comparative Canadian literature in the twenty-first century. When considering literatures in translation the chasm of linguistic and cultural diversity in this country can be at least temporarily thwarted, not with the malicious design to obscure difference, but to make space for other methodological approaches to Canada's literatures. In *Translating Montreal* Sherry Simon deals with the cultural plurality of the contemporary city, where translation enhances a fluid movement between cultures. She is of the opinion that “we need words that reflect the multiplicity of our many-layered lives, like so many per-

spectives across varied landscapes [...]. To live in a world of multiple languages is to be reminded of what is lost or imaginary in all language, and to know the risks and benefits of falling into the spaces between" (218). Sylvia Söderlind is another comparatist working today to increase the profile of translation in the discipline. In "Ghost-National Arguments" she suggests that an aversion to translation among contemporary literary critics has led to a shrinking of the field of study, rather than an expansion of it. She implies that the trend to be countered is the unilingual "safe zone" that avoids the complications of translation and border crossings. From this emerges a trend among literary scholars in Canada to prefer silence over addressing the difficult terrain of language politics in their works. As Söderlind observes,

The easy acceptance of anglophone unilingualism among the country's academic elite in the name of political correctness is cause for self-congratulation rather than embarrassment, and multiculturalism morphs into anglocentrism. Yet most comparatists would say that making an effort to approach other literatures through translation is preferable to ignoring them. (684)

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Incorporating translation into the comparative norm in Canada would not only offer comparatists a broader field to work with, but would render the linguistic and cultural binaries used by Moisan and Blodgett, among others, unnecessary. Rather than placing his focus on the differences and similarities between French and English Canadian poetics, for instance, Moisan could have concentrated his efforts on exploring specific literary developments across Canadian literatures. The same stands true with regards to Blodgett's research, whose methodology has favoured linguistic fluency to the study of translated works. Hence his decision to focus on German Canadian writing, leaving the writing from the rest of the Canadian immigrant populations to the hands of other comparatists.

While not a part of his comparative practice on the whole, Blodgett does show translation to be an essential component to knowing the full body of this country's literary production. In his article "Is a History of the Literatures of Canada Possible?", he describes the process of translation as not a mere mirroring of content from one language to another, but a creative mode that constructs a body of work that if taken in linguistic or cultural chunks is fractured. He explains, "translation, as its own act of origination, cannot be merely taken, as most historians of literature are inclined to do, as a means of access to other cultures; it cannot be considered a reliable reflection" (10). Söderlind seizes this point, arguing that it is what Blodgett sees as the "necessity of translation" that has been missing from contemporary analyses of Canadian literatures (10). In this way she advises comparatists to consider how it came to be that translation has fallen off the board when the implications of working unilingually could be severe. Furthermore, Söderlind urges us to consider what the implications may be of *not* making translation a cornerstone to how we view Canada's literatures. Without translation, what kind of comparative literary criticism do we have in Canada? Is it possible to carry out a unilingual, unicultural compara-

tive analysis and still suppose it speaks to what we call "Canadian" literature? As she underlines, "That something gets lost in translation goes without saying, while what gets lost without translation is rarely considered because it leaves no trace" (684). Ignoring the project of speaking across languages and cultures in Canada does little to advance the discipline of comparative Canadian literary criticism.

Reconsiderations of comparative methodology have begun to emerge that may help pave the way for future developments in the discipline. In recent articles both Dickinson and Moyes, to name only two scholars, have taken up an approach that contemplates the utility of translation in a variety of forms and places language and cultural concerns in a secondary position. Dickinson, in "Literatures, Cinemas, Cultures," compares film and television adaptations of English Canadian and Québécois literary works with an eye to what is lost and what is gained in the process of genre transfer and appreciation. While this analysis does address the literary works of both French and English Canada, the emphasis is placed not so much on revealing the cultural points of contact or dissonance between the two groups as on exploring how a broad sampling of Canadian texts have all met with the phenomenon of translation. Dickinson suggests that

if we conceive of translation as an indeterminate and ongoing system of structural, linguistic, cultural, historical, and so on, transformations, borrowings, and mediations that occur between and across forms, and if we further examine what these transformations say about the historical context in which texts are produced and received, then translation's critical potential, as applied to the adaptive process, is, I believe, recuperable. (34)

His analysis has taken up the issues of both genre adaptation and the cleavage that can result in this transfer as it impacts both creative production and reception. While Dickinson's work does not evade the issue of cultural and linguistic diversity in Canada, this content becomes only a component of his comparative and theoretical questioning.

In "Writing the Montréal Mountain: Below the Threshold at which Visibility Begins," Moyes has assembled what she calls a "literary genealogy" by selecting a geographical feature as the fulcrum for her reading of nine texts set in Montréal. She explains, "A genealogy is based not on lines of continuity of the kind that generate a literary tradition, but rather on contradiction and discontinuity, on unlikely links among texts written in different languages, among texts marked by different aesthetic practices, among texts that figure in several fields of writing [...] at the same time" (60). By taking geographic identity as a focalization that crosses linguistic and cultural boundaries, she has adopted an interesting comparative perspective that is at once innovative and insightful.

This small sampling of contemporary approaches to comparative methodology by Söderlind, Dickinson, and Moyes points to the viability of new directions for the discipline of comparative Canadian literature. Moisan and Blodgett remain influential figures in the development of this discipline whose works have situated

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future comparatists on the cusp of what could be a burgeoning time for the field. The writings of both scholars have established the need to consider Canada's literatures comparatively and with consideration given to the cultural and linguistic plurality that exists in this country. It may be time, however, to branch out from the desire to seize within a single analysis the full breadth of creativity that exists here and to find new means of celebrating the diversity within the literatures produced here. Rather than continue to examine a literature of borders (one that remains separated by the comparatists' mirroring of cultural similarities and differences), the discipline is now ready for a new kind of comparison without borders, one that refuses to hold to set grounds for comparison.

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