

PLENARY PANEL TWO: Collaboration and Friendship

1. Jeanne Perreault, U of Calgary [perreaul@ucalgary.ca]

“There’s no redeeming” but . . . : Conversations with my Daughter

Life writing scholars have often blurred the lines between our work and our selves, but placing one's own child in the glare of disciplinary practice is like poking a sharp stick into the hive of scholarly conversation. My daughter is addicted to crack cocaine. Despite my fears, I am now ready to talk publicly about the life Jennifer's addiction has produced; she is willing to tape our conversations for this project. I find I want to use all my images, registers, and modalities to talk about what we have been and done, thought and felt over the past decades. But I don't want to be constrained by scholarly or theoretical debates. Clearly, how addiction and addicts have been framed in public discourse invites rigorous critique. My aim, however, is to find a language of my own through the miasma of various jargons.

“Não há redenção”, mas . . . : conversações com minha filha

Frequentemente, estudiosos da escrita da vida deixam de distinguir a linha entre o nosso trabalho e nós mesmos, porém colocar sua própria filha sob o olhar da prática acadêmica é provocar o campo da conversação acadêmica. Minha filha é viciada em crack. Apesar dos meus medos, agora estou pronta para falar publicamente sobre a vida à qual o vício de Jennifer levou; ela está disposta a gravar as nossas conversas para este projeto. Decidi que quero utilizar todas as minhas imagens, registros e formas para falar sobre o que fomos e fizemos, pensamos e sentimos pelas últimas décadas. Porém não quero me limitar a debates acadêmicos ou teóricos. Evidentemente, a forma como o vício e dependentes químicos têm sido representados no discurso público está sujeita a uma crítica rigorosa. Meu objetivo, no entanto, é a achar a minha própria linguagem em meio à miasma de diferentes jargões.

[Traduzido por Clarice Dominguez - clarice.dominguez@gmail.com]

Jeanne Perreault, professor in Department of English, University of Calgary, 1988-2012, taught (since 1971) in Edmonton Public School District; Cariboo College, Kamloops; and Shanghai Institute of Education. She has two daughters, Valori (b. 1962) and Jennifer (b. 1964) and four grandchildren. Since leaving the university, along with completing student supervision and publication commitments, she has been travelling, writing, practicing yoga, and taking mandatory watercolour classes. Publications include: *Working Memory: Women and Work in WWII*, co-edited with Marlene Kadar, 2015; *Feminism and the Liberal Arts*, co-edited with Susan Brown, Jo-Ann Wallace, and Heather Zwicker, 2011—Nominated for Canadian Women's Studies Award for Scholarship, 2012—*Photographs, Histories, Meanings*, co-edited with Marlene Kadar and Linda Warley, 2010; *Indigenous Women and Feminism: Culture, Activism, Politics*, co-edited with Cheryl Suzack, Shari Hundorf, and Jean Barman, 2011—winner of Canadian Association of Women's Studies Award for scholarship; “Life Writing in International Contexts,” *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, double issue co-edited with Marlene Kadar and Linda Warley, 2008; *Tracing the Autobiographical*, Cco-edited with Marlene Kadar, Linda Warley, and Susanna Egan, 2005; *Writing Selves: Contemporary Feminist*

Autography, 1995; and, *Writing the Circle: Native Women of Western Canada, An Anthology*, co-edited with Sylvia Vance, 1990.

2. Helen Buss, U of Calgary [hbuss@ucalgary.ca]

Kim Thúy's *Ru* and the Art of the Anecdote

The gradual female gendering of Thúy's text as it moves forward is nicely wrapped in the comfortable and seemingly simple form of the anecdote, so that the text comes to represent, in both its genre and gender, what (in Perreault words) I would call "autography that is articulating not a site or a space but an energy" and creates an "'I' that works for the social, material, and personal transformations that we know as feminism." By a close reading of the text using the development of its anecdotal style joined with a theorization of the nature of anecdote as a generic literary tool that can illuminate the concept of flashback in theories of psychology, I hope to offer a fuller reading of the relationship of gender and genre in *Rú*.

'Ru', de Kim Thúy, e a arte da anedota

A construção gradual do gênero feminino no desenrolar do texto de Thúy se ajusta à forma confortável e aparentemente simples da anedota, de maneira que o texto passa a representar, no que se refere ao gênero discursivo e à identidade de gênero, o que (nas palavras de Perreault) eu chamaria de “uma autografia que articula não um lugar ou espaço, mas uma energia” e cria um “‘Eu’ que trabalha pelas transformações sociais, materiais e pessoais que conhecemos como feminismo”. Por meio de uma leitura atenta do texto, em que considero o desenvolvimento de seu estilo anedotal, e da teorização da natureza da anedota como uma ferramenta literária genérica capaz de iluminar o conceito de flashback em teorias psicológicas, espero oferecer uma leitura mais completa da relação entre gênero discursivo e identidade de gênero em ‘Ru.’

[Traduzido por Beatriz Vital - vitalb@riseup.net]

Helen M. Buss (a.k.a Margaret Clarke) has published novels, short stories, a play, a memoir, as well as books on life writing and articles in scholarly journals and collections. Her first novel *The Cutting Season*, won the “Manitoba search for a New Novelist,” contest, *Mapping Our Selves: Canadian Women's Autobiography* won the Gabrielle Roy Prize for best critical book, and *Repossessing the World: Reading Women's Memoirs* won the Laura Jamieson Prize for “best feminist book by a Canadian author.” Her interest in genre and gender is illustrated by a number of auto-critical academic essays and in *Memoirs from Away: A New Found Land Girlhood*, a series of personal/political stories of her childhood. She has co-edited several books including *Working in Women's Archives* with Marlene Kadar.

3. Patrick D. M. Taylor, York U [taylorp@yorku.ca]

Escape from the Colonial Asylum

David was a white Barbadian who died in the Barbados Mental Hospital in 1963 at age 46. Although making sense of his story is meaningful to me for personal reasons, I have wondered what interest other people might have in the story of this insignificant bystander to the march of history. Marlene Kadar has been my colleague and friend in battle over many years. I have

listened to her presentations, read some of her writings, and worked with a few of her many students. But I am an insecure outsider in the field of life writing. I questioned her about the value of my research: “Well, you are doing it,” she replied, “so you need to do it!” I am still not sure what she meant, and I may not be quoting her correctly, but Marlene legitimated the academic study of life writing for me, and dragged me into the field, albeit still waiting for meaning to emerge. A trace in the Barbados Archives, a strange reference to Toronto, Upper Canada, led me to the Ontario Archives, located, coincidentally, in the same building as my own office. There I experienced what I can only describe as a Marlene Kadar moment. In David’s life and writings, his ambivalent white Creole romance of Englishness (see Lambert 2010) sat uneasily with his utopian embrace of West Indian decolonization. Postcolonial theorists have used the term melancholia to describe the affect associated with the failures of independence and the sacrifice of the postcolonial ideal to lingering colonial contradictions (Gilroy 2005). David was a melancholic, his life pre-figuring aspects of postcolonial melancholia. Unknowable to him was a silenced past (Trouillot 1995), hidden away in the archive: an ancestor, the son of a Barbadian planter, colonial legislator, and owner of enslaved persons, who had been diagnosed with “mania” following “insane attacks.” Committed by his own father to an institution in a distant land, the Toronto Asylum for the Insane, he would die there, his memory lost to his family. White Barbadian masculinity constructed itself historically as noble, immutable, and free. Trapped in itself, however, it returned to haunt its descendants in a “boomerang effect of colonization” (Césaire 1972). By reading David’s story and hospitalization in relation to his ancestor’s I hope, following Khanna (2003), to unleash from the archive the critical agency of melancholia revealed in the silences haunting the postcolonial nation. I am grateful to Marlene Kadar for providing the space for unleashing the silence.

Fuga do manicômio colonial

David foi um barbadiano branco que morreu no Hospital Psiquiátrico de Barbados, em 1963, aos 46 anos. Embora entender a sua história tenha um significado pessoal para mim, me perguntei que interesse outras pessoas poderiam ter na vida desse insignificante observador do curso da História. Marlene Kadar tem sido minha colega, amiga e companheira de batalha por muitos anos. Eu ouvi suas apresentações, li seus escritos e trabalhei com alguns de seus muitos alunos. No entanto, sou um forasteiro inseguro no campo da escrita da vida. Eu a questioneei sobre a relevância da minha pesquisa: “Bom, você está pesquisando”, ela respondeu, “então precisa pesquisar!” Ainda não tenho certeza do que ela quis dizer e posso não a estar citando corretamente, mas Marlene legitimou o estudo acadêmico de escrita da vida para mim e me arrastou para o campo, mesmo que eu ainda espere que o significado surja.

Uma pista nos arquivos de Barbados, uma estranha referência a Toronto, Norte do Canadá, me levou aos arquivos de Ontário, que se encontravam, coincidentemente, no mesmo prédio que o meu escritório. Lá eu vivenciei o que apenas posso descrever como um momento digno de Marlene Kadar. Na vida e nos escritos de David, sua romantização ambígua, crioula e branca, da anglicidade (Lambert, 2010) entra de forma conflitante com a sua visão utópica da descolonização das Índias Ocidentais. Teóricos pós-colonialistas têm usado o termo melancolia para descrever o afeto ligado às independências fracassadas e ao sacrifício do ideal

pós-colonial em função das duradouras contradições coloniais (Gilroy, 2005). David era melancólico, sua vida demonstrando aspectos da melancolia pós-colonial. Desconhecido por ele era um passado silenciado (Trouillot, 1995), escondido nos arquivos: um ancestral — filho de um agricultor barbadiano, legislador colonial e senhor de escravos — que havia sido diagnosticado com “mania”, após “ataques de loucura”. Internado pelo seu próprio pai numa instituição localizada numa ilha distante, o Manicômio de Toronto para os Insanos, onde morreu, sua memória esquecida pela sua família. A masculinidade do barbadiano branco se construiu historicamente como nobre, imutável e livre. Presa em si mesma, ela voltou para assombrar seus descendentes num “efeito bumerangue da colonização” (Césaire 1972). Ao ler a história de David e da sua hospitalização, relacionando-a com a de seu ancestral, eu espero – seguindo os passos de Khanna (2013) – extrair dos arquivos a presença da influência crítica da melancolia nos silêncios que assombram a nação pós-colonial. Sou grato a Marlene Kadar por proporcionar a oportunidade de quebrar o silêncio.

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Patrick Taylor teaches postcolonial thought and Caribbean literature, religion, and culture in the Department of Humanities and the Graduate Programme in Social and Political Thought, York University. He is currently working on constructions of whiteness in the Anglophone Caribbean, focusing on Barbados. His recent publications include “From Planter’s Daughter to Imperial Soldier and Servant in Britain’s War,” in *Working Memory: Women and Work in World War II* (eds. Marlene Kadar and Jeanne Perreault). A Fellow of the Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean (CERLAC), he directed the Caribbean Religions Project, an international, collaborative, research and editorial project funded by the Ford Foundation and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). Professor Taylor has presented his research throughout the Caribbean and in Canada, the United States, England, and Switzerland. He is co-editor of *The Encyclopedia of Caribbean Religions* (with Frederick I. Case) and *Forging Identities and Patterns of Development in Latin America and the Caribbean* (with Joanna Rummens and Polo Diaz); editor of *Nation Dance: Religion, Identity and Cultural Difference in the Caribbean*; and author of *The Narrative of Liberation: Perspectives on Afro-Caribbean Literature, Popular Culture and Politics*, among other publications.