Janice Fiamengo, ed., *Home Ground and Foreign Territory: Essays on Early Canadian Literature*

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Janice Fiamengo, ed. *Home Ground and Foreign Territory: Essays on Early Canadian Literature*. Ottawa: Ottawa University Press, 2014. 308 p. ISBN paper: 978-0-7766-2139-5, C\$39.95; pdf e-book: 978-0-7766-2141-8, C\$29.99

- 1 Gathering the papers presented at the conference “Reconsidering Early Canadian Literature” held at the University of Ottawa in 2010, this volume comprises fourteen essays, including the introduction. The book’s subtitle is slightly misleading as many essays are concerned with early Canadian research itself, rather than Canadian literature. The contributions could roughly be divided into three categories: essays taking stock of early Canadian research with a focus on methodological, and at times sociological, questioning; essays considering a particular author or work, in a more traditional manner; and essays, maybe the most interesting ones, bringing together these two features. Regrettably, the essays are not organised in any distinctive order, nor divided into sections. However flawed, such divisions are always useful to the academic reader who has a specific interest. Surprisingly, Janice Fiamengo, in her introduction, presents the essays in a different order from the one in which they appear. In fact, Fiamengo is sometimes at odds with the works she introduces (“It was clear from the papers presented at the conference and from those submitted for this collection that many scholars of early Canadian literature do not share my sense of malaise and that many would take exception to my characterization of the field,” 13), and her introduction would perhaps have been more suitable as an afterword. Indeed, neither a definition of Canadian literature nor an explanation of the time frame for “early Canada,” for example, is attempted. In the first essay, D. M. R. Bentley triggers

an overall reflection on what constitutes Canadian literature and more specifically early Canadian literature, for the study of which he advocates an historical and cultural approach. Carole Gerson's limpid, excellent essay sheds new light on two of the most commented early Canadian works, Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* and Pauline Johnson's *Legends of Vancouver*. Her compelling analysis of the periodical versions of these works stresses the necessity to consider such formats for themselves and not only in relation to their later versions. Cecily Devereux's review of Canadian academic feminism and "postfeminism" provides a useful bibliographical record of indispensable works in the field. Andrea Cabajsky illustrates how archival work, here the exploration of library catalogues and borrowers' records, can be used to better understand the Canadian take on the historical novel. Thomas Hodd's perspicuous essay uncovers the influence of spiritualism on early Canadian literary culture, and his discussion of Susanna Moodie and Flora MacDonald Denison's works opens the way for further enquiry into supernaturalism in early Canadian literature. In her engaging essay, Christa Zeller Thomas considers Sara Jeannette Duncan's self-writing in her Anglo-Indian memoir, *On the Other Side of the Latch / The Crow's Nest*, and the latter's exclusion from the Canadian canon. She makes a convincing case to discard "one-dimensional paradigms such as the Canadian nationalist approach to early writing" (151). Albert Braz analyses Agnes Laut's depiction of Pierre Falcon in *Lords of the North* (1900). Joel Baetz, who aims at rediscovering Anna Durie's *Our Absent Hero* (1920), discusses Canadian war elegies. Focusing on Susanna Moodie, Isabella Valancy Crawford and Pauline Johnson's poetry, Wanda Campbell's gripping enquiry into the reasons for their popularity as research subjects initiates a stimulating reflection on canon formation. Cynthia Sugars' detailed analysis of the Gothic in *The Old Judge; or, Life in a Colony* (1849) will be of interest to the specialists of Thomas Chandler Haliburton. Ceilidh Hart convincingly examines how women's use of sentimental poetry in the Halifax newspaper, *The Acadian Recorder*, enabled them to take part in public life. Jennifer Chambers' thought-provoking discussion of evaluative criticism in literary research points to nationalism as the most problematic criterion in canon formation, and concludes with an enlightening case study of a "minor" writer, Susan Frances Harrison. Mary Jane Edwards traces the history of the Centre for Editing Early Canadian Texts (CEEECT) and addresses questions related to canon formation. In a book concerned with critically looking at scholars' own practices, questioning canon formation, discussing the nationality of literary works, it is perhaps regrettable that all contributing authors should be Canadian scholars. Despite the chronological and generic diversity of its topics and its methodological heterogeneity, sometimes leading to a disturbing lack of internal coherence, the essays in this study will be of interest to those working on a specific topic addressed here, as well as those new to the field, and to anyone interested in pondering the sociological and methodological aspects of today's academic literary research.

AUTHORS

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Anne-Florence QUAIREAU is a lecturer in English at the École Polytechnique, Paris. Her research focuses on nineteenth-century British women's travel writing, more particularly in Canada. She received the 2014 SELVA Doctoral Dissertation Award for her PhD dissertation on Anna Jameson's *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada* (1838). She has published several articles on nineteenth-century travel writing and gender.