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The Rise and Demise of a Book-Review Magazine:
Interpreting the Cultural Work of Books in Canada
(1971-2008)

par

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Littérature canadienne comparée

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par

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Abstract

This interdisciplinary study examines the contribution that a book-review magazine makes to the cultural identity of its readers. It is the result of reflections on the cultural work of *Books in Canada*, on whether or not this periodical was a cultural worksite and if that is the case how it performed that cultural work. In addition, it interrogates factors that may have contributed to the magazine’s demise.

The study affirms that *Books in Canada*, a cultural enterprise from 1971 to 2008, mirrored and helped to shape book and literary culture in Canada through its circulation, through the personalities of its editors, through its front covers and through its reviewers and their reviews. Furthermore, it proposes that the demise of the enterprise was due to a combination of factors, among them editorial decisions, market forces and reader preferences.

My use of the term “cultural work” is partly an adaptation of Jane Tompkins’ reference to the cultural work of 19th century critics to acclaim certain American writers, not necessarily because their literary output exhibited exceptional talent, but rather because their writing “worked” to reflect and endorse social and cultural tenets held by the critics and by society in general at the time. This approach allows the appreciation and assessment of the magazine’s presence in, and interaction with its milieu from several different angles in each chapter, for example by examining the cultural work of editors, of reviewers and of the front covers.

Literary criticism is not passive. It works. It identifies and analyses what is read in a literary society and, through those processes, affects and contributes to the book and cultural milieu. That being the case, surely *Books in Canada*, a periodical devoted to
reviewing books, *worked* too. How it worked, what it produced and how it affected its ambient cultural milieu are what I seek to understand better with this study.

The study begins with an introduction to book reviewing and special-interest magazines. Chapter I examines the interplay between selected visual and textual contents published in *Books in Canada* in its founding years. These components reflected and helped to fuel the cultural nationalism that was sweeping Canada subsequent to the 1967 World’s Fair in Montreal. There were also persistent rumours and comments about the magazine that caused certain ‘cracks in the foundation’ to appear.

Chapter II compares the aims and editorial challenges of Val Clery, founder of *Books in Canada*, with those of Adrien Thério, founder of *Lettres québécoises*, and of the editors of the magazines’ twentieth-anniversary issues, Paul Stuewe in the case of the former and André Vanasse in the case of the latter. Evidence in the content of the magazine, editorial and otherwise, indicated that the “contracts” that the editors made with their readers over the years were similar, to reflect and shape a cultural identity, but the result of their “projects,” that is, the nature of those identities, was distinctly different.

Evidently then, personal aims, preferences and political leanings of editors can have a major impact on the content of a book-review magazine and thus on the cultural work that it does. Therefore, in Chapter III, I focus on selected contents published during the tenures of two of *Books in Canada*’s key editors, Paul Stuewe and Olga Stein, in order to understand ways that their choices constituted a form of cultural work. I discuss innovations that Stuewe brought to the form and content of the magazine during his five-year editorial tenure and argue that such changes responded to the cultural moment by nurturing a national literary imaginary that was mature in its acknowledgment of regional concerns, Québec’s independence movement in particular. I contrast Stuewe’s liberal
nationalist and literary initiatives with the more conservative international identity encouraged by content published by Olga Stein, editor from May 2001 until the demise of the magazine in January 2008. Stein’s choices fostered a near-nostalgic respect for traditional cultural values while responding to the end-of-century shift from national culture to cultural globalization.

The second part of this chapter moves from an analysis of the cultural work of editors to an examination of the cultural work of reviewers. Here, through a close-reading of a selection of reviews published in *Books in Canada*, and in other periodicals, I argue that reviewers do cultural work in the way that they negotiate their presence in a review, and in how they signal that presence through lexical choices and through the degree of intellectual interaction that they invite.

Intellectual interaction is at the core of Chapter IV. This chapter consists of close readings of some of the “billboards” of the enterprise, that is, the front covers of *Books in Canada*, in order to show how these important components do cultural work by requiring readers to make an intellectual leap from image to text.

Chapter V suggests that book reviews, the company’s “bills of goods,” do cultural work in much the same way as the paratexts of a book. One of my own reviews is offered as a case-study along with a number of other reviews of how central components of a book-review magazine do cultural work through the illocutionary force of their sentences.

The first part of Chapter VI, the final chapter, measures the legacy of the magazine, in particular, the annual *Books in Canada* First Novel Award. Created in 1976, this prize is awarded to the author of the novel judged by a *Books in Canada* prize committee to be the best first novel in English of the year. The second part of Chapter VI sheds light on factors that may have contributed to the closure of the enterprise, including the copyright
uproar that accompanied the agreement that Adrian Stein, publisher of *Books in Canada* and Olga Stein’s husband, made in 2001 with the online book merchant, Amazon.com. Furthermore, this penultimate section of the study suggests that one of the most important factors in the magazine’s demise was the decision by the Steins to exploit their position as owners, publisher, and editor of a book-review periodical, a government-subsidized one at that, to publish their own lengthy pre-trial defense of Conrad Black. It suggests that their actions veered perilously close to the negative sense of “bill of goods,” that is, an attempt to “sell” their readers on the controversial media mogul’s innocence. The chapter then zooms back from the particular to the general with a broader consideration of the impact of technology and globalization on the book industry and on the ability of *Books in Canada* to survive in any form, print or digital. It finds that, just as the magazine was a product of a cultural moment, it became a victim of the current moment, a moment in which “thumbing through” pages of books has acquired a technological, *iPaddian*, tenor.

**KEYWORDS:** Magazine studies; book reviews; national culture; *Books in Canada*; Comparative Canadian Literature; cultural work; *Lettres québécoises*
Résumé

Cette étude interdisciplinaire analyse la contribution d’une revue littéraire à l’identité culturelle de ses lectrices et de ses lecteurs. Elle découle de questionnements sur le rôle d’agent culturel du magazine Books in Canada, à savoir si ce périodique était un chantier culturel et, advenant le cas, de quelle manière la fonction de diffuseur culturel était accomplie. De plus, l’étude examine des facteurs qui ont pu contribuer à la fermeture du magazine en 2008.

L’étude affirme que la revue Books in Canada, fondée en 1971, reflétait le milieu culturel du Canada tout en y contribuant. L’étude soutient que c’est en raison de son tirage, de la personnalité de ses responsables, de ses premières pages de couverture, de ses critiques de livres et de la voix des rédactrices et des rédacteurs de ces critiques que Books in Canada parvient à cet accomplissement. En outre, elle avance que la fermeture de cette institution littéraire est la conséquence d’une association de facteurs, dont sont parties prenantes les décisions éditoriales, les lois du marché et les goûts des lectrices et des lecteurs du magazine.

Le terme agent culturel utilisé dans cette étude rappelle les travaux de Jane Tompkins, qui y a recours pour illustrer les efforts déployés par les critiques américains du 19e siècle cherchant à mettre en valeur certains écrivains et écrivaines, non pas parce que leur œuvre littéraire démontrait un talent exceptionnel, mais plutôt parce que leur écriture contribuait à répercuter et à entériner les croyances sociales et culturelles états-unies soutenues tant par ces critiques que par la société en général de l’époque. Cette

1 Le terme anglais est cultural work, comme on le retrouve dans l’œuvre de Jane Tompkins. Dans ce résumé, l’expression cultural work est traduite par agent culturel, sachant que l’expression en français est imparfaite.
approche permet d’apprécier et d’évaluer la présence de la revue dans son milieu et en interaction avec ce milieu, et ce, à partir de différents angles. Par exemple, en examinant le rôle culturel joué par plusieurs de ses directeurs, de ses critiques et de ses premières pages de couverture.

La critique littéraire n’est pas passive. La critique anime, nomme, brosse le tableau de la littérature, et ce faisant, joue un rôle d’intermédiaire entre les lecteurs et les lectrices et les livres, ce qui en fait un acteur, un agent, du milieu culturel. Ceci étant posé, il apparaît alors sans aucun doute que *Books in Canada*, un périodique consacré à la critique des livres, joue aussi ce rôle. Cette étude cherche à mieux comprendre de quelle manière le magazine « agit », ce qu’il produit et comment il influence son environnement culturel.

Comme entrée en matière, l’étude propose une introduction à la critique des livres et aux magazines spécialisés. Le premier chapitre analyse l’interaction entre certains contenus visuels et textuels publiés pendant les premières années de *Books in Canada*. Ces composantes reflètent et nourrissent le nationalisme culturel qui se déployait à travers le Canada à la suite de l’Exposition universelle de Montréal de 1967. Déjà à cette époque, des rumeurs et des commentaires sur le magazine éclaboussent la réputation de l’entreprise et créent des fissures en son sein.

Il apparaît alors évident que les motivations, les choix et les allégeances politiques des directeurs et des directrices peuvent exercer un impact important sur le contenu d’une revue consacrée à la critique et, de ce fait, sur le rôle d’agent culturel de la revue. C’est pourquoi le troisième chapitre centre son analyse sur le contenu publié pendant le mandat de deux responsables majeurs de *Books in Canada*, Paul Stuewe et Olga Stein, et ce, afin de mieux comprendre comment leurs choix ont constitué un type d’agent culturel. Les innovations que Stuewe a apportées à la forme et au contenu de la revue pendant ses cinq années à la direction du magazine sont examinées. Je soutiens que ces modifications étaient en réaction au moment culturel de l’époque en nourrissant un imaginaire littéraire national mûr qui reconnaissait les préoccupations régionales, notamment celles du mouvement indépendantiste du Québec. Je fais ressortir les différences entre les initiatives nationalistes et littéraires libérales de Stuewe et celles d’Olga Stein, plus conservatrices et internationales. Les interventions de Stein, éditrice de la revue de mai 2001 jusqu’à sa fermeture en janvier 2008, favorisaient un respect quasi nostalgique pour les valeurs culturelles traditionnelles tout en répondant à une culture nationale en mutation vers une globalisation culturelle présente à la fin du siècle.

Alors que la première partie de ce chapitre analyse le rôle d’*agent culturel* du point de vue des directeurs et d’une directrice aux moments clés de la revue, la seconde partie explore ce rôle tel qu’il est pratiqué par les critiques. Ainsi, en faisant un examen attentif de textes critiques sélectionnés dans la production de *Books in Canada* et dans
d'autres périodiques, je soutiens que les critiques occupent un rôle d'agent culturel en négociant leur présence au sein de leur texte critique et en signalant cette présence par les choix lexicaux et le degré d'interaction intellectuelle qu'ils invitent.

L'interaction intellectuelle est au cœur du chapitre IV, qui présente une lecture approfondie de certains « panneaux d'affichage » de l'entreprise, c'est-à-dire une sélection de premières pages de couverture de *Books in Canada* et démontre comment ces composantes sont des agents culturels exigeant des lectrices et des lecteurs de faire un bond intellectuel de l'image au texte.

Le chapitre V suggère que les critiques de livres, soit la « marque de commerce » de la compagnie, endossent le rôle d'agent culturel de la même façon que le font les paratextes d'un livre. Proposant un de mes textes critiques comme étude de cas parmi d'autres, je montre comment la critique de livres, par l'action illocutoire de son contenu, devient un agent culturel.

La première partie du dernier chapitre, le chapitre VI, évalue l'héritage de *Books in Canada*, notamment dans le prix littéraire éponyme de la revue, soit le *Books in Canada* First Novel Award. Créé en 1976, ce prix, décerné annuellement par un jury composé d'écrivains, d'écrivaines et de personnalités du monde littéraire reconnus, récompense un auteur ou une auteure pour un premier roman de langue anglaise. La seconde partie du chapitre identifie certains facteurs qui ont pu concourir à la fermeture du magazine, y compris la dispute qui a accompagné la cession de propriété littéraire par Adrian Stein, éditeur de *Books in Canada* et époux d'Olga Stein, au libraire en ligne Amazon.com. De plus, cette section avance que le facteur le plus important qui a sonné le glas du magazine littéraire est la décision prise par les Stein de tirer profit de leur statut
de propriétaires et d'éditrice d'un périodique subventionné par les fonds publics en faisant paraître une très longue défense avant-procès de Conrad Black, un magnat de la presse accusé de fraudes. En publiant leur prise de position, les Stein cherchent à "vendre" l'innocence controversée du magnat de la presse à ses lectrices et à ses lecteurs. Le chapitre se termine en portant un regard qui permet d'évoluer du particulier au général et d'avoir ainsi une vision plus large de l'impact de la technologie et de la globalisation sur l'industrie du livre et sur la capacité de Books in Canada à survivre, que ce soit dans un format imprimé ou électronique. L'auteure de cette étude conclut que, tout comme le magazine Books in Canada a été le produit d'une époque culturelle particulière, il a été la victime d'une autre époque, une époque dans laquelle feuilleter les pages d'un livre a acquis un nouveau sens par la voix de la technologie iPadienne.

MOTS-CLÉS:
études de périodiques; critiques littéraires; culture nationale; Books in Canada; littérature canadienne comparée; agent culturel; Lettres québécoises
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INTRODUCTION:

*Books in Canada* is the magazine about Canadian books. Founded in 1971, it has developed into an important forum for informed, lively, and at times, provocative discussion about books and ideas. *Books in Canada* provides a vital link between writers and readers by reviewing more than 400 books each year – more than any other consumer publication! In the words of Robert Fulford, it is 'essential reading for anyone who follows the course of Canadian writing. I recommend it without reservation.'

Excerpt from a half-page *Books in Canada* change-of-address announcement on the inside back cover of the February 1996 issue.

**i. Books in Canada: A Cultural Worksite**

When we turn the pages of a book-review magazine, we become part of a circle of reading companions, like-minded or not, who need to or simply want to read about the books that have been recently published. This dissertation is the result of reflections on the potential of *Books in Canada* to do cultural work. It seeks to understand better how this periodical, a meeting place for Canadian readers for over three decades, worked to shape the nation’s book and literary culture, and was in turn shaped by the context of that culture. I will examine how the individual components of the magazine, its front covers, its book reviews, its editorial interventions, its letters to the editor and its reviewers, each went about performing that work. And finally, I will consider factors that may have led to the magazine’s demise in 2008.

In *A History of Canadian Culture*, Jonathan F. Vance defines “culture” broadly as being “a synonym for the arts” (vii-viii). I define “culture” as a collective sense of belonging that results from immersing oneself in one or more of the fine arts, in this case, books. I call this shared sense of belonging to a community of readers a “cultural identity.” However, and like the word ‘culture’ examined more closely below, the word ‘identity’ is fraught with intellectual interpretations. The word “identity” denotes an intangible concept whose referent is the individual and thus resists generalization. It is, practically-speaking, specific to each human
being. Complicating the issue is the question of whether or not there even is an English-Canadian cultural identity to share.

Ian Angus tackles that problem head-on in his discussion of the difficulties one encounters when trying to define an English-Canadian cultural identity (23). He writes that, similar to a personal identity, attempts to define a cultural identity require a certain amount of self-reflexivity (Angus 27). It is, according to Angus, “cultural workers” who facilitate that self-reflexivity through their “articulation” of the society in which they work (27). He suggests that cultural identity “occurs within an ongoing, socially constitutive, agonistic, rhetorical field” (Angus 27). Certainly, periodicals like Books in Canada and Lettres québécoises participate in this field in that they present readers with a range of contemporary cultural products, namely books, thereby inserting them, or “projecting them” into readers’ awareness of the ambient cultural milieu (Angus 27). These periodicals are thus tangible forms of the “expressions” that Angus says interact with the social and cultural world, thereby instigating “a complex cultural politics of representation” (27). Indeed, it is the politics of representation initiated by the presence of Books in Canada in its cultural milieu that my study attempts to address: to borrow Angus’ formulation, I look at “which identities are represented” thereby signalling too those which are not. I also look at “how they are represented,” that is, which “cognitive, perceptual and social characteristics” they choose to focus on, and “why” those characteristics have an impact on the society in which the magazine circulates (Angus 27). It is important to do this when talking about cultural identity because, as Simon During points out, “[i]dentities are not so much the mediation between individuals and society as constitutive of that relation” (145). In my study, I look at one component of that mediation process. I investigate what Books in Canada contributes to the relationship between the textual manifestations of Canadian authors and the society which fostered those manifestations.
This interdisciplinary study is not a quantitative analysis of geographical representation and distribution numbers, nor is it an analysis of data concerning the source and nature of the contributions that *Books in Canada* published over its lifetime, as in for example, how many times the books of publishers who had bought advertising were reviewed or how often one author was reviewed over another, or one gender of author or reviewer over another. Those forms of quantitative methods would also be interesting angles from which to approach this type of corpus. Indeed, as discussed below, I initially planned to structure my analysis that way. Ultimately, however, I preferred to conduct a qualitative interpretation of selections of the magazine’s contents over the past thirty-five years. My approach would take into account recent research in the fields of literary studies, cultural studies and magazine studies, and would provide a broader-based, rather more vibrant understanding of the various ways that this book-review magazine was both a product of and shaper of English-Canada’s cultural identity.

In one chapter, the cultural work of *Books in Canada* is compared to that of *Lettres québécoises*, a Quebecois review periodical of the same era. By comparing and contrasting the cultural “contracts” and cultural “projects” of the founding editors of each of these two periodicals, and of the editors of their twentieth-anniversary issues, the study discovers that while the “contracts” that each magazine made with its readers was similar, to stake out the borders of a cultural identity by introducing readers to recently published books and their authors, the result of the “projects” they put in place to carry out those contracts was distinctly different. While *Books in Canada* worked to establish and shape a pan-Canadian cultural identity, one that embraced each of Canada’s main regions – the Pacific, Western, Maritime, Quebec and Ontario regions, albeit with a heavy focus on the latter, *Lettres québécoises* was dedicated to reflecting, constructing and affirming Quebec’s distinct national identity.
Throughout this study, I use the notion of "shaping" a national imaginary to indicate that the magazine, through its reviews, its front covers, its reviewers' styles, and especially through its editorial decisions, fostered attitudes toward national culture and national identity. With "shape," I do not mean to imply the idea of "creating" a cultural identity where none existed before, or that readers are passive recipients. With "shape," I assume that readers of the magazine already possess some personal sense of Canada's book and literary culture, and that by reading this book-review periodical, they expand upon and enrich that sense.

The concept of shaping a cultural or national identity is a fluid one, common to a number of academic disciplines including philology, linguistics, sociology and literature. For example, in "Key Concepts of Puritanism and the Shaping of the American Cultural Identity," published in *Philologica Jassyensia* in 2010, Andreea Minguic argues that central tenets of Puritanism were important factors in shaping the American cultural identity: "The key concepts that governed the life of the Puritan community pervaded the social, political as well as cultural life and this makes them essential for the analysis of what is now the American identity" (211). In "Shaping a National Identity," published in the *International Journal of Sociology*, Anthony M. Abela discusses the challenges that modern technology, the mass media, growing tourism and especially membership in the European Union pose when it comes to the ability of the people of Malta to maintain a national identity alongside a contemporary European national identity. He writes that "it is not uncommon for individuals, communities, collective entities, and their leaders to shape their personal, social, national, regional, and European identities by drawing on deeply held values (Abela 11). The title of an article by Aleksandra Izgarjan published in *Gender Studies* in 2008 – "Language as a Means of Shaping New Cultural Identity in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*" – illustrates the centrality of the term to literary studies. I use the term "to shape" frequently because I am seeking to isolate and interpret the potential in the
magazine’s key components to influence a national identity and help construct a collective sense of national culture.

To my knowledge, there have been no sustained analyses to date of the role that a Canadian book-review magazine published in English plays in the construction of a country’s cultural identity. Nevertheless, the recent attention being given in the English reading community to the actual process of writing book reviews, and to the relationship that book reviews have with their *raison d’être*, the book, supports the contention that book-review magazines are a study-worthy component of what author and publishing analyst Roy MacSkimming calls “the ecology of the book,” in other words all activities that give life to and nourish a book, from the time the author decides to commit idea to paper or, nowadays, to computer, to the time the book reaches the hands of its readers (MacSkimming “Idea to Reader” 1).

In “Reviewing Reviewing Today,” published in 2009 in the *Literary Review of Canada*, Linda Hutcheon argues, for example, that despite a recent democratization of the book-reviewing practice encouraged by the Internet and by current pedagogical approaches like personal-response journals, when it comes to learning about a book, or film or a musical, most readers still want and need the guidance of an experienced reviewer, of an expert in the field:

But if we want reviews to teach us, if we want to learn more about a book, a film, a wine – its context, its particular qualities and forms – we might well want to know that the reviewer has more (or different) expertise and background knowledge than we do. (7)

Hutcheon sees reviewers in terms of what Bourdieu in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* refers to as “need merchants, people who sell symbolic goods and services and who always see themselves as models and as guarantors of the value of their products” (Hutcheon 7). She writes that, “as purveyors of value, reviewers assess (and thereby create) distinction” (Hutcheon 7). The power to assess and create distinction is no small thing and, as
Robert Darnton notes in *The Case for Books: Past, Present and Future*, the connections that Bourdieu makes between literature and power cannot be ignored (6). It is time, therefore, that the ability of a book-review periodical to both reflect and foster a cultural identity is investigated.

Over the past few decades, a number of other Canadian treatments of the practice of reviewing are worthy of note. In September 2003, a special issue of *The Malahat Review* entitled “Reviewing: A Special Issue,” edited by Marlene Cookshaw and Lorna Jackson, addressed the many social and personal challenges associated with writing book reviews in Canada. Indeed, the difficulty of writing fair reviews in a literary community as small as Canada’s has been the focus of several articles in recent years (R. Bigge, S. Neilson, C. Starnino, C. Van der Meer). A compilation of papers presented at a conference organized by the Research Institute for Comparative Literature at the University of Alberta in 1986 stands as a call for more attention to the periodicals in which book reviews are published. Edited by E.D. Blodgett and A. G. Purdy (1988), *Problems of Literary Reception/Problèmes de réception littéraire* consists of essays ranging from an interrogation of the “role of reviewing in the reception of poetry in English Canada in the 20th century” by Douglas Barbour, to a case-study analysis by Jacques Michon of the impact that reviews of Émile Nelligan’s poetry in newspapers and magazines had on the “horizon of expectation” of readers, and on the institutionalization of Québécois literature.

While the practice of book reviewing in Canada has had its steady share of scholarly attention, book-review magazines, whether print or electronic, have not. The present inquiry into the cultural work of a book-review periodical is testament to the concept of “magazine exceptionalism” introduced in 2008 by Abrahamson, a professor of magazine editing. In "Magazine Exceptionalism: The Concept, the Criteria, the Challenge," Abrahamson suggests that magazines are an exceptional form of media because they are designed to appeal and respond to specific interests of a well-defined audience on a regular basis, unlike the “quotidian, fact-driven
variety of journalism” practised by newspapers, with a newspaper’s broad reach in terms of content and audience, and unlike the often ephemeral and “largely derivative” content of broadcast media (146). Abrahamson sees a magazine as having a unique and powerful role both as a product of its social and cultural moment and as a catalyst for social change. As a result, periodicals can perhaps be usefully understood to lie on a continuum of function, ranging in both intent and effect from the reflective to the transformative. (Abrahamson 146)

He proposes that “magazines can serve, in both professional and scholarly research, as singularly useful markers of the sociocultural reality” (Abrahamson 146). This ability to be both a reflector of a cultural milieu and a catalyst for cultural changes is what I am calling “cultural work.” To measure and evaluate that cultural work, I interpret ways that *Books in Canada*’s presence, its editors, its contents and its contributors have been both products of and shapers of book and literary culture in Canada at particular cultural moments.

In “Mapping the Magazine: An Introduction,” Tim Holmes emphasizes this capacity of special-interest magazines to offer a wealth of information about social tastes and norms. He notes that in contrast to the contents of television or films, the contents of successful magazines are archived and range over decades, thereby acting as rich sources of insight into changes in the concerns of the reading communities that they serve, and into the way that magazine producers respond to those concerns (Holmes xi). This is why it is important to analyse the contents of *Books in Canada* for its cultural work. Its corpus stands as a record of the evolution of Canada’s book and literary culture, a broad, richly-textured panorama that encompasses three decades and a millennium change, until the demise of the magazine in 2008.

The cultural value of its contents is due, at least in part, to the number of times the magazine changed editorial hands over its thirty-seven-year lifetime. It had been a federally and
provincially subsidized private enterprise since shortly after it was founded. According to Douglas Marshall, the first managing editor, *Books in Canada* began with Val Clery, a writer and former radio producer, and four of his friends, Marshall among them, each contributing eleven dollars as start-up funds (Marshall 2). A total of ten people served as editor for one year or more (see p. xiii). The editorial tenure of Michael Smith was the longest. He served as editor through most of the 1980’s when the magazine was published by the Toronto-based Canadian Review of Books Ltd. Doris Cowan and Barbara Carey, former contributors and members of the magazine’s editorial board, were editors each for periods of one year or less. Carey and Brian Fawcett served as advisory editors during the five-year editorial tenure of Paul Stuewe. Both Fawcett and Stuewe were former contributors as well. Naturally, all of these editors and advisory editors left their mark on *Books in Canada* be it in the appearance, quality and format of the magazine, the variety and scope of the reviews, the types of books under review, or the pedigree of reviewers, right down to the number and variety of rubrics and the amount of space devoted to letters from readers. Each editor brought his or her individual interests and style to the editor’s task, much like curators bring their own style to the rendering of an art exhibition. What editors put on display for their readers reflects an understanding of the contemporary mindset while working to shape that mindset. This dissertation focuses on the tenures of only three of those editors: Clery (1971 - 1973) Stuewe (1990-95) and Stein (2001 - 2008) as a way of tracing the arc of the magazine’s presence in Canada’s cultural identity, its founding by Clery, its revamped image and aims during the first half of the 1990’s under Stuewe, and its final years during the first decade of the new millennia in the hands of the Steins.

In 1995, Olga and Adrian Stein, owners of Ribosome Communications, a medical newsletter publisher, purchased the rights to the magazine, and to an archive of back issues, from the Bedford House Publishing Corporation, owners of the magazine since 1989. The Steins hired
Norman Doidge who served as Editor for three years, followed by his Managing Editor Gerald Owen, from March to September 1998, and then Diana Kuprel from October 1998 to February 2000. *Books in Canada* ceased publication for the rest of 2000, possibly due to financial problems, until the June/July 2001 issue when Olga Stein took over as editor. The ten-month publishing hiatus in 2000 was resolved in 2001 by an agreement that the magazine's publisher, Olga's husband Adrian, made with Amazon.ca. The agreement stirred up a broadly publicized copyright controversy that is discussed in greater detail in Chapter VI.

In an e-mail to me in August 2007 in response to my query about distribution numbers, Olga, the magazine's last editor, estimated the total at that time to be about 13,000, including approximately 1200 individual subscribers, and various school and university libraries, and 700 newsstand copies across Canada. This total distribution number, rather large for a contemporary Canadian special-interest magazine, was explained by the fact that 10,000 free copies of each issue were at that time being mailed out with books ordered by Amazon.ca customers, in accordance with the arrangement that Adrian Stein had made in 2001 with the online bookstore. The agreement permitted *Books in Canada* to augment its distribution numbers while enabling Amazon.ca to offer their online customers full-length edited book reviews. From 2001 on, the magazine published regularly, nine times a year, until its demise with the January 2008 issue.

Thinking that correspondence files would make an important and no doubt intriguing contribution to this study, I asked both the Steins and Paul Stuewe, editor of the magazine when the Steins purchased it, about such letters during the interviews I had with them. However, both said that they had no idea of what happened to the correspondence files. They were, I was told, likely lost in the shuffle from one office to another. Although the mystery of their whereabouts is unfortunate, the present dissertation has not suffered unduly because of it. The absence of correspondence files encouraged me to train my attention directly on the archived issues as a site
of cultural work rather than indirectly on subjective comments made in epistolary exchanges about that corpus.

*Books in Canada* began as a tabloid (a finished size of approximately 8 ½ by 11 inches). Since 1995, it has been a broadsheet (about 11 x 15 inches, a finished size similar to that of the *Times Literary Supplement* or the *London Review of Books*). Each issue offers half to full-page (500-2000 word) reviews of contemporary books published in a given year in Canada. *Books in Canada*’s only competitor in English Canada in format and style, and to a limited degree, content, was the *Literary Review of Canada*. Ulrich’s Periodicals Directory shows *Books in Canada* as having twice the circulation numbers of the *Literary Review of Canada* (10,000 to the *Literary Review of Canada*’s 5000). According to Stuewe, the magazine had been provided free in bookstores and other outlets for its first fifteen years, until 1986 (Stuewe “The Way We Were” 19). Scott Anderson, in an article about Stuewe’s resignation published in the July 1995 issue of *Quill & Quire*, quotes Anita Miecznikowski, the magazine’s publisher at the time, who told him that “the magazine ‘more or less’ breaks even,” that it “relies on the Canada Council for about $90,000 per year (an estimated 25% of its revenues) and on the Ontario Arts Council for another $30,000” and that “paid circulation is 8000” (28).

The focus of my study is not, however, the number and geographical location of its subscribers, nor is it the profits that the magazine did or did not make, nor is it the nature or number of advertisements in the magazine. The aim of this dissertation is to locate and assess the cultural work of the magazine itself through qualitative, not quantitative, research. At first, I purchased expensive software, Filemaker Pro 6, to facilitate data entry for a quantitative study, software to which I was introduced while working in the offices of the Groupe de recherche et d’études au Québec (GRELQ) at the Université de Sherbrooke. I proceeded to create a template with fields for searchable data such as the reviewer’s name, gender, title of review, date of
publication, whether the review was positive or negative overall, book author’s name, title of book, with the idea that I would then be able to tally the number of reviews by any one reviewer, the gender of those reviewers, or the number of reviews of books by certain authors over others, or search for reviews by the same reviewer, in order to establish and analyze noteworthy trends.

It was not long before the unwieldiness of this approach became apparent. *Books in Canada* published nine issues a year, each issue averaging between 35 and 40 pages. Even if I entered the contents of only the issues published during the founding editor’s three-year mandate, Paul Stuewe’s five-year mandate, and Olga Stein’s seven-year mandate, that would be a total of nine issues in each of fifteen years, = 135 issues times 35 pages each, for a total of 4725 pages. While that is not a difficult number for a data base to manipulate, it would be a monumental task to document each item on each of those pages. Instead, I decided to focus on particular moments of those editors’ mandates and offer a close-reading of selections from the magazine’s components in order to interpret the form of cultural work being done.

Another quantitative approach I considered was to scan the contents of each of those selected back issues in order to create a database in the form of PDFs that I could then use to search and analyze the various types of contributions and contributor data. Here again, sheer numbers and the uneven quality of the scanned-in data (scanners were not as advanced in the early 2000’s as they are now) compromised that approach. Added to that, was the information that I received about that time from Olga Stein that *Books in Canada* had hired someone in Toronto to begin scanning the contents of all of their back issues to create a search engine for them, a process that did eventually lead to the back-issues search feature that is still available online, and that I discuss and assess in detail in Chapter VI. Instead of duplicating those efforts, I settled on a qualitative approach, one that invited a close-reading of selected contents through the
lenses of literary, cultural and magazine studies in order to show the magazine “at work” responding to and influencing its social and cultural milieu.

I initially borrowed the term “cultural work” from Jane Tompkins’ *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860* (1985) and freely adapted it to refer to the ability of a book-review magazine to shape a sense of national cultural identity. The expression “cultural work” is as yet an under-theorized concept although it is used increasingly across the disciplines to refer to the influence and effect of certain images, texts, and cultural practices. As a fluid term, it makes room for an analysis of several components of periodicals that promote and evaluate books and their authors. Tompkins uses the term to refer to the canon-formation process inherent to American criticism. She argues that works that make up the 19th century American literary canon, like those of Nathaniel Hawthorne, were critically acclaimed not necessarily because of writing attributes unique to them, but because they “worked” on behalf of, in other words, favoured and promoted, the literary, social and moral values of the day. The fiction that was published and reviewed at that time achieved critical attention because it was working to sustain socio-cultural ideologies: “They expressed what lay in the minds of many or most of their contemporaries” (Tompkins xvi). In her groundbreaking study of poverty narratives in Canadian literature, Roxanne Rimstead shows that a similar dynamic is present in twentieth-century Canadian literature. In *Remnants of Nation: On Poverty Narratives by Women* she argues that many of Canada’s canonical texts, and critical analyses of those texts, work to privilege the image of Canada as a prosperous nation and to erase, ignore or minimize the social context of the narrative, when that context is one of poverty, or of racial or gender discrimination, or a combination of all three.

In the present dissertation, the concept of cultural work is used as a flexible tool to refer to the various ways that the magazine’s historical presence, its editors and the contents they
published, reflected, responded to, generated, shaped, and ultimately betrayed "what lay in the minds of many or most" of its readers as far as a Canadian cultural identity was concerned.

My qualitative approach to a corpus of selected editions of *Books in Canada* is not meant to suggest that textual analysis is the only way to identify and understand the impact of a book-review periodical on its ambient culture and society. Here, I concur with Joke Hermes, professor of media, culture and citizenship. In her ethnographic study of why women read women's magazines, she emphasizes the need in the field of cultural studies to welcome both ethnographic analysis and textual analysis (147). As she points out, both approaches need to keep in mind that "all texts are used in the context of other media and genres; each reader brings their own life experiences to the reading process" and that reading "can be a fleeting, transient pastime that does not leave much of a trace" (Hermes 147). What follows is presented as one concerted, scholarly attempt to stimulate additional insight and intellectual exchange with regard to book-review magazines by focussing on a qualitative rather than a quantitative study of *Books in Canada* and by considering, not the sociology or comprehensive history of the magazine's publication, but rather the textual evidence of editorial choices and the cultural work this implies.

When I began teaching courses in Canadian literature at the Université de Moncton in 1996, I consulted the library's copies of literary journals and of *Books in Canada* for insight into the critical reception of contemporary novels and into the careers of the authors whose work I was teaching. A subscriber to *Books in Canada* since that time, my publishing career with them began in 2001 when Olga Stein, the owner and new editor published an article I wrote about what I would now refer to as the "cultural work" of the short stories written by the early twentieth-century Eastern Townships poet Louise Morey Bowman. In the article, I argue that Bowman used her stories to advocate the acceptance of European-based modernist trends in
Canadian poetry and that she therefore had a rightful place among Canada’s early modernist poets, despite what E. J. Pratt had to say about her third and final collection of poems.

A reviewer for the magazine since then, I wrote numerous book reviews at the request of Olga Stein. These include a review of Nadine Gordimer’s collection of short stories, *Loot*, of Nancy Richler’s novel entitled *Your Mouth is Lovely*, and of the 2004 re-issue of Thomas Raddall’s novel *Rockbound*. (A discussion of this latter review forms part of Chapter V.) In 2004, Olga and the Associate Editors David Solway and Carmine Starnino invited me to join the editorial board as a contributing editor in recognition of the reviews I had written for them. I learned much from Olga’s editorial suggestions and input, guidance that I then applied when writing reviews for other journals as well such as *Canadian Literature*, *ARC Poetry Magazine* and the *Fiddlehead*.

Through the book-review writing that I did for *Books in Canada*, I became better acquainted with Olga Stein. In December 2003, not long after I began my doctoral studies, I told her that I had decided to make the magazine the focus of my doctoral dissertation. As owners of the magazine, she and her husband were pleased to know this, perhaps because it would mean some degree of posterity for their magazine, and for them. But they were also genuinely pleased for me and both of them, and particularly, Olga, gave me constant encouragement. My membership on the editorial board made it easier for me to request and arrange an interview with the two associate editors, Solway and Starnino, who also encouraged me to proceed with the project.

However, when it came to arranging interviews, in person or by telephone, with other individuals who were associated with the magazine, former editors, Douglas Marshall (who died in 2005), Doris Cowen and Paul Stuewe, for example, with Roy MacSkimming and with *Lettres québécoises* Director, André Vanasse, it was more the project itself than my position as a
Contributing Editor that eased the way. For Marshall, Stuewe and Cowan, the magazine had been important to them at a certain point in their personal and professional lives. Marshall was there when it was founded. Cowan served as acting editor from January 1988 to January 1989, and editor for the June/July 1990 issue. Stuewe had been writing reviews for the magazine on a regular basis for several years before becoming editor in the Fall of 1990 and serving in that capacity throughout the five years leading up to the purchase by the Steins. It was as significant for them as it was for me that attention be given to Books in Canada as a product of its time as well as a facilitator within the country’s book and literary cultural milieu.

It might seem at first that knowing the people who were influential in the contents and design of Books in Canada during the five years preceding its demise would be beneficial to my investigation into the history and cultural work of the magazine. However, the Steins, Solway and Stamino consistently behaved as if I knew more about the magazine than they did, and indeed, when it comes to its historical presence, it seems I may have. The Steins claimed not to know much about the magazine beyond the five or so years that preceded their purchase of it in 1995. Neither Solway nor Stamino had ever been to Books in Canada’s editorial office, at least not when it was part of the Stein’s Bridlepath home in Toronto, as I had been invited to do.

In the course of our interviews, Olga informed me that she decided what books to review according to a thematic thread that she was able to identify running through certain of the numerous books that publishers had recently sent her. She emphasized how necessary it was to work with a three-issue lead-time, that is, to always be working at least two issues ahead of the current one. There is an intricate balancing act that Stein had evidently mastered with regard to each issue. Central to that balancing act were human factors, most of which were beyond her control – for example, anticipated reviews never arriving, and badly-written reviews requiring heavy editing within short periods of time. Also evident at the time was the degree to which she
relied on her memory of what books publishers had sent her, and on her intuition, when deciding how to group the books being reviewed according to a theme. Olga, and each of her predecessors, were remarkably adept at producing a varied yet unified product of its time, every time. The capacity of that product not only to reflect but also affect a cultural identity is what I am calling “cultural work.”

Mary Vipond, in her study of the mass media in Canada and its impact on culture, notes the difficulty in trying “to grasp” the term “culture” (100). She reminds us that in 1952, A. L. Kroeber and C. Kluckhohn offered over 160 definitions of culture “and then added their own!” and that “in everyday speech, we often use the term to refer to art, literature, architecture, classical music and other self-conscious creative attempts by artists to express their innermost feelings” (Vipond 100). Vipond’s comment echoes British cultural historian and theorist Raymond Williams who writes that the most widespread use of the word “culture” is to refer to “music, literature, painting and sculpture, theatre and film” (80). His definition accords with the primary one listed in the Oxford Canadian Dictionary — “the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively.” For the purpose of the present study, “culture” in the term “cultural work” aligns with Bourdieu’s notion of cultural capital in that it refers to the knowledge and familiarity that one acquires by taking an active interest in one or more of those manifestations, but in this particular case, books.

I understand the second part of the term “cultural work” not as the physical labour involved in producing the magazine, or the place where it was produced, but as the idea that the magazine’s contents and its contributors are responding to the book and literary milieu of the day even as they seek to define and contribute to that milieu. The magazine’s “job,” that is, the work it does on behalf of book and literary culture in Canada, is to make readers aware of recently published books by summarizing the contents of the books, by analysing the significance of the
book to its field of study and to society, by situating the books in terms of other books in the field, and by informing readers about the authors of these books. I use the term “work” as an active verb, that is, the work that the magazine and its various components are engaged in, are carrying out, rather than as a noun which would mean the result of the magazine’s presence in Canada’s book and literary cultural milieu. I ask what meaning and agency can be identified in the various components of a magazine, its front covers and its editorials, for example, and in what ways did the magazine respond to its cultural milieu? My use of “work” as a verb is therefore different than, say, that of the authors in Andrew Beck’s collection of essays entitled Cultural Work: Understanding the Cultural Industries (2003). Those writers focus on “the conditions of the production of culture,” in other words, on the ways that the jobs of cultural producers, the nature of their labour or of their workplaces, for example, those of radio DJs, or of filmmakers, have changed over the last two decades, and why they have changed (Beck 1-2).

For Tompkins, “cultural work” refers to the idea that literary texts are working “to express and shape the social context that produced them . . .” (200). She argues, for example, that a book like The Last of the Mohicans, by James Fenimore Cooper, is a “meditation” on controversial ideas concerning “national, racial and ethnic mixing” circulating in 19th century America (Tompkins 106). According to her analysis, Cooper’s book gained readership and canonical recognition because it was reflecting and responding to certain of the era’s social dilemmas (38).

My method of using the term “cultural work” is similar to Tompkins’, but not the same. Tompkins uses it to argue that the popularity of many 19th century authors, Cooper and Nathaniel Hawthorne among them, depends on the degree to which their work participated in social construction by reflecting the social and literary mores and values of publishers and people of influence. I use “cultural work” to explore the degree to which a book-review magazine
participates in the construction of a national cultural identity. Tompkins' expressed aim is "to question the accepted view that a classic work does not depend for its status on the circumstances in which it is read, and to argue exactly the reverse" (Tompkins 3-4). My aim is to explore and validate the idea that book-review magazines, through their historical presence and contents are, as Tompkins writes of 19th century novels, "doing work, creating, expressing and shaping" (Tompkins 200) the cultural context in which they are read.

The concept of "cultural work" underscores the value of examining the cultural influence and agency of a book-review magazine more closely. In Tompkins' introduction, she explains that her exploration of the notion of the 'cultural work' of canonical texts is grounded in her desire to distance herself and her fellow reader-response theorists from critical practices that privilege certain works of literature as classics, worthy of study and inclusion in the American literary canon because of their "enduring themes in complex forms" (xi). The purpose of her book is, she writes, to argue that the study of American literature would be richer and "more fruitful" if such literary texts, and others, were seen as "attempts to redefine the social order" of the context in which they are published (Tompkins xi). According to her, a book's continual success throughout generations, in other words, its inclusion in a literary canon, has more to do with the "publishing processes, pedagogical traditions, social networks and national needs" than with any 'inherent' aesthetic value (36-37). Tompkins writes:

American literature itself, as represented in literary anthologies, affects the way people understand their lives and hence becomes responsible for defining historical conditions. Thus if literary value judgements respond to changing historical conditions, the reverse is also true. (195)

In other words, the people writing and publishing literary value judgements of the day are influenced by and in turn influence the ambient literary culture. Similar arguments can be made
with regard to the value judgements found in book-review magazines. Not only do they express
the values of the day. They are also influenced by them and influence them.

Nevertheless, Tompkins’ term comes with certain baggage. Fortunately, however, that
baggage also works, albeit indirectly, to support the aim of the present study. John Guillory
disparages Tompkins’ entire project. He writes that it “dissolves the aesthetic . . . by substituting
for it a pseudo-historicism disguising the fact that the values being ‘revalued’ are very simply
contemporary values . . .” (24). He acknowledges with evident exasperation that Tompkins’
provocative reconsideration of the history of literary reception in the United States has become a
“foundational gesture” in critical considerations of how canons were, and are, formed (24). From
a less radical standpoint, Terence Martin, in his review of Tompkins’ Sensational Designs for the
American Literature journal also takes issue with Tompkins’ approach to analyzing the ways that
the reputations of authors were, or were not, established. He sees in Sensational Designs “a
recurrent inclination . . . to subvert rather than to expand the present canon” and he suggests that
Tompkins is essentially replacing one canon for another rather than finding a way to include both
(Martin 628).

Such vigorous reactions to her work suggest that Tompkins has touched a sensitive
canonical nerve. Regardless of whether or not critics like Guillory and Martin consider her
“gesture” to be of significant theoretical substance, that gesture exposes some of the weaknesses
in the long-standing foundation of inherent, timeless artistic merit upon which American and of
course other canons have been constructed. In doing so, and more pertinent to the present
project, Tompkins’ contentions, as well as the lively criticism they engendered, serve as
important support for my contention that book-review magazines, and the people associated with
them, are indeed involved in doing cultural work that both reflects and shapes cultural identity as
well as the book market, notions of literary excellence, and celebrity. The question of how a
special interest magazine like *Books in Canada* carries out that work is what this dissertation sets out to explore.

**ii. Magazines as Sites of Cultural Work**

Any interrogation about ways that a magazine goes about reflecting, creating and shaping cultural mindsets must first acknowledge its debt to its major precursors, primary among them the extraordinary five-volume masterpiece *A History of American Magazines* by Frank Luther Mott. Canada’s Nick Mount calls it “still the single most authoritative record of magazine publishing in America” (139). Similarly, John Tebbel and Mary Ellen Zuckerman note in the “Foreword” to *The Magazine in America 1741-1990* that Mott’s study is “the rock on which all research must rest” (v). So important was his work to America’s social history that Volumes II and III were awarded the Pulitzer Prize in American history in 1939. Volumes I to IV of his oeuvre trace the significance of American magazines to American history and culture from 1741 to 1905. In Volume IV (1885-1905), for example, with more than eight hundred pages divided into twenty-three chapters, plus thirty-five illustrations and a sixty-seven page index, Mott offers either brief references to the titles of hundreds of American magazines, their dates of publication and who founded them, or what he in one of his rubrics calls, “sketches,” or lengthy histories, of “Certain Important Magazines Which Flourished 1885-1905” (xvi). Volume IV contains thirty-four of these types of historical overviews. Mott also records ways that contemporary political and social issues were treated in certain newspapers and magazines in chapters like “The Labor Movement” and “The War with Spain.” In the latter chapter, for example, Mott quotes the *Saturday Evening Post*’s editorial response to the destruction of the American battleship *Maine* in Havana Harbor, in which most of the crew was lost (Mott 234-235). The final 616-page Volume
V consists of his “sketches” of twenty-one magazines published between 1905-1930 and a cumulative index to the four preceding volumes.

Mott’s correspondence and literary manuscripts are kept in the Special Collections Department of the University of Iowa. The entry on the university’s Pulitzer Prize Winners website quotes the three main reasons that Mott offers in the introduction to the first of the five volumes to explain why magazines are important to the evolution of American society: “‘first, they provide a democratic literature which is sometimes of high quality; ‘second, the magazine [plays] an important part in the economics of literature’; and ‘third, periodical files furnish an invaluable contemporaneous history of their times’”

(<://www.iowalum.com/pulitzerPrize/mott.html>). Each of these reasons signals the kind of new knowledge that a sustained analysis of a book-review magazine like Books in Canada can bring to the fields of literary, cultural and magazine studies.

Consider the first “service” that Mott associates with American magazines – that of providing what he calls a “democratic literature,” with some of it being of very good quality (Mott Vol.1, 2). In a democracy, the power to govern a society is said to rest in the hands of the people, usually through their elected representatives. When Mott applies the notion of democracy to magazines, he is acknowledging that the will of the people, of the magazine’s target audience in other words, is exercised through their power either to purchase the magazine because it responds to their interests, or to leave it on the shelf if it does not. As he puts it, “The general magazine’s audience must perforce be a popular one, and even the specialized periodicals whose appeal is limited to particular classes are subject to referendum and recall of an annual subscription campaign just as the general magazine is” (Vol. 1, 2). Thus a magazine aims to provide content which appeals to the interests of the magazine’s target audience in order to ensure the magazine’s viability.
As is apparent, Mott’s introduction, first published in 1930, treats magazines as non-partisan sites of “periodical literature” and describes the contents from that angle. He does not take into account the important role that editors play in choosing which articles to publish in the periodicals – which world events and political or social issues the articles focus on and why those articles were published and not others. For example, he writes that “periodicals must keep very close to their public; they must catch the slightest nuances of popular taste” (2). He attributes agency to the periodical, not, for example, to the person in charge of the periodical nor to specific components such as the front covers, nor to the contributors’ writing styles, all of which this study does.

The present study thus adds important nuances to the first of the three services that Mott claims magazines provide. The dissertation locates and examines the magazine’s social, cultural and historical agency, catching that agency at work in the reviews, in the editorial interventions as well as in the front covers, in the reviewers’ writing styles and in published letters to the editor. By doing so, it exposes and explores limitations inherent in Mott’s first claim that periodicals are sites of “democratic literature” (Vol. 1, 2).

Moreover, it is essential to acknowledge an editor’s agency, and the impact that that agency has on the magazine’s contents and historical presence when studying a periodical’s presence in and impact on its social and cultural milieu. The present dissertation also addresses the fact that the power of an editor to keep readers reading and subscribing is limited by certain factors. In the case of *Books in Canada*, a privately-owned, federally and provincially subsidized periodical that specializes in book reviews, limitations are created, for example, by the sorts of books that are published in a current year and by which books are sent to the editor to choose from. As mentioned above, the ability of book-review magazine editors to appeal to their readers can be influenced by the interests, availability and conscientiousness of the reviewers that they assign to
review the books. More importantly, and as seen below when I discuss certain decisions made by the magazine’s final editor Olga Stein, the power to keep readers reading can be limited as well by an editor’s own partisan interests.

The second service that Mott identifies, namely that American magazines have played a significant role “in the economics of literature” is as true for the magazines he studies as it is for Books in Canada. As he proposes, the magazines he studies stimulated interest not just in the books that some of those magazines reviewed, but also in reading in general, and, as he notes, in the “literary reputations” of the books’ authors, and the careers and reputations of those writing the reviews (Mott Vol 1, 2). Similarly, Books in Canada, with its focus on books and the authors of those books, has no doubt contributed to the economics of literature in Canada. The primary aim of Books in Canada was always to bring recently published books to the attention of its readers and to offer sufficient skilful insight into those books and their authors to influence a reader’s decision to purchase them. The service that Books in Canada set out to provide for Canadian publishers and readers since it was founded is apparent in a speech delivered by Hugh Faulkner, a Member of Parliament at the time, to the Conference on Publishing in Canada, an excerpt of which was published in the introductory issue of Books in Canada. According to Faulkner, many publishers “felt that a subsidized, high-quality (but not too high-brow) critical weekly or monthly book review, to appear in both languages, would help create an awareness among librarians and the public of what is being written in Canada” (qtd. in “Write in,” Books in Canada, May 1971, 3). Although Books in Canada never attempted to publish in both official languages, it did, over its thirty-five year existence, work consistently to create an awareness of what was being written across Canada, and of who was writing it.

The vexed notion of “quality,” used above by Mott, and by Faulkner, warrants attention. Mott offers examples in his introduction of the kind of “high quality” literature he has in mind.
For him, high quality writing is the writing of “prominent authors.” In his discussion of this first
type of service offered by magazines, for example, he alludes to “Longfellow, Mrs. Stowe,
Tennyson, and Dickens” as a way of illustrating the calibre of good writing that some American
magazines are known for (Mott Vol. 1, 2). Faulkner does not specify what “high quality” writing
consists of, but hints through his caution that it should not be “too high-brow.” He seems to
understand it to mean writing which appeals to a general, rather than a scholarly reader.

Today, such assumptions that all readers share the same understanding of what is meant by
“high quality” writing are no longer tenable. As communication and cultural analysts like Stuart
Hall and Pierre Bourdieu argue, “good” writing is more often than not synonymous with writing
that is privileged by the literary elites. Mott’s allusions are a case in point. They signal the way
that celebrity status can have a positive influence on the reception of a text by readers, reviewers
and critics. As Faye Hammill reminds us, however, studies of the degree to which an author’s
celebrity status increases book sales and reading habits are a relatively recent development in
Canada (Canadian Literature 170). Moreover, an author’s celebrity can sometimes hinder his or
her status within the literary establishment. In their treatments of literary celebrity in Canada,
Hammill, Lorraine York and Clarence Karr each include interrogations into ways that popularity
and fame threatened to diminish rather than enhance the critical reception of work by Ralph
Connor, E. Pauline Johnson, and Lucy Maud Montgomery, for example.

Books in Canada has also contributed to the economics of book and literary culture in
Canada through its First Novel Award, initiated in 1976 and discussed in more detail in “The
Legacy” section of Chapter VI. And of course, as I hope this dissertation demonstrates, Books in
Canada carries out the third service that Mott attributes to general-interest magazines in America
– namely to act as an “invaluable contemporaneous history” of particular moments in Canada’s
book and literary culture.
Another core text that traces the development and impact of magazines on American society is Theodore Peterson’s *Magazines in the Twentieth Century*, first published in 1956. Like the caption for one of the early modern American magazines for children that Peterson discusses, his own study is “freighted with treasures” for anyone seeking to better understand the evolution and significance of modern popular magazines in the United States (Peterson 9). Chapters in Peterson’s 480-page book include “The Birth of the Magazine,” “Advertising: Its Growth and Effects,” “The Economic Structure of the Industry” and “Magazines For Cultural Minorities.” Among many other factors, Peterson addresses the impact that advancements in print technologies and the expansion of transportation infrastructures had on the vitality of the magazine industry throughout the twentieth century.

The work of Tebbel and Zuckerman was published in 1991, the year that “the American magazine industry will celebrate, or at least acknowledge, 250 years of its existence” (v). Their study builds on Mott’s foundation by considering his work “through the eyes of later research and the perspectives provided by recent social and cultural historians” (Tebbel and Zuckerman v). Their focus, however, is the evolution of the medium from 1918 to 1991 in chapters that look, for example, at the use of magazines as “political weapons,” trace the history and evolution of magazines for black Americans and that of the use and impact of photojournalism.

David E. Sumner offers a contemporary treatment of the history of magazines in the United States with *The Magazine Century: American Magazines Since 1900* (2010). Sumner limits the parameters of his study by focussing on “innovative magazines, editors and publishers” and on magazines “that reflected or illustrated larger trends taking place within American society” (vii-viii). Sumner’s intention is to “create a theoretical framework for the century that offers some explanations as to why magazines experienced such expansive growth,” given the consistent scepticism about their viability (3). His book introduces what he calls “the expansion of interest
theory” and the “popularization of content” theory (Sumner 5). He notes that “only four books cover any general history of American magazines and they offer limited explanations for the success of magazines” (Sumner 4). One of them is a work I refer to as well, below and again in Chapter II – Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets and Class at the Turn of the Century by Richard Ohmann. Sumner writes that he does not subscribe to what he calls Ohmann’s Marxist-based “view” that the success of magazines was market-driven because, he writes, that view “fails to recognize the freewill and autonomy of magazine readers in choosing content that is useful to their lives” (4). Sumner considers Ohmann’s analysis to be, nevertheless, “the most comprehensive anyone has yet attempted” (4).

The above works are historical treatments of the American general-interest magazine, with Sumner attempting to theorize their popularity. As Holmes reminds us, the presence of industry-related and sometimes industry-sponsored American and British research into the specifics of magazine publishing are also important facets of magazine studies in general. By this he means the work that national magazine organisations and associations do on behalf of the magazine trade – organizing conferences and publishing their own research – in order to promote and advocate on behalf of their members. These include Britain’s Periodical Publishers’ Association, the Magazine Publishers of America, and the International Federation of the Periodical Press, the latter of which, Holmes writes, “‘works for the benefit of magazine publishers around the world,’ a claim which accessing the organisation’s website verifies” (xi). Magazines Canada is the equivalent organization in Canada. Its current website features announcements of professional development courses and trade events as well as offering links to articles such as “Canada Post Explains Rate Increases for 2010,” a government decision I refer to in Chapter VI for its role in the demise of Books in Canada.
The studies discussed above stand as important historical and theoretical treatments of the very wide range of American magazines on the market over the past three centuries. Others offering insight into ways that contemporary magazines, especially women’s magazines, influence their circle of readers include the ethnographic analysis of who reads women’s magazines and why by Joke Hermes, studies of Helen Gurley Brown, thirty-year editor of Cosmopolitan magazine, and of The Ladies Home Journal, by Jennifer Scanlon, the case-study analysis of nineteenth-century British periodicals designed expressly for women by Margaret Beetham and the focus on the contents of over fifty American magazines for women by Ellen McCracken. Scanlon and McCracken both analyse the text and the lay-out of the advertisements, the fiction, and editorial content for the social values and attitudes they express in order to weigh the political, economic and social impact of the magazines as American ‘institutions’. McCracken’s book includes an illustrated semiotic analysis of the front covers of several American women’s magazines.¹

There remains much to do in the emergent field of magazine studies. According to both Holmes and Sumner, scholarly attention to the capacity of contemporary magazines to act as cultural reflectors and catalysts are still surprisingly scarce in the English-speaking world. Holmes writes that while magazines are “vectors of pleasure” that “encourage the acquisition of knowledge” and “may play an important role in the formation of identity” other forms of media including film “are accorded higher status” as cultural agents (viii). Magazines are, writes Holmes, a cultural form “which scholars have, with a few exceptions, tended to underestimate and overlook” (ix). Ohmann’s book is one of the exceptions that Holmes mentions specifically for its potential to act as “an excellent model” for “the study of culture and identity in both its widest and narrowest sense” (xii). Consequently, in Chapter IV of my document, I follow Ohmann’s lead and treat a selection of Books in Canada’s front covers as sites of “interaction of
text, image, design, product and reader” that require what he refers to as a “bridging of lacunae” (176) on the part of the reader.

Another core magazine study that Holmes praises is a Canadian one. In Roughing It in the Suburbs: Reading Chatelaine Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties (2000), Valerie Korinek updates former feminist critical readings of the contents of “the venerable doyenne of Canadian women’s magazines” (3). She argues that Chatelaine was a source of awareness and thus empowerment for post-war Canadian women, contrary to what she refers to as the first-wave feminist dismissive assumption that commercial women’s magazines like Chatelaine were “pap for women, created by the machinations of male corporate executives, editors and advertising executives . . . to foster insecurity about women’s bodies, appearance, and relationships with husbands and children” (Korinek 9-10). To prove the contrary, Korinek draws on the theories of Foucault, Barthes and Fiske in her analyses of selected articles, photographs, editorials and letters to the editor published in Chatelaine during the 1950s and 1960s. She convincingly documents the magazine’s implication in effecting change to the social, political and economic status of Canadian women during the mid-twentieth century. She also stresses the activism of editor Doris Anderson who, during much of this period, through her editorial choices, encouraged not only the cause of second-wave feminists, but also greater social awareness through articles that linked poverty to class and gender, and others that documented the plight of Canada’s aboriginal population. This book has served as a model for my own study because Korinek shows Chatelaine’s articles, fiction, advertisements and editorials at work mirroring the lives of its readers, but also empowering and educating women and thereby contributing to gradual changes in the social and cultural values of women in post-WWII Canada, in other words, shaping their sense of identity. Similarly, I see Books in Canada as shaping the cultural
identify of its readers by expanding the scope of their knowledge of recently-published books by Canadian and international authors.

Abrahamson, Holmes and Sammye Johnson all acknowledge the relative lack of scholarly interest in the social and cultural agency of magazines. They attribute it to, among other things, the sheer number of magazines on the market, the conflicting data surrounding those numbers depending on their source, and the wide variety of subject matter that magazines address, all of which make it difficult for researchers to know where and how to begin (Johnson 2). Johnson asks, “How do we tackle magazines and their meanings? What kinds of methodologies should we use? Should our approach be quantitative, qualitative, historical, descriptive, Marxist, literary, feminist, postmodern or economic?” (Johnson 3). Beetham too quickly realised these difficulties: “. . . as I have discovered to my cost, such work is very difficult, both in methodological and practical terms. Theoretical work on periodicals as popular texts is still relatively undeveloped despite their importance” (viii). Given this absence of any one widely-recognized theory that takes special-interest magazines like a book-review magazine into consideration, I draw on ideas and theories from a variety of theoretical disciplines related to my corpus in order to achieve my objectives of unpacking and comparing the cultural work of Books in Canada.

As far as I can ascertain, my dissertation is the first extensive study in Canada of the cultural work of an English book-review magazine. However, important work on other kinds of English-Canadian periodicals has been carried out. These studies have as their corpus the contents of women’s magazines, specifically Chatelaine in the case of Korinek, mentioned above; of general-interest magazines such as Maclean’s and Saturday Night in the case of L.B. Kuffert; and of what are known in Canada and elsewhere in the world as “little magazines” in the case of Ken Norris and Dean Irvine, discussed below. A recent initiative that augurs well for an
increase in scholarly studies of the contents of book-related periodicals is the Call for Papers for the 2011 ACCUTE conference issued by Ross Leckie. Leckie seeks papers that deal with *The Fiddlehead*, a literary journal that “has helped shape Canadian literature from the end of the modernist period through Sixties and Seventies Canadian nationalism to the diversity of forms that define contemporary Canadian poetry and fiction” (Leckie <http://www.accute.ca/2011cfp>). Rather than bibliographical studies of the journal, or literary histories, Leckie is inviting papers that discuss the journal in such contexts as “regional identity in a global context,” “the rural underclass and the decline of Atlantic Canadian industrialism,” “tourism and heritage mythologies,” and “parochialism and cosmopolitanism” (Leckie <http://www.accute.ca/2011cfp>). The scope of these topics emphasizes the role that book-review magazines and literary journals can play in reflecting and shaping cultural identity. At the same time, the focus of the conference on the “forms that define contemporary Canadian poetry and fiction” highlights one of the major differences between literary journals and book-review magazines.

A useful synopsis of the history of English and of French creative literature journals in Canada and of their basic tenets is available in the *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada*, under the rubric “Journals” (564-570). As well, a chronological list of many of Canada’s creative literature periodicals can be found on *The Canadian Encyclopedia HISTORICA* web page. The latter, with a 2009 copyright date, was compiled by Marilyn G. Flitton and Geoffrey Hancock. It includes where the journals were founded, when and by whom. Some, like the *Canadian Garland* and the *Mayflower*, were shooting stars in the periodical skies, publishing for a year or less in the mid-1800s and then disappearing. Others, like the *Literary Garland*, (1838-1851) were published for more than a decade. Flitton begins with periodicals published in the late 18th century through to the turn of the 20th century. Hancock addresses the “Modern and
Contemporary Periods,” ending with references to magazines that were founded in Canada up until the mid-1980s, with a link to those in French.

In “Literary Periodicals in English,” also published in 2008 in The Canadian Encyclopedia Historica electronic journal, W. J. Keith provides a similar chronological list of publishing venues for scholarly studies of literature in Canada, with one or two-line descriptions of each. Keith’s list begins with the Canadian Journal (1852-78), following through to brief descriptions of, and links to, university based journals like Queen’s Quarterly, the Dalhousie Review, University of Toronto Quarterly and Canadian Literature. The latter, and Canadian Forum, receive more substantial consideration while Keith emphasizes, if only by omission, the unique place that Books in Canada occupies in contemporary book and literary culture in Canada. The university-based journals he lists are publication venues that are vital to the distribution of new literature and theory-related research. They do publish reviews of books of fiction, poetry and literary criticism, but generally speaking, book reviews are not their focus. In direct contrast, the focus of Books in Canada is to bring a wide range of newly published books, of both general interest and literature-related, and their authors, to the attention of its readers.

For the purpose of this dissertation then, the term “journal” refers to literary journals like The Fiddlehead. A journal is defined as a periodical produced by members of the academic community or affiliated in some way with a university. The Explicator, for example, is an American critical journal whose executive editorial board includes members from Hunter College, CUNY and the University of New Orleans. It offers close-readings at the scholarly level of literary works from all eras and regions of the world. Liberation journals like those that are the focus of Meadow Dibble-Dieng’s dissertation, consist primarily of creative writing intended to express a certain ideology through the writing itself, criticism, editorials, essays and interviews it publishes, and through other components of its contents, for example its photographs. Literary
journals often include a section for reviews of books, but reviewing books is not their primary aim.

When I think of book-review magazines, in contrast to seeing the above types of content and criteria, I “see” a multi-paged bound paper periodical that contains, primarily, reviews of books, along with, possibly, reviews of other recent manifestations of the fine arts, book-related articles and author interviews, each contributed by a variety of writers with different backgrounds and experience, and put together with the guidance of an editor and editorial board.

To illustrate the distinction, we might think of what are called “little magazines.” As David McKnight notes in his article in l’Histoire du livre et de l’imprimé, Volume III on small English and French book publishers in Canada, little magazines are usually associated in some way with small publishing houses. He writes: “Dans certains cas, de petites revues sont à l’origine de maisons d’édition, et dans d’autres cas, ce sont des éditeurs de livres qui lancent des revues” (McKnight 325). Distributed among a circle of loyal readers, these magazines advocate changes in literary and aesthetic values by publishing and promoting new, often avant-garde, creative literature (McKnight 335). His examples of “little magazines” in English Canada include TISH (Vancouver, 1961-1969), Open Letter (Toronto, 1965- ) and Arc (Ottawa, 1978 - ). The periodicals published in French in Quebec that he discusses include Liberté (Montréal, 1954- ), Parti pris (Montréal, 1963-1968) and Estuaire (Québec, 1976- ) (McKnight 331-335).ii

According to the parameters I have set out, “little magazines” are actually journals because they publish creative work and they are, in most cases, affiliated with a university. These journals also do cultural work, as Ken Norris and Dean Irvine have ably shown. Norris’ book examines ways that small-press publications such as Alphabet (edited by James Reaney), Imago and Tish, shaped the development of modernism and postmodernism in Canadian poetry. Irvine’s study expands on Norris’ work by revealing the extent to which Canadian women writers and
editors were involved in the production and distribution of these ‘little’ magazines. He documents ways in which the women’s efforts expressed and affected modernist, feminist and leftist writing in Canada as well as cultural policy. Both studies demonstrate the cultural activism, or at least agency, of these literature-related periodicals. *The Bull Calf*, a triannual online journal founded in January 2011 at McGill University and edited by Kait Pinder and Jeff Weingarten, features scholarly reviews of Canadian fiction, poetry and literary criticism, both English and French. *Ellipse*, founded at the Université de Sherbrooke, is committed to translated poetry in Canada. Jean Delisle and Gilles Gallichan write that by 1980 *Ellipse* had published translations of over fifty of Canada’s English or French poets in twenty-six issues (54). One could, therefore, locate its cultural work in the space it created “for dialogue and networks of sociability between pairs of literary writers from the two main linguistic groups” (Delisle and Gallichan 54).

Because “little magazines” and literary journals are in the business of publishing new creative writing and promoting innovative writing styles and techniques, they are fundamentally different from book-review magazines like *Books in Canada* and *Lettres québécoises*. These two periodicals are each in the business of bringing a selection of newly published books, and information about their authors, authors’ writing styles and ideologies, to the attention of their readers. *Books in Canada* is referred to here as a magazine because its contents reflect the aim to introduce its readers to an eclectic range of books recently published in Canada. This range may include books of literary criticism and theory, but such books were not its primary concern, nor is the publication of original works, except during Stuewe’s tenure from 1990-1995. Rather, throughout most of its publishing life, *Books in Canada* consisted primarily of reviews of new novels and special-interest books, for example books about politics, arts, sports and hobbies, and books of poetry; and secondarily of author interviews, of literature-related essays and, from
2001-2008, English translations by the Associate Editor David Solway of short poems from Quebec.

The website for the Canada Council for the Arts/Conseil des Arts du Canada does not distinguish between magazines and journals in their statement of funding criteria. In order for either a literary journal or a magazine to be eligible for funding, the Council stipulates that “the arts or literature in Canada must be an important and regular, not occasional or peripheral, editorial focus of the periodical” (Canada Council). In addition, either must:

* be written principally in English, French or one of Canada’s Aboriginal languages
* be at least 75 percent Canadian-owned
* be published at least twice a year
* focus mainly on editorial content written or created by Canadians
* have a demonstrated editorial capability and financial stability
* focus mainly on previously unpublished material, and have a print run of at least 500 copies per issue, but not exceed 25,000 copies per issue (except for electronic magazines) (Canada Council).

Both Books in Canada and Lettres québécoises obviously met the criteria since both began to be subsidized by the Council within three years of their inaugural issues. Nevertheless, for the reasons explained above, throughout this study, I refer to Books in Canada and Lettres québécoises as “magazines” or “periodicals,” not as “journals.”

What follows now are in-depth reflections on a number of factors: Books in Canada’s reputation in scholarly circles and its position in terms of high and popular culture; similarities and differences between Lettres québécoises and Books in Canada in terms of their stated objectives and debates, their respective histories and the cultural work that each does; the influence that editorial interests and biases exert on the nature of a periodical’s contents; the
agency of book reviews when considered as a form of *paratext*; the ways that a book reviewer’s writing style can affect a reader’s reception of the book under review; the meaning and cultural agency of a selection of the magazine’s front covers; the nature of the relationship editors of periodicals have with their readers and how precarious that can be, what mark *Books in Canada* has left on this country’s book and literary culture and finally, what some of the factors are that may have led to the demise of this versatile, vibrant companion to Canada’s reading public.
i. The Founding of *Books in Canada*

By 1971, Canadians were finally able to sense that their country could actually have a cultural identity of its own. Twenty years had passed since the Massey Commission had first recommended that the government create a Canada Council for the Arts and a National Library (Vance 366). As Jonathan Vance reminds us in *A History of Canadian Culture*, it was the deaths of two of Canada's wealthiest businessmen and its foremost patrons of the arts, Isaak Walton Killam in 1955 and Sir James Dunn, a year later, that provided Ottawa with what Vance calls "a huge pot of money," $100 million in inheritance taxes, finally making it possible for Canada's Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent to respond to the Massey recommendations (366). In 1957, Parliament passed the Canada Council Act, "to foster and promote the study and enjoyment of, and the production of works in the arts, humanities and social sciences" (Vance 366-7).

In 1971, hosting the World's Fair, *A Man and His World*, was still fresh in the minds of Canadians. Montreal's Expo 67 had drawn international attention to Canada's history, geography and culture while centennial projects in cities and towns across the country, not to mention Bobby Gimby's centennial song still playing on the radio from time to time, continued to provide Canadians with the mirror they needed to see themselves as having a distinct cultural identity.

The year 1967 was also good for book culture with the Canada Council offering publishers "grants for individual literary titles" (MacSkimming 408). As MacSkimming notes, the centennial year saw the start-up of several publishing houses – House of Anansi Press, Hurtig Publishers, Talon Books, Tundra Books, and the University of Manitoba Press (408). Three years later, in December 1970, the Ontario Conservative party created the Royal Commission on Book

According to MacSkimming, it was Marsh Jeanneret, Director of University of Toronto Press who, as one of the three members of the Commission, was responsible for “Canada’s unique system of public support for private-sector publishing” (113). Jeanneret wrote the final report, Canadian Publishers and Canadian Publishing (1973), a document that “laid the foundations for three decades of innovative public policy, both federally and provincially, by making a detailed and cogent case for government support” (113). The plight of McClelland and Stewart Inc. may well have stressed the urgency of that support.

In 1971, Jack McClelland, whose company had been a major force in publishing books by Canada’s foremost authors, was deeply in debt. Its owner saw no choice but to put the company up for sale. In response to the news, and the heavy publicity around it, the Commission declared McClelland and Stewart “a national asset” and loaned the company almost a million dollars, with no interest to pay for the initial five years (MacSkimming 149). MacSkimming described the offer as “unprecedented”:

Book publishing would no longer be regarded as a business like any other; it was a key cultural industry, producing what economists call ‘merit goods,’ things of intrinsic value to society that must not be abandoned to the mercies of the market. (149)

Books in Canada magazine was, therefore, a product of the times. Clery’s initiative in launching the magazine was a prescient response to government policies intended to acknowledge the fact that Canadian books were essential to the building of Canadian culture. In his editorials and through the content he chose to publish, Clery expressed his intentions to use the magazine to promote his own declared bias “in favour of Canadian books” (“Editorial” July 1971 5).
Nevertheless, when he founded *Books in Canada*, it would not likely have occurred to him that he was doing something called “cultural work.” Born in Dublin, Ireland in 1924, Reginald Valentine Clery was a radio broadcaster in Ireland before volunteering for the army. In an article in memory of Clery written for the “Lives Lived” section of the *Globe and Mail*, Sandra Martin notes that according to Clery’s sister, an Irish historian, the Clerys are descendents of the O’Clerys, “which in Gaelic means lovers of books” (Lives A22). After WWII, Clery toured Ireland for two years “with a puppet opera show” and worked for the British Broadcasting Corporation and for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation bureau in London, England before moving to Canada in 1965 (Dobbs 3, Marshall 2). A free-lance journalist and columnist, Clery wrote articles for most of Canada’s major magazines and newspapers, and published at least thirteen books that included two picture books about Canada and an anthology of Canadian journalism (Dobbs 4).

As an energetic producer for CBC radio in Toronto in the late 1960s, Clery originated the phone-out radio program format with *As It Happens*. Comments made by Douglas Marshall, *Books in Canada*’s first managing editor, its second editor and a close friend of Clery, attest to Clery’s visionary talent with regard to *As It Happens*. Marshall refers to a note from Richard Lubbock in which the latter recalls that “Clery stretched the technology at the time to its limit. They did the first few shows with the Bell engineers on hand, and phone wires rigged loosely around the studio” (Marshall 2). Clery exploited the era’s most advanced communication technology to enable the show to stay on air for “6 ½ whole hours on Monday evenings” and “to continue broadcasting in two-hour chunks throughout the night across the country” (Marshall 2). Phone-in radio shows, those in which listeners are invited to call the hosts and broadcast their personal opinions on the radio, were common in those days. Clery’s adaptation of that standard format, so that it allowed the radio audience to listen in as the radio host phoned out to
interviewees across the country, provided the template for the current *As It Happens* program during which the radio hosts interview people from all over the world, that still airs weekday evenings on CBC radio.

In the early 1970’s, after resigning from the CBC, Clery worked as a free-lance writer and he turned from the world of broadcasting to the world of book publishing. The unprecedented support of book publishing by both levels of government in Canada during the late 1960s and early 1970’s had created a need for far more reviews of, and articles about, Canadian books and their authors than any of the existing literary magazines such as the *Tamarack Review*, or political and general-interest magazines like *Canadian Forum* and *Saturday Night*, or even the review sections of the major Canadian newspapers would ever be able to cover. Randall Ware, in “Et Tu George Anthony” addresses this dearth of reviewing. Ware refers to a report by Clery entitled *Media and Response* in which Clery notes that the *Toronto Star’s* book page offered the best coverage in terms of Canadian content, “yet they managed to review or notice only about six percent of the Canadian books published annually” and “most periodicals enjoyed figures substantially lower than those of the *Star.*” Ware adds that “it does not come as a surprise to learn that books are published in this country that people never find out about” (Ware 6). Clery saw what was needed to remedy the situation. He launched *Books in Canada*.

In a eulogy for Clery, Marshall remarks: “I was able to witness Val’s creative powers myself in early 1971... Val had a plan. A hare-brained plan to be sure... We would save the Canadian book industry and put Canadian literature on the world map by launching a national book-review magazine” (2). Less than two months after the provincial government’s announcement, Clery had the introductory issue of *Books in Canada* in circulation and available free at bookstores across the country.
The associations being made on the front cover of the May 1971 introductory issue suggest that Clery intended from the 'get-go' to ensure that his magazine would be a key player in the evolution of the nation’s cultural identity. The cover features a photograph of Mordecai Richler with a caption that reads “courtesy of McClelland & Stewart.” The McClelland and Stewart publishing house, 75% of which is now owned by the University of Toronto, was at that time and still is one of Canada’s most respected publishing houses. By coupling its name with the picture of Richler, an already internationally-renowned Canadian author at the time, Clery is establishing the magazine’s association with prominent Canadian authors and their publishers. In addition, the large (approximately 36-font) thin-lined heading announcing the arrival of Richler’s novel Saint Urbain’s Horseman as “A Major Canadian Novel” establishes an aura of perspicacity around the magazine’s contents. Furthermore, Clery establishes a clear connection between the magazine and respected Canadian publishers and literary prizes by vaunting in this first issue the reputation and recent literary accomplishment of reviewer David Godfrey, describing him as “one of the founders of New Press” whose novel, The New Ancestors “recently won the Governor-General’s Award” (Godfrey 2).

The front page of this introductory issue also announces an intention to play an active part in the development of the country’s book and literary culture. Serving as what is in the magazine industry often referred to as a “teaser” – it teases the reader into searching for the article – a one-and-a-half-inch wide strip directly beneath the title of the new magazine contains the names of several well-known Canadian authors and one artist: Robertson Davies, Paul Kane, Al Purdy, Alden Nowlan, David Helwig, Hugh Garner and Pierre Vallières. Indeed, as Marshall writes, contributors to the first seven issues, all of them edited by Clery with the assistance of Marshall, include Marian Engel, Norman Depoe, George Woodcock, Jack Batten, Margaret Laurence, Jane Rule, bpNichol, Michael Ondaatje, Rudy Wiebe and, Marshall adds, “Barbara Frum and
somebody called Margaret Atwood” (“Val Clery & the Original Books in Canada” 2). The reputation of these writers, and media personality in the case of Frum, is evidence of the support the magazine was receiving from accomplished Canadians. Clery was presenting his magazine to readers as a significant new link in what MacSkimming calls “the literary continuum” (“Idea to Reader,” 1).

This kind of cultural work can be viewed through a bourdieuvian lens. For example, we might say that Clery was exploiting the “institutional cultural capital” of major Canadian publishers, and the “symbolic” capital of the country’s acclaimed authors (Bourdieu “Forms” 50). In addition, Clery’s efforts to associate the new magazine with the “image of respectability and honourability” and the “reputation for competence” of these authors and institutions (Bourdieu Distinction 291) were as significant for their potential to augment Canada’s cultural capital as was the founding of the magazine itself. Moreover, by featuring not only reviews of works by Canada’s established writers, artists and personalities but also contributions by them, Clery was positioning his magazine as a respectable source for readers of what Bourdieu calls “embodied cultural capital,” that is the culture that a person acquires through his or her upbringing and education (Bourdieu “Forms” 48-49).

Clery’s editorial decisions and choices appealed to and nurtured a cultural identity that was distinctly Canadian and eclectic in nature. According to Sandra Martin, Clery “approached Canada like a commando, making daring raids against sacred cows, establishment darlings and entrenched bureaucracies” (Lives A22). Using puns in the titles of reviews appears to be one of his favourite ways of creating a circle of readers whose tastes leaned to “popular” culture rather than what Vance calls “elite” culture (viii). As Marshall tells it, for Clery, “Canadian society as a whole was far too polite and needed to be shaken up by a healthy dose of irreverence. ‘Kicking against the pricks’ was his private term for it” (Marshall “Val Clery & the Original Books in
Canada 2-3), a phrase that would later reappear as the title of a book by John Metcalf (1982). According to Martin, Clery “despised humbug, pretension, nepotism (which he called logrolling) and nationalism of any stripe, cultural or otherwise” and he thought “Canadian letters should be debated, not worshipped” (A22). If it is true that there is an “alternating current in the Canadian mind, as reflected in the writing, between two moods, one romantic, traditional and idealistic, the other shrewd, observant and humorous,” as Northrop Frye once noticed, then Clery was designing the magazine to encourage the latter of the two moods during its inaugural years (Frye 220). The former would emerge more forcefully some thirty years later, with the arrival of Olga Stein as Editor.

The December 1971 issue of Books in Canada is an example of Clery’s version of Frye’s “shrewd, observant and humorous approach” (Frye 220). Punned headings in the issue range from “Cultural Strip-off,” an unfavourable review of a book entitled Great Canadian Comic Books to “Toujours L’Armoire,” a review of a book featuring the early furniture of French Canada. “Dancing Images” considers two books about the National Ballet of Canada, while in “Jean D’Art,” Harry A. Malcolmson reviews a book about The National Gallery of Canada, written by its director, Jean Sutherland Boggs. Clery’s selection of books in this one issue alone and his playful editorial treatment of them promote the same eclectic reading and irreverent attitude towards literature for which Clery himself was well-known and remembered. After all, the topics of his own books and essays reveal his eclectic tastes, ranging as they do from doors and windows to dragons, from ghost stories to cooking and from media response surveys to an anthology of journalism (Dobbs 4).

In the November 1971 issue, Clery uses reverse psychology to continue to inject a sense of irreverence into the Canadian cultural identity while at the same time establishing the magazine’s reputation as a significant site for controversial discussions about published books. For example,
above a subscription form to *Books in Canada* that fills the bottom third of the inside back cover is a smaller, black and white replica of the form as it was supposedly received by *Books in Canada*. On the lines designated for the subscriber’s name and address are written the following handwritten comments: “You idiots are really on an ego trip if you think anyone with sense will pay $9.95 for your anti-American ramblings.” The dissenting “subscriber” squiggles an arrow downward to an added comment: “It would be interesting to know who is financing this garbage” (Clery November 1971 31). Below the illustration is *Books in Canada*’s response in which readers are directed to the larger, two-colour subscription form: “Okay, not everybody likes us (above). But financially, we’re completely independent. Honest. We’re counting on the support (see below) of all of you who don’t happen to think this magazine is garbage” (Clery November 1971 31). Clery’s candidness and humour – the action of publishing a disparaging comment and countering it with a fact, emphasized by the one-word pledge of honesty – engage readers. At the same time, they work to establish the magazine in the minds of readers as a site of healthy, pointed, debates concerning Canadian books.

In an editorial published less than a year after the magazine was founded, Clery writes that most of the magazine’s income came from advertisements purchased by book publishers and from subscriptions purchased by libraries and educational institutions (“Editorial” Feb. 1972 3). He also notes that the magazine had received “small grants” from both levels of government (“Editorial” Feb. 1972 3). The magazine began receiving funding from the province of Ontario six months after it was founded, as indicated by acknowledgements published in the masthead of the January and June 1972 issues. With the magazine’s financial viability relatively stable, Clery concentrated in his early editorials lobbying on behalf of government support for the country’s authors, and on exposing the “virtual monopoly” that large American publishing houses had over Canada’s book market. In the July 1971 issue, for example, he writes that while the magazine’s
first bias is in favour of Canadian books... our second bias is in favour of Canadian
writers... Our contention is, not that Canadian writers are better or worse than writers
of other countries but that because of historic economic circumstances they are
uniquely denied the encouragement, the response and the reward that is essential to the
growth of diverse literary quality. (Clery July 1971 5)

Clery is certain that people “will buy and read” Canadian books if they are “given a fair
evaluation of them and access to them” (July 1971 5). He acknowledges that his new magazine
can never expect to “achieve any miracles of regeneration” but can only hope to start “some kind
of chain reaction” (July 1971 5). The aim of his magazine is “to bring every worthwhile
Canadian book to the attention of readers wherever there is a library or bookstore, and honestly
to point to its virtues and its faults in relation to other Canadian books and even to other imported
books of its kind” (Clery July 1971 5). He concludes this inaugural editorial by acknowledging
that the magazine still has some distance to go before achieving “the ease of style, the range of
reviewers, and the trans-Canadian reach” to which he and his editorial team aspire (Clery July
1971 5). Essentially, the editorial is an expression of the mission statement of the Books in
Canada enterprise. It states the goals and standards that Clery has set for the magazine, while
promising fairness and accuracy in the cultural work that it does.

Randall Ware’s essay in the first issue attacks the excessive promotion by the Toronto
Telegram, and by many of Canada’s book publishers, of American and other international books,
to the detriment of Canadian books. In his entry for the Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada,
George L. Parker writes that “by 1970 educational publishing was in a state of chaos, in part
because of foreign competition and because Ontario had deregulated its compulsory textbook
lists. Just as expectations were at a peak for the [publishing] industry, overexpansion and
inefficiency took their toll” (911). The allusion in the title of the review “Et tu George Anthony”
to Brutus’ betrayal of Caesar suggests the belief that the country’s newspapers were adding to the “chaos” that reigned in the publishing industry by betraying Canadian titles in favour of books by well-known American authors. The essay itself is a comment on a poster, reduced and reprinted next to Ware’s article, that the Telegram had sent out to Canadian publishing houses to announce the transfer of journalist George Anthony from the newspaper’s travel section to the position of book page editor. It shows a young, hip Anthony reading The Sensual Man while perched on a stack of some fourteen books, all of them by renowned American authors. The poster’s heading reads: “This man hobnobs with Erich Segal, Harold Robbins, Jacqueline Susanne, Allen Drury, Ann Rand, Irving Wallace and Mary McCarthy” (Books in Canada May 1971 6). Ware argues against the message of the image:

It is impossible to believe that Canadian books are inferior to any other books. Certain books may be badly written or boring, but there are plenty of books written by people everywhere like that. The only advantage that the Canadian book has is its relevance. I think that it is safe to assume that Canadians increasingly realize that they are part of a unique experience. The country is not so much in a state of being as it is in a state of becoming. And we need our literature, as well as all the arts, to help us interpret our experience. We need to promote our literature in order to be sure that everyone knows of its existence. (6)

He adds to this declaration of cultural nationalism:

... just as surely as Vietnam pushes Canadian issues like Indian ghettos or the pillaging of our resources by foreign interests to the back pages of our newspapers, so does the already over-exposed American book push the Canadian book into oblivion. Newspapers have to accept the fact that they are opinion-makers, not just reporters.

(Ware 6)
The essay, prompted by what Ware rightly identified as the “delicate situation in Canadian publishing” vis-à-vis the threat of American dominance of the country’s educational and literary market is, obviously, a plea to newspapers to do their part to promote Canadian books (6). Moreover, Clery’s decision to place the essay on the left-hand page directly opposite an advertisement taken out by McClelland and Steward also reinforces the bias in favour of Canadian books that Clery is promoting.

The unimaginative but effective full-page ad for McClelland and Stewart is written entirely in capital letters. It begins with the simple statement: “WE PUBLISH CANADIAN AUTHORS. Below that are four columns of authors’ names totalling 119, listed in alphabetical order followed by “and many more” and the question, “May we send you our ‘Books in Print’ catalogue?” Clery’s placement of Ware’s essay next to an ad by one of Canada’s most respected publishers can be interpreted as obvious editorial attempts to galvanize reader support for Canadian books and their publishers.

In addition to promoting the publication and the reading of Canadian books, *Books in Canada*, under the stewardship of Clery, also promoted the cause of national unity. For Canada, the year 1971 and those during Clery’s three-year tenure as editor were uncertain in terms of national politics, more so than they were in the 1980’s and 1990’s or even than they are today with the presence in parliament of the Bloc Québécois. Serious social and political wounds inflicted by the October crisis, by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau’s controversial implementation of the War Measures Act and by the murder by a rogue cell of the FLQ (Front de libération du Québec) of Pierre Laporte, the Quebec minister of labour and immigration, were still festering. What has now become a cliché, “what is it that Quebec wants?” was at that time a catalyst for heated debates across the country.
In issues of *Books in Canada* published during this period, those debates occupied prime space. The centre-fold of the introductory issue, for example, consists of a review of Joan Pinkham's translation of Pierre Vallière's largely autobiographical novel *White Niggers of America*. Curiously, and possibly with the intention of presenting a more objective evaluation, Clery assigns the book to two reviewers, one an American, and the other a Canadian of Jamaican origin who had worked both for CBC and for the National Educational Television Network in Los Angeles. Clery prefaces their reviews with an introductory heading that runs across the top of both centrefold pages in which he explains why he assigned Vallière’s book to two reviewers and these two reviewers particularly. The heading reads:

Every so often a book appears that is so complex, so controversial to us as Canadians that it demands the attention of more than one reviewer. The reviewers will be chosen not because they may contradict each other but because they may complement each other, or because they can provide a contrast of different political, ethnic or regional viewpoints.... (Clery 18-19)

His editorial intervention here is noteworthy, first, because of its inclusive language (“us as Canadians”) and, second, because of the nationality of the reviewers. The language recalls the conclusion that Ronald Sutherland comes to in “Twin Solitudes,” Sutherland’s comparative analysis of themes common to French and English literature in Canada. His study concludes that “there does exist a single, common national mystique, a common set of conditioning forces, the mysterious apparatus of a single sense of identity (26). But it also illustrates the “légitimation institutionnelle de la littérature québécoise au Canada anglais” identified much later by Réjean Beaudoin and André Lamontagne in a retrospective article (22). With the gradual increase in Quebecois literature since the 1950's, Beaudoin and Lamontagne note among the English-
Canadian literary establishment the “intérêt, mais aussi d’inquiétude pour l’unité nationale, entendue comme la conscience d’une entité tant politique que culturelle et morale s’étendant ‘d’un océan à l’autre’” (22).

[Il] semble que la critique littéraire anglophone ait choisi globalement de défendre l’identité canadienne par un rapatriement de la littérature québécoise dans l’unité d’une seule littérature canadienne. (Beaudoin and Lamontagne 22)

The attempt at “rapatriement” of Québécois literature by the English-Canadian literary establishment is evident in comments made by Richard Bebout, the American reviewer of *White Niggers of America*:

But the book is not only a personal record. To a large degree it is also a manifesto of the FLQ, and as such it puts forward a particular political and historical point of view which should not be overlooked (. . .) Separatism, we tend to assume, is the primary concern of the FLQ. Yet one could read *White Niggers of America* from cover to cover and justifiably conclude that Pierre Vallières is not a separatist at all, were it not for the large fact that he says he is. (18)

With such a remark, the review can be read as an attempt to diffuse the rest of the country’s concern over the threat of separatism and to sustain the English-Canadian national, that is ‘d’un océan à l’autre’, imaginary. Moreover, it is an example of another observation made by Beaudoin and Lamontagne. They note that the “anglo-canadienne” literary establishment “a tenté de transposer le caractère ‘national’ des œuvres québécoises dans un context tout autre que l’expression d’une culture de dissidence dans l’ensemble canadien” (23). And indeed, C. Alexander Brown, the Jamaican-born reviewer, begins his review of Vallières’s book by advising English-Canadians “who still ask themselves ‘What does Quebec want?’” to read *White Niggers of America*. Brown observes that in reading the book: “I got the strange feeling that I
knew the man Vallières, and understood him as well as I would have if I had met him and listened to him talk at great length” (19). Thus his review supports Beaudoin and Lamontagne’s claim. It transposes the “nationalist” fervor that is at the core of Vallières’ book into a different context, that is the experience of a Jamaican like himself who has lived in the United States, thus diffusing the dissatisfaction with treatment of Quebecers by English-Canadians that is at the core of Vallières’ work. Consequently, Clery can be seen here to be promoting national unity through his choice of reviewers of *White Niggers of America* and through his endorsement of their approaches to the book.

Coming immediately after the review of Vallière’s book in the same introductory issue is “Vive la Difference,” an omnibus review by Ben Shek of three books related to the October Crisis: *Rumours of War*, by Ron Haggart and Aubrey Golden, Gérard Pelletier’s *La Crise d’Octobre*, and an English translation of Marcel Rioux’s *La Question du Québec*. Shek writes that the first two “deal specifically with the recent FLQ crisis, the latter touching only marginally on those events, while providing a broad background to them” (20). Shek finds the historical background that the first book offers concerning the use of the War Measures Act “enlightening” and criticizes Pelletier, author of the second book, for ignoring “almost completely . . . the critical views of Claude Ryan, editor of *Le Devoir*, concerning the crisis and its handling” (Shek 20). And the value of Rioux’s book is, according to Shek:

less in his summary analysis of the recent turbulent happenings than in his popularized presentation of the economic, social and cultural evolution of Quebec, from the French régime to the present. While his approach is sometimes simplistic, it has the merit of rejecting the traditional conservative-nationalist view which glosses over the responsibility of French-speaking élites for Quebec’s backwardness in many vital areas. (21)
By devoting four full pages to informing readers about recent books from Quebec dealing with the October crisis, Clery announces the magazine’s commitment to act as a key resource for readers seeking books about national concerns written from different political points of view. But then, as if to lighten the contentious atmosphere, Clery follows these four pages of reviews of serious national matters with a review entitled “Rough Draft” by Al Purdy of a book called The Art of Making Beer.

Such editorial choices and their placement show Clery in the process of creating a magazine that, while not taking itself or its contents too seriously, aimed to acquire a reputation for being serious in its attempts to both reflect and shape Canadian culture. Metaphorically speaking, he was designing the magazine as an overtly biased wrestling ring, a site where contentions are made and argued, where one argument does not always win out over another, where editors can, subtly or overtly, “fix” the fight if they wish and where readers leave the forum as winners, in that they are better informed than they were when they arrived.

Author, editor, co-founder of the Tamarack Review and managing editor of Saturday Night magazine from 1965-1967, Kildare Dobbs, in his tribute to Clery in the December 1996 issue, insists, however, that Clery was not a nationalist. Dobbs writes: “One very important aspect of Val Clery’s outlook was his strong dislike of nationalism. . . . It seems to me quite natural that he should hate nationalism, having seen it come near to destroying his native land” (4). Evidently, Clery’s nationalism is of a different sort. It comes less from personal political motivations or preferences than from a desire to encourage a body of work that would be distinctly Canadian, an expression of the form of cultural nationalism that was, according to McMaster University’s website for “Publishing and Cultural Identity,” the motivation for publishers like Jack McClelland <http://hpcanpub.mcmaster.ca/theme/publishing-and-canadian-identity>. Clery’s vision for the magazine was, as he announced in the May 1971 introductory issue, simply “to
stimulate more and better Canadian books and a growing appreciation of them here and abroad” (5).

ii. Cracks in the Foundation

As the American industrialist Henry Ford once said, “you can’t build a reputation on what you are going to do.” And the success of an enterprise consists of more than having a vision. Despite the founding editor’s original intention to create and nurture a magazine known for insightful reviews of a wide range of Canadian books, for thought-provoking debates about national concerns, and for raising readers’ awareness of as many of the country’s newest publications as possible, Books in Canada seemed to always be hounded by controversy and disparaging remarks.

Even before 1973, the year Clery resigned as editor, the magazine’s reputation had suffered serious blows from which it perhaps never entirely recovered. In his first editorial as the new editor, Douglas Marshall, Clery’s friend and former managing editor, noted that under Clery’s direction the magazine had gone from an “introductory issue of 10,000 copies to a more-or-less regular publication with an average print run of 40,000” the bulk of which “were distributed free, through some 450 bookstores across the country” (Marshall “Editorial” Oct. 1973, 3). Marshall added that in the two and a half years since the magazine had been founded, it had reviewed “more than 730 books, Canadian books every one, at least three times as many as any other publication in Canada during the same period” (Marshall “Editorial” Oct. 1973, 3, Marshall’s emphasis). As impressive as these figures were, the success they represented seemed to invite enemies, one of them being the Royal Commission on Book-Publishing itself. According to Marshall, someone on the commission had “implied” that the magazine tended “to indulge in
assassination of authors for its own sake” (Marshall “Editorial” Oct. 1973, 3). Marshall’s denial of the charge was emphatic:

The most elementary research proves that only 25% of our reviews could be described as generally unfavourable. The implication that a responsible editor would deliberately order a professional writer to fill his pen with acid, and that a responsible writer would comply, is of course a double libel. Should that implication ever appear in print, *Books in Canada* will immediately take action – even though the defendants turn out to be such an august body as Ontario’s Royal Commission on Book-Publishing. (Marshall “Editorial” Oct. 1973, 3)

This was, according to Marshall, one of two “malicious and highly damaging canards about *Books in Canada*” that had been repeated so often that they were gradually becoming “accepted as established truth” (Marshall “Editorial” Oct. 1973, 3).

Clery, who was still editor at the time the accusations were made, responded with an editorial in which he discussed “editorial freedom.” He responded that “in general, we try to extend to our reviewers the same freedom which we seek to maintain for ourselves,” a freedom that, he made clear, includes being free from bowing to pressure from publishers seeking positive reviews of their books (Clery “Editorial” Feb. 72, 3). Clery’s defence is the notion that the magazine is only one of many participants contributing to critical debate concerning Canadian writing:

If Canadian writing is to be the valid expression of a Canada that has at last come of age, it must be measured in adult terms, persistently, honestly, passionately, and from every point of view. We believe that we are contributing to that process. But we are aware that we can only contribute as long as we can maintain our editorial freedom intact before the pressures and sanctions of commerce, of coterie, or of excessive patriotism. Without absolute
editorial freedom, *Books in Canada* would not be worth picking up, free or otherwise.

(“Editorial” Feb. 72, 3)

The accusations of self-serving motives and a lack of fairness that Clery and Marshall were up against are unavoidable in any activity that involves an evaluation process. According to Doris Cowan, former *Books in Canada* Acting Editor (Jan. – March 1988) and Editor (April 1988 – June/July 1990), ever since the notion of writing about recently published books was first acted upon, going back to the 1600s in England and Europe, there has been doubt about the possibility of achieving fairness and objectivity when it comes to book reviews, of writing honest reviews. Cowan addresses the conundrum in her opinion piece entitled “What’s in a Name?” published in the special May 1991 twentieth-anniversary issue of *Books in Canada*. After examining the evolution of the practice of book reviewing, first in general, and then in Canada specifically, she suggests a return to the anonymous reviewing common to the small 19th century British literary communities as a potential solution (Cowan 30-32). It is a practice “whose time has not yet passed,” she writes, but a practice that she admits she was “too chicken” to implement when she was editing *Books in Canada*. “Everybody argued that it wouldn’t work” she says, and then she wonders, tongue-in-cheek, whether it might have had she made the suggestion “anonymously” (Cowan 31, 32).

If she had been around some twenty years earlier to make that suggestion, Clery and Marshall might have given it serious consideration especially in light of the second canard that Marshall was seeking to put to rest in his October 1973 editorial. The accusation that the magazine was “inbred” and “depended on a limited and repetitive cast of contributors” was, according to Marshall, “ignorant nonsense” (3). He acknowledges that “our quest for regional and intellectual variety among our reviewers has sometimes been at the expense of those standards of competence in reviewing to which we naturally aspire” (3). Noting that the
magazine has worked with over 120 reviewers “drawn from every province,” he adds that “at least a score of those were appearing in a national magazine for the first time and perhaps a dozen have since gone on to become regular contributors to other periodicals” (3). Indeed, my own unofficial survey of reviews published in the first two years shows Marshall’s statistics to be accurate and at 25% even to err on the side of caution. Perhaps at the root of the toxins that clung to the magazine’s reputation was the fact that those who were the target of the negative reviews had relatively high profiles in the Canadian writing community.

For many a young aspiring author, a negative review would be difficult to accept, no matter how confident one might be of one’s talent. Margaret Atwood’s present life-partner, Graeme Gibson, had his share of negative reviews in the magazine. In a review of Gibson’s Communion, published in the January 1972 issue, Isaac Bickerstaff – the pseudonym adopted by Don Evans, a journalist and artist living in Collingwood, Ontario at the time – calls the protagonist of the author’s previous novel, Five Legs, “a watered-down version” of Malcolm Lowry’s “mescal-tormented Geoffrey Firmin” (9). Bickerstaff, whose biography describes him as “a former newspaper editor,” and who explains that his choice of pseudonym was because it was “more interesting than his own” and that he admires Jonathan Swift (Clery Feb. 1972, 4), was also known at that time for the line-drawings and illustrations, similar to many of those published in Britain’s Punch magazine, that he provided to complement the content of the magazine. Bickerstaff/Evans adds in his review that now, with Communion, Gibson demonstrates that “. . . left to his own devices and those of the nouvelle [sic] compressionistes whose late-1950s prose style he had borrowed, he had absolutely nothing to say” (9).

Similarly, and as discussed below in greater detail, reviewer Jim Christie, a recent new Canadian from the United States, is not at all kind to Gibson’s Eleven Canadian Novelists Interviewed by Graeme Gibson, when he compares it to “dry stuffing” in the May/June/July
1973 issue. The *Canadian Encyclopedia* notes that at that time, Gibson had begun a literary resources guide and was concurrently developing the Book and Periodical Development Council (BPDC). According to Carole Gerson and Jacques Michon, the BPDC was officially formed in 1975 “as an umbrella group to encourage communication between organizations across the trade and to present a coordinated lobby to government” (195). Originally consisting of the Canadian Booksellers’ Association, the Canadian Library Association, the Canadian Periodical Publishers’ Association, the Independent Publishers’ Association, the Canadian Book Publishers’ Council and the Writers’ Union of Canada, “the BPDC advocated on many fronts to increase the cultural and market profile of Canadian publications . . .” (Gerson and Michon 195). Publicly criticizing a leading advocate of Canadian book publishing not once but twice may not have been a wise decision at that particular moment in the magazine’s development.

Susan Zimmerman did her part to continue making enemies for the magazine. In a review of *I Am Watching*, by Graeme Gibson’s wife Shirley Gibson, published in the same issue as Marshall’s editorial, Zimmerman’s pen does indeed drip poison when she writes that Gibson’s book “is strongly influenced by such poets as Atwood and Ondaatje, but this need not condemn it” (30).

As MacSkimming’s study of the publishing industry makes clear, the Gibsons were among several budding Canadian authors, including Peter Such, Margaret Atwood, and Michael Ondaatje who worked with Dave Godfrey in the founding years of Anansi Press (MacSkimming 180-187). Could the scurrilous remarks about the magazine that Marshall takes issue with have something to do with the fact that some of the reviewers in *Books in Canada*, and the Editors who published their reviews, seemed not to care that the maligned author was closely associated with a young publishing company, or that both Atwood and Ondaatje had each contributed a
least one review to the magazine in its start-up days? In Clery’s, and later Metcalf’s, words, had
Clery and Marshall picked the wrong “pricks” to kick against?

Speculation aside, there can be no doubt that the rise of the magazine’s reputation was
hampered by the type of bad feelings that are difficult to avoid in a small literary community like
that of Canada. In “What’s Wrong With Book Reviewing in Canada,” Carolyn Van der Meer
ponders the reasons why Canadian reviewers are often “fence-sitters”: “... it’s about the fear of
watching your reputation dissolve because you’ve pissed off the wrong person in that literary
community – maybe someone who can make or break you” (37-38). The same thing could be
said of the magazine that publishes the negative reviews. Clery and Marshall put their
magazine’s reputation at risk when they published reviews such as those described above by
reviewers who were not “fence-sitters.” Unfortunately, the attitude of the literary community
towards the magazine, the attitude that Marshall challenged, hounded Books in Canada right
through the 1980’s, long after Clery and Marshall had moved on. David Staines’ comment to a
major literary conference in 1986 suggests that it would be an attitude that would be difficult, if
not impossible, to change.

The remark by Staines appears in Problems of Literary Reception/Problèmes de
réception littéraire, a compilation of papers presented at a conference organized by the Research
Institute for Comparative Literature at the University of Alberta, October 1986 edited by E.D.
Blodgett and A. G. Purdy and published two years later. As Purdy writes in his introductory
“Présentation,” the conference was the result of a commitment made two years earlier by a group
of researchers, acting under the auspices of the Institut de recherches en littérature comparée.
The group set out to “préparer une histoire, non des littératures canadiennes, mais de l’institution
telle qu’elle s’est développée au Canada depuis les origines jusqu’à nos jours” (1). To arrive at
this history, the group decided to organize a number of conferences from 1986 to 1990, each of
which would address "un aspect particulier de l'institution littéraire considérée comme phénomène socio-historique" (Purdy 1). It was decided that the first conference would address problems concerning literary reception in Canada (1). The conference was a timely attempt to give a formal structure to comparative literary criticism in Canada. Presenters at that first conference included a group who were to become influential literary scholars, among them Carole Gerson, Richard Giguère, E. D. Blodgett, Lucie Robert, Donna Bennett, Itamar Even-Zohar, Douglas Barbour, Jacques Michon and David Staines. Undoubtedly, the papers given at the conference, and published two years later, would help to shape attitudes of those attending as well as those of Canadian literature researchers who would later read the proceedings.

In “Reviewing Practices in English Canada,” Staines assesses book-reviewing practices during the 1980’s and the number of public venues for serious book reviews, and finds them “lamentable” (Staines 62). He mentions Books in Canada, but only to cast it as “a journal” that perhaps “does not deserve mention” given that “its pages are often devoted to the spectacle of natural adversaries happily denouncing one another’s publications” (Staines 63). That Staines recognizes the need for “public venues for serious book reviews” can be taken as a clear indication that book reviews and the periodicals that publish them, do important cultural work. His dismissal of Books in Canada was, however, a clear indication that he did not think that this magazine was doing worthwhile work. In terms of the present study, an investigation into what may have prompted him to target Books in Canada serves to highlight a part of the magazine’s cultural work.

The conference at which Staines made his remark took place in October, 1986 and certain reviews and letters to the editor published in the preceding issues lend credence to Staines’ contention. For example, a letter published in the October 1977 issue signals the type of reviewing that Staines is taking about. Sandra Martin writes that she “is appalled by David
McFadden’s silly, whining piece about John Newlove’s anthology, *Canadian Poetry: The Modern Era*” (Letters 41-42). In the May 1977 review to which she is referring, entitled “On not making the Top Thirty,” McFadden begins by quoting a certain poet and former railroad worker Dudley Fuddington who had once told him that: “Writing poetry is like working on the railroad... It’s all seniority” (18). McFadden informs the fictive Fuddington that the reason Fuddington has not received more attention than he has is because the latter has not been writing long enough. Had he been, then he “could have been right up there with [his] lucky but no more talented colleagues such as Milton Acorn, David Helwig, George Bowering, Gwendolyn MacEwen, and even John Newlove himself” (18). McFadden’s review is soaked in satire that, as Martin suggests, betrays his disappointment that his own work had been disqualified because it did not fit the temporal framework of the anthology. McFadden does put “fooling around” aside in time to acknowledge that “it isn’t a bad anthology and should sell well,” but then follows that faint praise with a précis count of how many pages are devoted to which authors: “Al Purdy appears to be on top with 13 pages, followed closely by Irving Layton and Margaret Avison with 12 each, P. K. Page, James Reaney, and Leonard Cohen with 11 each, and Margaret Atwood, Alden Nowlan, and Earle Birney with 10 each” (McFadden 18). His “only serious criticism” is, he writes, that “nowhere except for a brief passing allusion buried deep in the preface, is reference made to the fact that the book only represents poetry written in one of the two Canadian languages: English” (McFadden 19).

Apart from the “whining” that Martin senses going on here, McFadden’s review is a good example of a review doing cultural work. It draws attention to the publishing process, reminding readers that the making of anthologies is itself a form of marketing. Anthologies promote some authors to the detriment of others. The discussion highlights the fact that anthologies tend to anoint the already anointed, and it underscores the stakes that are involved for authors who are
included and for those who are not. Similarly, Martin's letter does cultural work first by bringing readers back to the review, and thus the anthology, and second, by inviting a second reading of them from her angle.

A review of Seymour Mayne's *Essential Words: An Anthology of Jewish Canadian Poetry* by Kathleen Moore published in the November 1985 issue, also lends credence to Staines' comment. Acclaimed Canadian author Adele Wiseman, a contributor to the anthology, responds from Toronto in the March 1986 issue: "It is insulting and certainly has nothing to do with literary considerations to read a review in which I am told what I should write and what I must not write... on pain of incurring the displeasure of the people with fragile literary resources and restricted as well as restrictive consciousness who are, as she obviously sees herself, the legitimate Canadians" (40). Marya Fiamengo writes from West Vancouver that she read the review "with mixed feelings of incredulity and dismay" (40-41). She concludes her letter suggesting that Moore "might do better to give up on books about Jewish culture and religion as such books err, as Moore has pointed out, in the directions of the recondite and the rigours of metaphysics. She might well consider books on comparative cuisine" (Fiamengo 40). Moore, given room in the same Letters section to reply, accuses Fiamengo of "twisting" her words "to create an excuse for hers" (41). She defends herself against "insinuations" of "callousness on my part concerning the Holocaust" by noting that she had "co-authored a children's play for a Montreal Synagogue – Samson in modern dress as the hero of a Jewish freedom movement in Russia" and "written a poetry course for a Montreal school program, subsequently used by special request as part of a children's educational project on the Holocaust in some Massachusetts elementary schools" (Moore 41).

The adversarial and back-biting tone that Staines remarked on is certainly noticeable in these letters and reviews. In terms of the present dissertation, equally noteworthy is that fact that
they illustrate ways that the periodical works upon as well as reflects the cultural identity of the people who read them. The contributions discussed above illustrate the way that letters and book reviews can act as catalysts for reflection on the place that Jewish literature occupies in their readers’ personal sense of Canada’s book and literary culture. They serve to remind readers of what Michael Greenstein calls “Montreal’s third solitude,” those writers who “mediate between English and French solitudes,” A.M. Klein and Irving Layton among them (Greenstein, Solitudes 15). Indeed, Greenstein, in his overview of Jewish literature in Canada and in his discussion of the “highly problematic nature of the formation and formulation of Jewish Canadian identity” designates Seymour Mayne, along with David Solway and Robyn Sarah, as poets whose work continues to assert an English Jewish cultural presence in Montreal, with “the major francophone authors” Naïm Kattan, Monique Bosco and Régine Robin ensuring that presence in French (550). Reviews and letters in Books in Canada such as those discussed above thus have the potential to provoke consideration among their readers of whom and what contemporary Canadian book and literary culture can and does consist of.

A letter from J. D. Carpenter, a Toronto poet and book reviewer, published in the same March 1986 issue, also validates Staines’ remark. It asks readers to “Find your back issue of Books in Canada October, 1985” and to read Carpenter’s review of Nanoose Bay Suite by Kevin Roberts. Carpenter wants readers to tell him whether or not he has been slandered by Susan Yates, a peace activist writing from Gabriola Island, British Columbia, in her letter to the editor published in the January/February 1986 issue (Carpenter 41). He writes that “one gets the impression that the purpose of her letter” was less about criticizing him and more about publicizing a particular cause, that of the group of individuals who had set up camp at Nanoose Bay, British Columbia, in protest of the use of the bay as a joint Canadian and American underwater military test site for torpedo warfare (Carpenter 41). Carpenter’s response to Yates’
letter does socio-cultural work by drawing attention to the protests against the Canadian Forces Maritime Experimental Test Range at Nanoose Bay that Yates refers to. Furthermore, Carpenter’s heated reaction to Yates’ letter – she begins with the claim that *Books in Canada* “chose the wrong person” to review Roberts’ collection (39) – does cultural work when it sends readers back to Carpenter’s review in order to consider it and Roberts’ poetry in terms of Yates’ comments, and in terms of Carpenter’s suggestion that Yates has used Roberts’ poems as a forum from which to express her own views. My own opinion is that such a consideration would validate Carpenter’s contention that in her letter Yates does indeed, as Carpenter claims she does, make a “a self-serving and irresponsible accusation” (Carpenter 41).

Al Purdy, in a review of *An Exchange of Gifts: Poems New and Selected*, a collection of poetry by Alden Nowlan, published posthumously, compares Nowlan to Milton Acorn, calling Acorn “a ranting madman who wrote shit, then marvellous stuff in the next breath” and commenting that “Nowlan never wrote shit, but never rose above a certain practised mid-excellence either. (But few can do that)” (19). According to Purdy, the collection is representative of Nowlan’s best work, noting that “[m]any of his poems are obvious and pointless, with small reason for existence” (19). Purdy concludes that the review is his way of bidding farewell to Nowlan, someone whom he “knew and yet never knew” (19). This review of the work of one nationally-known poet by another is surprising for its ambivalence and for the disconcertingly faint nature of Purdy’s praise.

The above is a sampling selected from many reviews and letters to the editor published in *Books in Canada* during the 1980’s that could be used to substantiate Staines’ claim. At the same time, the presence of negative reviews and outraged letter writers suggests a vibrant, astute editorial board, one that seeks to produce a magazine that is confident enough to do cultural work by provoking intellectual reactions and reconsiderations, and by publicising controversial
comments concerning Canadian books, and reviews of those books, rather than merely promoting cultural nationalism.

It is worth noting that many of the negative letters are directed at reviews of books of poetry. In “Going Negative,” an article published in Poetry, Jason Guriel writes that when a book of poetry “receives a tough verdict, we often label the review ‘negative’ and speculate about the reviewer’s motives, the agenda behind the takedown” (555). We see it as a form of “bullying” (Guriel 555). This certainly appears to be what the letter-writers quoted earlier are suggesting. Guriel points out that this is often not the way we react to negative reviews of movies or music CDs or movies, perhaps because we think movie critics are “merely wrong” while poetry critics “go negative” (555). He wonders whether or not negativity “needs to be the poetry reviewer’s natural posture . . .” and concludes that “for the love of poetry” reviewers ought to “be sceptical” (Guriel 555).

Michael Smith, editor of Books in Canada during the 1980’s, demonstrated a willingness to publish reviews that were not always favourable. Many were controversial, thought-provoking reviews. He published them even if, ultimately, they upset some readers, especially those in the poetry community, and even though they may have harmed the reputation for fair-minded reviews that Smith’s predecessors, Douglas Marshall, editor from 1974 to December 1980, and Clery, from 1971 to September 1973, had worked hard to establish with the magazine. Yet the decision to publish negative letters and provocative reviews may simply have been a way to test the marketing premise that ‘controversy sells’.

Staines’ assessment of the limited influence that the presence of Books in Canada had on book and literary culture in Canada could have also stemmed from the high culture/popular culture debate circulating in the 1980’s. Until late in the 20th century, embers of the rhetoric of excellence as expressed through the content and style of Northrop Frye’s criticism in the many
reviews he wrote throughout the 1950s for the "Letters in Canada" section of the University of Toronto Quarterly continued to burn, at least in academia. Staines made his remark a good twenty years after popular culture, including the mass media, had achieved the recognition it presently enjoys as a legitimate field of academic studies, in Canada thanks at least in large part to Canadian media history scholars like Mary Vipond. In her discussion of mass communication and culture, Vipond notes that there is "considerable literature" that deals with the negative impact that mass media has on "high" culture. She writes that "according to this view, high culture challenges, stimulates and creates, while popular culture conforms, lulls and copies" (Vipond 100-101). Echoes of Tompkins' contentions about the cultural work of 19th century-American literature can be heard when Vipond explains that the mass media is not only about the communication of aesthetics but also about the communication of "society's beliefs, values, traditions – of its whole way of life" (101).

Lorraine York addresses this critical notion of mass and elite culture in her study of celebrity culture in Canada. She traces the roots of contemporary theories concerning celebrity, especially the "emptiness theory" where people are celebrities not because of their social standing or cultural expertise, but simply because they are celebrated, back to C. Wright Mills and Daniel Boorstein (York 8). She notes Graeme Turner's more recent warning that "analyses such as Boorstin's are typical of 'elite critiques of movement in popular culture' wherein 'each new shift in fashion is offered as the end of civilization as we know it, with the real motivation being an elitist distaste for the demotic or populist dimension of mass cultural practices'" (Turner 5 quoted in York 8-9). York writes that she seeks to distance herself from the disparaging attitude towards stardom that is at the basis of these earlier investigations. She turns to the work of Richard Dyer and Richard deCordova, each of them film critics, for "a definition of celebrity that at least holds open the possibility that being celebrated need not always be a negative thing,
that it can operate and signify variously within culture, and that audiences, in turn, can act and signify upon it" (11). Her reflections move theoretical considerations of celebrity culture into a more productive and positive framework. They also highlight the fundamental tenets of the popular-versus-high culture argument that may well have shaped the assessment of a magazine like Books in Canada by a scholar like Staines.

In Authors and Audiences, Popular Canadian Fiction in the Early Twentieth Century (2000) Clarence Karr signals some of the problems that encumber the reception of popular literature in a society where the literary elites privilege "high" culture. His examination of the publishing careers of five popular turn-of-the-century Canadian fiction writers including Lucy Maude Montgomery and Ralph Connor highlights the stigma that popular literature has to get past in order to achieve critical recognition. In his work, Karr draws on archives of fan mail to illustrate the strong bond that readers often felt they had with these authors despite the fact that they were ignored at the time, and for decades after, by high culture, a culture that includes academic scholars. Their popularity with readers sustains their publishing viability but tends to harm their literary reputations in scholarly circles.

By referring to Books in Canada as a "journal" then, Staines echoes the type of "high culture" expectations he has of the magazine's editorial mandate, and of the nature of its contents. Then, as now, literary journals would be considered "high culture" due to their scholarly associations. Affiliated with universities, editors of literary journals, and most contributors to the journals, are often professors of literature. Reviews in literary journals devote substantial attention to books of literary criticism and theory. Canadian Literature is one example. According to its webpage, Canadian Literature:

aims to foster a wider academic interest in the Canadian literary field, and publishes a wide range of material from Canadian and international scholars, writers, and poets.
Each issue contains a variety of critical articles, an extensive book reviews section, and a selection of original poetry. *(Canadian Literature)*

This scholarly journal, published by the University of British Columbia, was founded in 1958 by George Woodcock, a UBC lecturer at the time. *Canadian Literature* has known several editors – in addition to Woodcock, W. H. New, Eva-Marie Kröller, Laurie Ricou and Margery Fee. Because of its academic focus, it could be said to be doing "high culture" cultural work. *The Fiddlehead* is another type of literary journal that does "high culture" cultural work. Published at and partially funded by the University of New Brunswick, the majority of its pages feature original essays, stories and poetry in English by national and international writers, with each issue ending with five or six book reviews. In the high culture/popular culture debate, literary journals, because of their scholarly associations and intentions, would thus be considered "high culture."

In contrast, and as I explained in my Introduction, *Books in Canada* was a privately-owned, federally and provincially-subsidized magazine comprised almost entirely of book reviews. Its editorial board has for the most part been a mix of English professors, teachers and text editors, erudite lay-people, accomplished authors and aspiring writers. Its tables of contents set out not to "conform, lull or copy," but rather to tell motivated readers, or what Margaret Atwood calls "instigated reader[s]" (Slettedahl Macpherson 4) and former *Books in Canada* editor Norman Doidge calls "unaccidental readers" (2), about an eclectic range of recently published books. This range may include books of literary criticism and theory, but such books are not its primary concern, nor is original creative writing a major component of *Books in Canada*. Meanwhile, original poetry is present in almost every issue of *Canadian Literature*. *Books in Canada* focuses on bringing readers reviews of novels, books of poetry and of special-interest books – books for sports fans, political afficionados, handicrafters, and cooks –author
interviews and, from time-to-time, a literary essay. *Books in Canada* would be by its very nature forever destined to disappoint anyone expecting to find the type of "high culture," scholarly content that is generally associated with literary journals.
CHAPTER II:  
*Books in Canada and Lettres québécoises*

**i. Similar Cultural “Contracts”**

Editors of government-subsidized book-review periodicals enter a cultural contract with their readers, if only metaphorically, a “contract” in which they agree to respond to the cultural moment on behalf of their readers and to help to enrich that moment. If it is true, as scholars like Timothy Brennan and Benedict Anderson propose, that print media make a significant contribution to a collective’s sense of identity and of belonging to a nation by presenting manifestations of human intellectual achievement and by influencing them, then print media that is focussed on reviewing those manifestations must surely be part of that contribution. Mary Vipond’s study of the impact that mass media, that is “newspapers, general-interest magazines, movies, radio and television” (xiv) have on culture signals the reflective and productive cultural agency of other forms of media as well, such as the special-interest magazine that is the focus of the present study. Mass media are not solely about communicating culture which is, for her, “the glue that holds any society together,” but also about helping to “mould” culture through the process of selection and interpretation that they involve (101). Culture is closely linked to identity and is therefore a cornerstone of national identity:

> Without the bonds created by culture, a society cannot exist because culture explains where we have come from, how the world works and where we may go. . . . Both at the individual and the collective levels, it forms our identity, it is our common language.

(Vipond 101)

This common language and its ability to both frame and produce a cultural reality, is also at the root of special-interest media like *Books in Canada* and *Lettres québécoises*. Their founding editors, by virtue of their choices, had, figuratively speaking, entered into a contract with the
reading public to provide that public with a “framework of understanding” and to contribute to the development of their cultural and national identities. Their content is thus directive even as it is symptomatic of the times in which they emerged. Like Atwood’s Survival, published in 1972, five years after Expo 67, Clery’s founding in 1971 of Books in Canada filled what W. H. New describes as “a hunger for cultural celebration and the illusion of a clear definition of Canadian identity” on the part of English-speaking Canadians (483). Similarly, the same “constat d’existence d’une vie littéraire québécoise” that had led in the 1960s to the founding of several university-based literary journals, led sixteen years later to the founding of Lettres québécoises, “une revue consacrée à l’actualité littéraire” (Fortin 212). As Pierre Hébert writes, Lettres québécoises met the need in post-Quiet-Revolution Quebec “to be informed rather than educated” at the same time as it increased the readership for “Quebec’s national literature” (“From Censoring” 480).

In Liberation Journals: Twentieth-Century Francophone Literary Journals and the Struggle for Sovereignty, Meadow Dibble-Dieng examines three modern francophone literary journals, Les Temps Modernes (1945), Présence Africaine (1947), and Liberté (1959), for their ability to effect social and political change. She expands on Anderson’s interpretation of the role of print culture in nation-building, and on Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic capital, in order to answer such questions as “How could such unassuming, thinly circulating periodicals possibly fuel and sustain massive liberation movements?” (1). Especially helpful in understanding ways that a book-review magazine does cultural work is her examination of the ability of literary journals to assert national identities while at the same time establishing new intellectual and cultural alliances (1).

The potential for political activism that Dibble-Dieng identifies in these literary journals speaks for the nature of cultural and national agency that I attribute to Books in Canada and to
Lettres québécoises. It is important to note, however, that Dibble-Dieng focuses on the contents of literary journals that were founded by writers and political activists who had a specific political agenda in mind, for a specific audience. The agency of the literary journals she studies is easier to ascertain for two reasons: one, they are overtly activist so their cultural work on behalf of nation is more self-conscious and apparent; and two, they can be studied more easily for their effects in retrospect since half a century has passed since their publishing life. Moreover, given that they published over a shorter period of time, and consisted of fewer pages, their contents make up a smaller research corpus than the contents of either Books in Canada or Lettres québécoises.

In contrast, both Books in Canada and Lettres québécoises are private enterprises founded by professional writers rather than political activists like those in Dibble-Dieng’s study. As already noted in Chapter I, Val Clery was an Irish-born freelance writer who, while working as a producer for the CBC radio in Toronto, originated the As It Happens format. Adrien Thério, a professor, novelist, short-story writer and playwright, founded Livres et auteurs québécois in 1969, which he edited until 1973, and Lettres québécoises in 1976. Thério remained editor of the latter until 1990, and was then “Président honoraire et fondateur” until his death in 2003. André Vanasse, a close friend of Thério, has been a member of the editorial board of Lettres québécoises since Vanasse hired him in 1976, and the director of the magazine since 1990.

Clery’s declared intention was to publish Books in Canada twelve times a year but it was not long before the publication schedule was reduced to ten times and then settled into nine times a year. According to my interview with Vanasse, Thério too had hoped to publish his periodical twelve times a year (Vanasse Interview). However, he soon established the quarterly schedule that is still adhered to today. As Fortin notes, Lettres québécoises was intended to be “. . . une revue de critique, contrôlée non par des universitaires ou des journalistes, mais par des écrivains”
Similarly, and according to the eulogy that former Editor Douglas Marshall gave in memory of Clery in 1996, Clery's intention in founding Books in Canada was to offer a high-quality review that was independent of university affiliations (Marshall 3).

Both Clery and Thério had a clear vision of the role that their magazines should and would play in Canadian book and literary culture. For Clery, it was to "save the Canadian book industry and put Canadian literature on the world map by launching a national book-review magazine" (Marshall 2). Thério's vision, similar to that of Clery, was evident in the title itself of his editorial to the first edition - "Témoin de la littérature en marche," that is, to bear witness to a literature on the move, and in the editorial he published in the second edition. In the latter, he writes that Lettres québécoises was "une revue consacrée à ce qui se passe dans le domaine littéraire d'ici, qui fait des articles sur, des articles au sujet de, des articles à propos de" (Thério "Où situer" 3).

Thus, in founding their magazines, Thério and Clery were each making an implicit contract with their readers that they would create a venue that would raise readers' awareness of recently-published Canadian books and contribute to the forging of a national cultural identity.

ii. Different Cultural "Projects"

From the time they were founded, the cultural projects, that is, the actual reviewing work that each of these two review periodicals did, were different. As Thério explains to his readers, the size of Lettres québécoises and its quarterly publication schedule restricted the number of new books that could be reviewed. He therefore set out to present his readers with a variety of literature-related articles as well as reviews. Unable to provide his readers with a panorama of all the books published during a specific year, he would opt instead to offer them a fine arts smorgasbord, one that included a selection of novels and books of poetry alongside reviews of
books worthy of rereading, of plays being performed, interviews with authors, selections of original work, and other culture-related articles:

En mettant les choses au mieux, nous ne pourrons parler, dans une année, aux *Lettres québécoises* que d'une dizaine de romans et d'une dizaine de livres de poésie. Nous ne pourrons retenir que quatre ou cinq pièces de théâtre. Nous voilà donc très loin du panorama. En revanche nous parlerons des livres à revisiter, des rééditions, du théâtre qu'on joue, de différents sujets dans *Porte ouverte*. Nous publierons chaque fois une entrevue. Nous réservons un certain espace à la création et aux lettres des lecteurs.

(Thério “Où situer” 2)

In contrast, early issues of *Books in Canada* consisted primarily of reviews of all the new releases and author interviews, but not of coverage of literature-related events such as live performances of plays, as Thério saw *Lettres québécoises* doing. Nor did *Books in Canada* publish creative writing, at least not until 1990-1995, when Stuewe served as editor and initiated the “Work in Progress” feature that is discussed in Chapter III.

Both publications took advantage of magazine subsidies that resulted from the federal initiatives in the 1950's and 1960's designed to study and foster all aspects of Canadian culture. These initiatives included the *Report of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences* (1951) which eventually led to the creation of the National Library in 1953 and to the Canada Council in 1957. In his entry for the *The Canadian Encyclopedia* website, Geoffrey Hancock notes that the latter half of the twentieth century were prolific and prosperous years for literature-related periodicals in English Canada. He includes *Books in Canada* among those literary magazines which continued to foster the “critical examination of Canadian letters” that had begun in earnest in the 1960s in response to the “surging nationalism” that the Canada Council was nurturing.
Lise Gauvin, in her survey of literary periodicals in French for the online encyclopedia, places Livres et auteurs québécoises (1961 – 1982) and Lettres québécoises among the “number of useful surveys of current Quebec literary journalism” and Lettres québécoises among those that offer readers “a systematic review of current publications.” To call the contents of either of these two Quebecois periodicals “surveys” of “literary journalism” seems rather a disservice given the number of interviews and in-depth articles and reviews that each publishes. Moreover, Gauvin’s description of both fails to take into account the variety of content that Thério aimed for when he founded both of those magazines, and that prevails today in Lettres québécoises.

Similarly, in its discussion of the explosion in numbers of literary journals and review magazines that began in Canada in the 1960s, the Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada notes that Livres et auteurs québécoises and Lettres québécoises “remain the standard annual accounts of francophone books in Quebec” (569), a description that again fails to acknowledge the attention that the latter magazine has consistently given in its issues to literary festivals, prizes, publishers and to prominent scholars and personalities, in addition to books and their authors, as Thério had explicitly set out to do. Gauvin’s attention to Lettres québécoises in her article written for La revue des revues in 1987 provides more details. There, she notes that “… Lettres québécoises passe systématiquement en revue les publications courantes, rend compte de la vie littéraire et publie de nombreuses entrevues d’écrivains” (33). Elizabeth Nardout-Lafarge, in her overview of Quebecois magazines for Écrits du Canada français, describes Lettres québécoises as “la seule … qui se consacre exclusivement à la production québécoise et à l’actualité littéraire” (30). She adds that, in the case of Lettres québécoises, “on parlera donc de vulgarization plutôt que de diffusion parce que l’auteur, lui, est toujours connu” (31). However, both of these surveys of Quebecois periodicals situate Lettres québécoises as only one among a
plethora of periodicals appealing to general and specialized interests that were available to readers at the time.

Financially too, Thério's project had a difficult time of it, at least in the beginning. On a provincial level, Clery benefitted regularly from the Ontario Arts Council but Thério was initially frustrated by the bureaucratic tactics of its counterpart in Quebec. In "Lettre Ouverte au Ministre des Affaires culturelles," addressed to Jean-Paul L'Allier, Quebec's Minister of Cultural Affairs, Thério recounts with bitter humour that the several attempts he had made to meet with the Minister had been unsuccessful despite the Minister's invitation to, as Thério puts it in his September 1976 editorial, "tous ceux qui s'occupent de culture ou qui font la culture à lui faire connaître leurs idées . . . ("La politique" 2). Thério's letter to the Minister, dated "Montréal, le 31 septembre 1976," was published as an editorial in the November 1976 issue of Lettres québécoises. André Vanasse, a "collaborateur" since the journal's first issue, notes in his own editorial on the occasion of the journal's twentieth anniversary, that at one point, Thério was forced to sell his house to keep Lettres québécoises afloat (5).

Fortunately, the magazine began receiving regular provincial grants soon after, but it wasn't until Thério had been publishing regularly for three years that he and his comité de régie, which consisted of himself, Réjean Robidoux and Donald Smith, finally succeeded in convincing Naïm Kattan, then head of the Writing and Publishing Section of the Canada Council, that Lettres québécoises deserved federal recognition to the same degree as its counterparts. In an editorial published in the autumn 1980 edition of Lettres québécoises, the committee reproduced their letter to Kattan, dated "le 10 juillet 1980" for their readers. Below the letter, they included a detailed account of what it cost, at that time, to publish a magazine, "environ 17,000" dollars and a brief description of a number of their counterparts, Books in Canada first among them, together with the amount of federal subsidies each magazine was
receiving annually (Thério, Robidoux and Smith 4-5). With regard to *Books in Canada*, *Lettres québécoises*’ comité de régie informed readers that *Books in Canada*, a magazine “qui fait un peu au Canada anglais ce que fait *Lettres québécoises* au Québec,” had received $50,000 (5). In his 1996 editorial, Vanasse writes of *Lettres québécoises*:

> Quand on regarde son histoire, force est d’admettre que son destin fut sérieusement entravé par le Conseil des Arts qui refusa de la subventionner pendant plus de douze numéros. À l’époque, une revue de ce genre recevait presque à coup sûr une aide dès la parution du quatrième numéro. (5)

According to Vanasse, Thério believed that the reason the Canada Council caused him so much difficulty was because his project “avait contrecarré un projet de revue analogue concocté en haut lieu” (5). Thério complains: “Voilà pourquoi, . . ., on a tout fait pour tuer mon projet dans l’œuf, en espérant que je lâcherais prise. Si j’avais fermé boutique, alors on aurait procédé à la création d’une revue du même genre, quoique infiniment plus prestigieuse” (Vanasse 5). *Lettres québécoises* prevailed, obviously, and according to Vanasse was, at the time of his editorial, in good standing financially, and in healthy demand by its loyal subscribers (5).vii

While *Lettres québécoises* has known only two editors in its twenty-seven year history, Thério and Vanasse, *Books in Canada* was on its tenth in thirty-two years when it folded in 2008, with the changeovers rarely smooth and, as discussed in more detail in Chapter VI, sometimes even rancorous.

But what was the nature of these two cultural projects? A comparison of selections from editorials, articles and reviews in each journal’s inaugural issues suggests that while the “contracts” that each of these founding editors made with their readers were similar – to expose the national “internal frontiers” (Balibar 95) that their respective writers were staking out for readers to imagine and internalize – Clery and Thério each had a different understanding of the
project that they had given themselves. Each, in his editorial choices, exhibited tendencies to construct fundamentally different cultural identities. Twenty years later, selections from the 1991 anniversary issue of *Books in Canada* show the magazine endorsing trends in postmodern literary criticism as well as a cultural identity that embraced all of Canada’s regions. Content in the 1996 twentieth-anniversary issue of *Lettres québécoises* shows Vanasse contributing to the process of building a distinct Québécois national identity.

The following analysis is not meant to be representative of all the content and cultural work of either of these periodicals in their entirety. What I am trying to show is that the selections I look at demonstrate characteristics that can be interpreted as working not just to reflect the contemporary national and cultural status quo, but also nurture and help to construct a national cultural identity.

The editorial Clery published in the Introductory Issue of *Books in Canada* announces his project of introducing and shaping a sense of cultural and national identity for his readers. He writes that the magazine seeks to “provide a bridge between Canadian writers and readers” and that, “in the 1970’s, our national hunger seems to be to know ourselves and our society better. Books, our own books, remain the most accurate record and reflection of what kind of people we really are. We need to know that if we are to persist” (Clery “Editorial” May 1971 5). The magazine is thus presented as a site of cultural work where Canadian readers can observe and participate in the making of a national identity.

In this inaugural issue, an inset to a two-page review of Mordecai Richler’s *Saint Urbain’s Horseman* by David Godfrey illustrates one way that novelists, reviewers and editors challenged a traditional aspect of Canada’s cultural identity, in this case English Canada’s literary inferiority complex vis-à-vis the United States. The inset complements the review and presents a selection of comments made by Richler for the “Canadian Writers on Tape” series, prepared by the
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. One of the six comments by Richler that Clery chooses to include is:

Right now, this country is shaking with nationalist feeling: some of it good, some of it bad. Now, I'm fundamentally for this and I would like this country not to fragment or become part of the United States. But the dark underside of this kind of nationalism is that Canadian writing – or painting or whatever – is pushed too far in the yearning to have a culture of our own. We can – and have in the past – made too much of writers not good enough. (...) If you've written a good novel set in Pittsburgh or Montréal, they're equally acceptable. Probably Montréal is inherently more interesting. There's no built-in prejudice against Canadian writers abroad. (Richler 2)

Just as Richler's comments about nationalism and about the quality and the international status of Canada's literature are provocative, so too is Clery's act of including them. As an accompaniment to the cover article of an introductory issue, the comments act as a challenge to readers to consider books by Canadian authors in terms of their merit as books, literary and otherwise, rather than valuing them simply because they are written by Canadian writers. Clery's project is to foster books that will be considered "good" wherever in the world they are read. Such an aim finds an echo in the "glistening internationalism" that Sandra Martin, in her article on magazines for the online Canadian Encyclopedia, identifies in today's Canadian magazines which have moved away from what she calls the "parochial nationalism" inherent to pre-1980 special-interest magazines in Canada ("Magazines – Bill C-58").

Thério's project is also the defence of Quebec's literature against foreign influences, especially American influences, not by using those influences as a standard to meet, as Clery hoped to do, but by using them as a reason to strengthen and protect Quebec's cultural and linguistic borders. The first interview that Thério publishes in the inaugural issue of Lettres
Québécoises (March 1976) addresses this ‘anxiety of influence’ in the Québécois national imaginary.

In “Gérald Godin, ‘poète, éditeur, journaliste,’” interviewer Donald Smith asks Godin what action needs to be taken to ensure the survival of publishing in Quebec (30). For Godin, whom Smith describes as an “indépendantiste réputé, éditeur et poète” and director of the radical separatist literary and political publishing house Parti Pris, the answer is simple: to rid the Quebec book market of distribution activities such as those of Victor Lévy Beaulieu (Smith 30). Godin labels Beaulieu “un véritable ‘agent d’impérialisme’” because of his association with Benjamin News, the main distributors in Quebec of magazines and paperback novels published in the United States and in France (Smith 30). Moreover, in response to Smith’s question of what needs to be done to improve publishing conditions in Quebec, Godin blames the provincial government for the excessive number of American general-interest magazines and paperbacks that threaten to drown the Quebec market. He goes so far as to accuse the province of prostituting its literary wares and doing so without even being paid for its services: “Le Québec est une guidoune qui couche avec les étrangers sans se faire payer,” he replies, accusing the province’s two principal print media distributors, Benjamin News and Hachette, of “dumping de revues et de livres de poche américains et français” (Smith 31). Referring to the government’s suppression of a report describing “précisément cette situation colonialiste,” Godin calls for the imposition of quotas on books published outside Quebec:

il faudra donc que des quotas soient établis pour protéger dans les librairies la proportion des livres québécois par rapport à des livres d’autres provenances. Autrement, l’industrie de l’édition au Québec restera folklorique et opprimée. (Smith 31)
The remedies that Godin suggests are radical, but so too is Thério’s decision to publish the interview in which they are expressed. The article concludes with Smith outside Godin’s home “dans la poudrerie outaouaise, symbole du ‘mal du pays’ chez Godin,” and recalling “l’originale légendaire se frayant un chemin vers un avenir toujours incertain (Smith 32). By referring to the symbolized ‘mal du pays’ in Godin’s work, the influx of international paperbacks and magazines, and by comparing the legendary Godin to a moose clearing a path towards an uncertain future for publishers to follow in Quebec, Smith’s review mirrors for readers of Lettres québécoises a characteristic common to the Québécois national imaginary of that era – a concern over the influence that foreign publishers could have on the vitality of the publishing industry in Quebec. As well, Smith’s image of a moose trying to make its way into the unknown raises questions concerning the symbiotic relationship that exists between the province’s literature and its political and social realities.

In “Sur quelques critiques de notre littérature,” Jean-Charles Falardeau remarks on the intimacy of this symbiosis when he prescribes a critical approach to Québécois novels. The approach he advocates is one in which novels are understood as both products and shapers of the society which produces them:

Il est nécessaire pour interpréter en profondeur les œuvres romanesques, de les mettre, selon une méthode ou une autre, en regard de la société d’où elles sont issues. A cette condition seulement, une interprétation de la littérature pourra-t-elle ambitionner d’être éclairante en s’inscrivant dans une problématique où s’entrecroiseront avec elle l’analyse de l’évolution des structures sociales et l’analyse de l’évolution psychoculturelle. (28)
The literature of Quebec can, according to Falardeau, aim to enlighten its readers by implicating itself in an issue where the analyses of the evolution of social structures and of the cultural psyche intersect with the storyline (28).ix.

A review of Québécois theatre that Thério publishes in this inaugural issue of Lettres québécoises echoes Falardeau’s contention at least in as much as it relates to dramatic literature. The review by André Dionne testifies to the fact that theatre and by extension the periodicals that publish theatrical reviews, can work to alert audiences to the potential of literature to both reflect and shape Québécois society and culture. Entitled “Les activités théâtrales québécoises, automne 1975,” Dionne’s three-page review informs readers that as Quebec audiences watch the plays, they will recognize themselves and their political and cultural roots. Not only that, but they can strengthen and shape those roots by understanding them and relating them to the present-day context. Dionne recognizes this potential in the world premier performance by le Théâtre Populaire du Québec of Il faut être fou pour pleurer, the French translation of The Wesker Trilogy, by Arnold Wesker, one of Britain’s most prolific playwrights. Assessing the direction of Monique Lepage as “très nuancée,” Dionne appreciates the capacity of the production to capture and convey the contemporary Québécois “drame humain” that, he writes, supercedes the politics of the “grande noirceur” setting:

Comme impact social, le montage de la trilogie d’Arnold Wesker – Soupe au poulet et à l’orge, Racines et Je parle de Jérusalem – m’apparaît beaucoup efficace. Il faut être fou pour pleurer devient une tentative de compréhension du pays à partir de soi et de ses racines. On voit et on se reconnaît (sic). Les étiquettes se collent et s’accollent (sic) sur les gens et les systèmes politiques en présence. (17)
Dionne concludes his survey of Québécois theatre by noting that “L’automne 75 marque un pas. On commence à rire. On recherche de nouvelles voies dans la comédie musicale. Des jeunes comédiens, de nouveaux auteurs prennent la relève, c’est sans doute l’annonce du ‘temps d’une vie’ nouvelle” (18). This three-page review invites Québécois readers to reshape and expand their previous conceptions of theatrical frontiers, to revamp their sense of what theatre offers its audiences, that is, cultural and social mirrors, creative expression, and, of course, entertainment to which they can relate.

A review by Nicole Bourbonnais of a study of Québécois literary criticism by Jacques Blais entitled *De l’ordre et de l’aventure: la poésie au Québec de 1934 à 1944*, also in the first issue of *Lettres québécoises*, is another example of the way that editors of review periodicals can identify, explain and contribute to the national imaginary of their readers by virtue of the articles and reviews that they decide to publish. The review, through its detailed analysis and appreciation of Blais’ compilation of political, literary, artistic and social events, works to encourage readers to internalize the “new spirit” or “l’esprit nouveau” to which the title alludes.

The phrase, Bourbonnais explains, is taken from “La fille rousse,” a poem by the early twentieth-century French poet, playwright and art critic Guillaume Apollinaire. Apollinaire, Bourbonnais notes, was an innovator, an early leader of the surrealist movement. The critic’s borrowing of his phrase for the title of his book was, therefore, a judicious choice, the reviewer acknowledges (25). Nevertheless, she reminds her readers, that the “esprit nouveau” that Apollinaire envisioned, one that called for order and duty and their companion liberty, was not exactly what was being called for in the case of Québécois poetry: “Or, ce n’est pas tout à fait le cas pour l’esprit nouveau de la poésie québécoise qui doit avant tout combattre l’ordre ancien, abandonner les notions périmées du devoir et pour qui la tradition n’est pas une source d’enrichissement” (Bourbonnais 25). The distinction that Bourbonnais makes between the two
uses of the phrase “esprit nouveau” serves to raise awareness of reasons for the radical changes in modern Quebecois poetry – poets were battling against the constrictions that had been placed on them by “the old order.”

Presented under the rubric “Les Études littéraires,” the three-page review offers readers an informed and thus informative résumé of Blais’ book. Bourbonnais writes that because of the attention to detail that Blais gives and his engaging style, he enables readers to identify with the transitional period, 1934-1944, that it deals with (25). Moreover, the review is in the process of describing and contributing to the Quebecois cultural identity when Bourbonnais mirrors that identity for readers. She writes, for example, that Blais’ book depicts an outdated society attempting to break free of parochialism. Blais “nous dépeint une société bien ‘datée’ qui rêve et refoule, qui édifie et étouffe, pour enfin se libérer” (Bourbonnais 27). Her own rendering of Blais’ depiction of Quebecois society struggling to free itself from traditional bonds would have resonated with readers as would her use of the inclusive first person plural “nous,” thereby contributing to a collective awareness of the independent national spirit that arose out of those struggles.

The reviews referred to above were selected from each periodical’s inaugural issue because they illustrate the way that the magazines’ presence and their contents were grounded in the desire to offer readers a depiction and an interpretation of a national imaginary for them to internalize. Selections from the twentieth anniversary issues show Paul Stuewe, editor of Books in Canada from 1990-1995, attempting to ensure the representation of all regions of Canada while responding to and reflecting movements in Canadian literary criticism. Meanwhile, Vanasse at Lettres québécoises continues to foster a distinctive Quebecois national cultural identity. As Elizabeth Nardout-Lafarge observes in her treatment of Lettres québécoises in her 1986 survey of
Québécois literary magazines: “il est clair que les œuvres valorisées sont nettement enracinées dans les thématiques traditionelles (Tremblay, Thériault)” (43).

Stuewe had been editor of Books in Canada for five months when the “20th Anniversary Issue” was published in May, 1991. He chose to celebrate the achievement by featuring miniature reproductions of a range of front covers and other visual material from issues of Books in Canada over the years. The four-page article, entitled “The Way We Were” and captioned with “Twenty years of snapshots from Books in Canada’s family album” is, in itself, indicative of the magazine’s contribution to English-Canada’s cultural identity. The seventeen front-cover images and the comments that accompany them act like a visual and textual exhibit of the development of Canada’s book and literary community. For example, the commentary to the photograph of the front cover of Books in Canada’s inaugural issue reminds readers of the difficulties the founders faced and cites Clery’s editorial comment: “Conceived in some passion, born in haste, we feel ourselves essentially Canadian in being somewhat short still of our potential” (Clery May 1971, cited in “The Way We Were” 16). The multi-page exhibit also directs readers’ attention to the many accomplished authors it has introduced them to over the years, several of whom, like Michael Ondaatje, were at the outset of their careers at the time. It remarks on the articles and editorials about the publishing industry that were frequently published in the magazine, and on some of its more provocative reviews, like that of Isaac Bickerstaff’s review of Communion by Graeme Gibson, discussed in Chapter I. A photo of Phyllis Web accompanies the commentary, “It was West Coast writers who took a turn in the spotlight in May, 1985” (18). The commentary next to the photograph of Webb lists some of the authors featured in that issue, authors whose names, by 1996, would have been well-ensconced in the nation’s cultural identity, for example, Jack Hodgins and Eleanor Wachtel. The latter, the commentary reminds readers, had gone on from writing for Books in Canada to a distinguished career at CBC-Radio (18). In its reference to
the May 1987 issue, the anniversary issue reports on readers’ responses to a survey published in that issue. The survey, according to the article, held some surprises with regard to the popularity in 1987 of certain authors over others: “Edna Alford, Wayne Johnston, and Gertrude Story outpolled Pierre Burton, Irving Layton, and Farley Mowat” (19). No doubt many readers of the anniversary issue would have also been surprised, though perhaps less so at the popularity of Johnston, but Alford and Story over Burton, Layton and Mowat seems strange indeed, even today.

This four-page twentieth-century anniversary article also draws readers’ attention to the ironic take on cultural identity that occurred when Michael Smith took over as editor from Douglas Marshall and initiated “one of BiC’s periodic redesignings” (18). The article reproduces the cover of the November 1981 issue, which features a black and white headshot of W. O. Mitchell looking a lot like Albert Einstein, beneath a caption that reads “W. O. Mitchell’s Second Wind.” That cover was, according to the accompanying commentary, one of eleven consecutive issues whose front covers consisted only of a photograph, usually black and white, but colour for at least one, that of Brian Moore, of a prominent Canadian author, against an all-black background. The February 1982 issue, for example, features a photo of a young Roch Carrier, with the caption “Le Québec, Yes Sir!” to announce that issue’s focus on “writing from the other solitude” and the June/July 1982 issue consists of an exterior shot of Elizabeth Smart puffing on a cigarette and wearing what looks like a white lily in her lapel, below the caption,” The Life and Love of Elizabeth Smart.” The text that accompanies the image of the cover featuring Mitchell suggests some of the tensions involved while attempting to reach the potential that Clery had been convinced the magazine could fulfil. In response to the funereal look of these covers, the commentary notes that there was,
nothing terminal about what went on inside, however, where one could read such disturbing sentiments as John Moss’s frank assessment of recent Canadian literary criticism, his own included: “It’s appalling...All these bloody generalizations born out of this need to systematize and generalize...post-coital ruminations after the centenary ecstasies. (18)

By reprinting Moss’ sentiments in the commentary, readers are reminded of the intention of Smith, editor throughout the 1980’s, to implement the move that Moss was advocating away from patriotic culturalism and towards the more mature, worldly, national literature of the kind that Clery had originally envisioned for his magazine. Similarly, the text in the anniversary article that accompanies the front cover picture of the August/September 1990 refers to the “fine essay” by W.J. Keith on ‘The Ethics of Fiction’ which was written, the commentary tells readers, to prepare the magazine for the challenge of meeting a new decade (19). In describing the latter essay this way, the commentary signals an upcoming shift in editorial focus in order to meet that challenge. The magazine’s contents would, the comment proposes, thenceforth aim not only to nurture a sense of national cultural identity, but also to devote more space to issues that concerned scholars and students of literature.

As I show in Chapter III, from the beginning of Stuewe’s editorial tenure, this intention manifested itself in content that reflected and responded to the contemporary trends in literary criticism and to the regional diversity of writing in Canada. Such content included, for example, issues that offered reviews like that by Erin Mouré of No Language is Neutral by Dionne Brand in the December 1990 issue. Alone the December 1993 issue illustrates these tendencies. It features a review by Janice Kulyk-Keefer of Itsuka, a novel by Books in Canada First Novel award-winner Joy Kogawa about a Japanese-Canadian family in the years after the internment, a five-page interview with Carol Shields, one of Canada’s literary icons, a review of Plainsong, a novel by Nancy Huston, an Alberta-born novelist who writes primarily in French and translates much of her own work, and
an excerpt from *A Discovery of Strangers*, the Governor-General award-winning novel about the ill-fated Franklin expedition by Rudy Wiebe.

The twentieth-anniversary issue of *Lettres québécoises* should have been the March 1996 given that first issue came out in March 1976. However, the event was not acknowledged until the Winter 1996 publication, and then only by André Vanasse in his editorial. He writes that the magazine’s mandate throughout the years since it was founded has remained the same, namely to become the most important journal devoted to Quebecois literature (5). Nardout-Lafarge frames this mandate more precisely: “*Lettres québécoises* s’attache exclusivement à promouvoir la littérature récente et le succès déjà établie; son objectif est de créer un lien entre le public lecteur et les écrivains . . .” (43). Contemplating what lies ahead, Vanasse wonders about the ability of Quebecois literature to assert itself when confronted with the pressure exerted by American publishers, a concern that he then assuages by recalling other times throughout history when Quebec’s national culture has succeeded in fending off attempts by English, American and French publishing houses to dominate the literary marketplace of Québec (5).

Vanasse demonstrates a preference in this anniversary issue for articles and reviews that portray Quebecois literature as mature and open to other cultures. This type of openness mirrors in some ways Stuewe’s interest in representing literature from each of Canada’s regions, but shows less evidence of the type of commitment to reflecting and responding to contemporary trends in literary criticism that *Books in Canada* exhibited during Stuewe’s tenure. Vanasse includes, for example, reviews of a book of “récits” entitled *Chroniques d’enfance* by Maurice Joncas and a review by Adrien Thério, the magazine’s founding editor, of an anthology of short stories entitled *Dix ans de nouvelles*, edited by Gilles Pellerin. Both reviews reinforce the social and historical traditions in the Quebecois literary imaginary while illustrating the ability of Quebec literary culture to stand on its own alongside French literature produced outside of
Quebec. In his favourable review of the short story anthology, Thério draws readers’ attention to the fact that three of the authors in the anthology are not from Quebec. One is from Ontario and two are translations of stories by writers from Europe (26). He writes that he hopes that other Québécois anthologists will follow suit because what is most important is that anthologies like the one he was reviewing are sources of pleasure, that they "fassent de belles rencontres" (26).

In this twentieth-anniversary issue of *Lettres québécoises*, there is also a two-page review by Francine Bourdeleau of three French translations of books by English-Canadian authors, Trevor Ferguson, Sharon L. Sparling and Lawrence Hill. Entitled "Romans et merveilles," the review is accompanied by a caption that alerts readers to the fact that these anglophone writers show themselves to be extraordinary storytellers: "Voilà des écrivains canadiens-anglais drôlement inspirés, qui se révèlent d’extraordinaires conteurs" (Bourdeleau 23). In her introductory paragraph, Bourdeleau expresses her dismay that she is only now discovering these authors and introducing them to readers of *Lettres québécoises*. She blames this unfortunate situation on the tendency of French publishers to publish translations of books by authors like Margaret Atwood and Robertson Davies whose success in the French version is generally assured by the high profile they enjoy in the English-speaking community (23). The above-mentioned review by Thério and this one by Bourdeleau may well have been in response to Nardout-Lafarge’s comment in 1986 that "*Lettres québécoises* ignore totalement toute production étrangère et traite la littérature sans jamais la lier à des références extérieures au pays" (41). As is suggested by the act of publishing those two reviews, the editorial team of *Lettres québécoises*, did make an effort over the years to position Québecois literature alongside that of other cultures and countries.

In his section on editors and editing for the *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada*, W.H. New writes that editors of newspapers, literary magazines and journals “influenced writers,
publishers, and readers, and in that way shaped the sensibilities and tastes of their generation and the literary history of Canada” (330). A juxtaposing of the editorial visions and trends in the ideas and opinions expressed by contributors to the inaugural and to the twentieth-anniversary issues of *Lettres québécoises* and of *Books in Canada* are embodiments of that statement. Under the direction of Clery, the contents of *Books in Canada* reflected the founders’ conviction that Canada could have a distinct, internationally recognized national literature. Twenty years later, the anniversary issue announces its editor’s commitment to exposing readers to the stylistic, regional, thematic and ethnic diversity of Canada’s book and literary culture. Meanwhile, the two editors of *Lettres québécoises* remained unwavering in their commitment to constructing a cultural identity that, as Fortin remarks, the intellectual founders of periodicals still needed to assert. She writes that at the end of the twentieth century, the Québécois identity was still “à définir-redéfinir. Les intellectuels fondateurs de revues s’attacheront à nommer le Québec, le sujet québécois et ses pratiques, et ainsi à l’affirmer, à le définir” while at the same time confirming “son appartenance à un monde plus large” (Fortin 384-5).

Citing Hugh Seton-Watson, Jonathan Kertzer makes two assertions: one, that “a nation is a community of people, whose members are bound together by a sense of solidarity, a common culture, a national consciousness,” and two, that “Quebec is a nation, though not yet (and not necessarily) a state” (7). A comparison of the original “contracts” of the founding editors of these two periodicals, and a comparative survey of their “projects” at that time, and twenty years later, shows *Lettres québécoises* and *Books in Canada* each in the process of building that sense of solidarity, of shaping sensibilities and of nurturing a national consciousness, a cultural identity, within their respective target communities of readers.
Chapter III:  
The Editors and Reviewers

i. The Cultural Work of Two Editors

There can be no doubt that each of the editors listed at the beginning of this study made significant contributions to the cultural work of *Books in Canada*, and especially Michael Smith. It is evident from the form and content of the issues published during his editorial tenure in the 1980’s, the longest of all, that his editorship brought consistency and intellectual breadth and depth to the participation of the magazine in the cultural moment of that decade. It is circumstance that dictates the restriction of my investigation in this chapter into the cultural work of the periodical to the editorial tenures of Paul Stuewe and Olga Stein. The parameters set for this study are intended to attribute an arc to the life of the magazine, that is, its beginning, its middle and its end. Thus, earlier chapters, which focussed on the tenure of the founder, Val Clery, are followed here by an examination of what I consider the “highpoint” of the life of the magazine, that is the tenure of Paul Stuewe during the first half of the 1990’s, and concluding with the tenure of Olga Stein during its final years, from 2001 to 2008, the year of its demise.


In 1986, four years before Paul Stuewe became editor of the magazine, the Canadian government had transferred $4.8 million to the Canada Council block program for publishers under its Book Publishing Development Program (MacSkimming 411). Since then, publications of books by Canadian authors had climbed steadily. As Nancy Ann Duxbury shows in her statistical analyses of the legal deposit records of the National Library between 1973 and 1996, the number of books published in Canada and classified in the Dewey Decimal Code category 800, that is English language literature, went from about 1600 in 1986 to approximately 2400
titles in 1995 (Duxbury 251). The program, begun in the 1970’s and still in place today, provides established Canadian publishers with financial assistance in publishing books that “make a significant contribution to the development of Canadian literature” (<http://www.canadacouncil.ca/grants/writing>). In 1995, the year Stuewe left the magazine, the Department of Canadian Heritage cut funding to the book industry by fifty-five percent (MacSkimming 412). The five years Stuewe was head of *Books in Canada*, were, in other words, among the most prosperous ones for book publishing in Canada. During that period, the number of English literature titles published went from just under 2000 titles to approximately 2400, an increase of close to 100 new titles in English literature alone coming out each year (Duxbury 251).

One of the first things Stuewe did as Editor was to mail subscribers a survey “to make sure,” he explains, that the magazine was “in touch with the readers who don’t write in” (Stuewe Interview). In his summary of the 623 replies he received, published as an editorial in the August/September 1990 issue, Stuewe stresses the nationalist focus of the magazine: “The primary responsibility of *Books in Canada* is to cover Canadian books, and that’s not going to change” (7). He concludes his editorial by announcing what amounts to a mission statement for the magazine: “You’ve given us a lot to think about, and we’re going to do our best to make *Books in Canada* an indispensable resource for those who care about Canadian writing” (7). His vision for the magazine was, as he told me, “strictly Canadian” (Stuewe Interview). Using that mission as a guide, Stuewe’s editorial initiatives and decisions would work to shape the cultural identity of his readers.

For one thing, Stuewe included more ‘omnibus’ reviews, that is reviews by one reviewer of several books that are connected in some way, usually through topic or author. The decision was an efficient way of responding to the growing number of newly published books he was
receiving from Canadian publishers. Omnibus reviews thus expanded readers’ sense of cultural identity by exposing them to a greater proportion of the books that were being published in Canada, to their authors and to their content.

Moreover, Stuewe established a ‘Work in Progress’ department. Here, he provided readers with excerpts of new, but as yet unpublished work by Canadian writers who were at that time relatively well known. Contributors to this department included Thomas King, Libby Scheier, George Bowering and Drew Hayden Taylor. The introduction of this feature shaped readers’ knowledge of the writing process of some of the nation’s more successful authors, poets and playwrights. Stuewe was anticipating his readers’ curiosity about what established Canadian authors were currently working on, saw there were few or no public places where readers could track the development of a work that had not yet been published, and arranged for them to do so through this feature.

The Opinion Department was another of Stuewe’s initiatives, albeit a short-lived one. Here, Stuewe invited writers to weigh in on developments in Canadian literature or developments in the writing process itself. While the heading itself was not a consistent presence in subsequent issues, its use in the November 1990 issue served to alert readers to the move of *Books in Canada* under Stuewe’s direction to pay more attention to literary academia. “Colonial Mentalities,” a scathing review by Bruce Serafin of Steve McCaffery’s book *North of Intention*, is an example of the type of provocative academic discourse to which readers would be exposed.

Serafin begins his review by juxtaposing two quotations, both laden with literary jargon, one by Roland Barthes, and one by McCaffery. Serafin explains that he has done this in order to show that McCaffrey’s writing is “derivative” in the same way, he says, as “those Canadian poets who wrote in the style of Swinburne or Longfellow” (21). He accuses McCaffery of
cronyism, of privileging and mimicking authors whom “the common reader finds tedious or unintelligible,” -- the “zoo of the new,” a phrase borrowed, he writes, from Sylvia Plath.

According to Serafin, McCaffery’s writing is weighed down with literary jargon. He does not exploit the qualities of “brightness, vivacity” and “curiosity” that one finds in Plath’s use of language. McCaffery has lost touch with the vitality of his own language and, in his attempts to create an “atmosphere of difficulty” via “verbal density,” he has abandoned the pleasure of exercising the vitality of the English language. McCaffery has evidently done this, Serafin writes, in order to gain the favour of a particular group of literary theorists, along with the security that one attains by writing for an interest-group (Serafin 21, 23).

In the following issue, Stuewe replaces the “Opinion” heading with “Rebuttal” where he provides McCaffery with the opportunity to respond to Serafin’s article. McCaffery’s response is as scathing and enlightening with regard to literary schools of thought, as Serfin’s review was. McCaffery accuses Serafin of having given his book “a shallow,” poorly substantiated, reading. He describes it as a “propagandist screed” (24). He defends his use of jargon and accuses Serafin of xenophobia “in his call back to native and national values” (McCaffery 24). He adds:

It’s my belief that Serafin’s opinion self-destructs through the patent negativity of his methodology, the inaccuracy of his allegations, and the incoherence of his own proposals. . . To appeal, as he does, to ‘the common reader’ is to appeal to nothing but a judgemental and falsifying term that involves the promotion of a pseudo-consensual essence that does not exist in reality. In a blunter phrase, it is a hollow slogan that insults the heterogeneity of individuals. (24)

Likewise, he attacks Serafin’s use of terms like the “literary avant-garde” and Plath’s “zoo of the new” phrase, calling them insulting because of “their basal inhumanity, their vulgar classification, and their cavalier contempt for historical context, change and process” (24).
Here again, Stuewe’s initiatives create a venue for heated conversations like these to take place. His creation of the “Work in Progress” and the “Opinion” departments are examples of editorial decisions and interventions that had the ability to add to a reader’s understanding of the ways that literary debates contribute to the shape of a country’s book and literary culture. An article entitled “Whose Voice Is It, Anyway,” published in the February 1991 continues this trend. It presents readers with the responses of various Canadian authors including Sandra Birdsell, George Bowering, Marilyn Bowering, George Elliott Clarke and Don Coles to the question, a hotly debated one in academia at that time, of authorial appropriation of narrative voice. Stanley Fogel’s tongue-in-cheek delightfully illustrated article entitled “Whazzappenin’ in Lit Crit” (Figure 16) published in the May 1991 is another example of Stuewe’s determination to bring consistent attention to the developments occurring in academia at the time.

The content that Stuewe selected for *Books in Canada* during his five-year editorship provided additional material for shaping a Canadian cultural identity. For example, Stuewe calls the September 1991 issue “The Transcultural Issue” and features an essay by Janice Kulyk Keefer entitled “From Mosaic to Kaleidoscope: Out of the multi-cultural past comes a vision of a transcultural future.” Of the many insights Keefer offers in the article about multi-culturalism is her comment, “Recognition of difference and diversity, not allegiance to some fixed icon of identity – Mounties’ hats or red ensigns or oaths to the Queen – would be a more useful and lasting means of consolidating what Mavis Gallant has called our ‘national sense of self’” (15). And, beneath Keefer’s name on the front cover is the phrase: “On the Shape of Our Literary Future.”

Other reviews and articles in the “Transcultural Issue” that act as cultural worksites are the interview Stuewe publishes with the award-winning Canadian poet and novelist Marlene Nourbese Philip, originally from Trinidad and Tobago, and a profile by Cary Fagan of new
cultural presses. The sub-title to Fagan's article is, "A survey of who's doing what on
publishing's cultural frontiers." The sub-title reflects the contemporary cultural milieu in the way
that it assumes that readers of *Books in Canada* would want to know more about who is
publishing the work of newcomers to Canada. Fagan defines these presses as those run by "an
identifiable cultural group within Canada" and who "have enlivened the country's literature with
their books by Native, Black, Asian and other writers (26). Readers learn, for example, about
Williams-Wallace Publishers, a press located in Stratford, Ontario. Its first book was a poetry
anthology that included poems by Dionne Brand and Marlene Nourbese Philip. According to
Fagan, Williams-Wallace has also published a volume of essays by Arun Mukherjee and a play
by Daniel David Moses (Fagan 26). The article, through its presence in the issue, informs readers
who may not have been aware about TSAR (Toronto South African Review) publications'
existence, and more specifically about the original resistance that Fagan met with from its
founder, M. G. Vassanjii. The latter had problems with being slotted into Fagan's category since,
as Vassanjii's associate told Fagan, quality was their "primary criterion" (28). The article, and
Stuewe's publication of it, thus presents readers with a publishing horizon that includes these
presses, but also the personal ambivalence that, as Fagan writes in his summary of Vassanjii's
reaction, "many Canadians confront in creating a sense of place and belonging in this country" (28).
By publishing Fagan's overview, Stuewe is making room in the magazine and in the
national literary imaginary for the work of Canadians from other parts of the world and for the
people who produce and publish that work and their concerns as newcomers to the country.

Stuewe, like his predecessors, Clery, Marshall and Michael Smith chief among them, also
made consistent efforts to broaden the magazine's mandate, both in content and readership. The
October 1991 issue features a four-page interview with Quebec author Marie-Claire Blais by
David Homel, accompanied by a full-page photo and two of her poems. The March 1992 issue,
(Fig. 14), entitled the “Atlantic Provinces Issue,” reads as if authors from the Maritimes were already ‘at home’ in the national literary imaginary, which is more the case now than it was in 1992. In the same issue, Stuewe published a survey by Fraser Sutherland introduced with the subtitle, “The rich literary traditions of the Atlantic Provinces are of much more than regional significance,” an interview with Ann Copeland and an omnibus review by George Elliott Clarke of new books of poetry from the Maritimes. By the time readers had finished with that issue, they would have felt as if works from the Maritimes were already as integral to the nation’s cultural identity as they are today.

Similarly, the cover of the December 1993 issue of Books in Canada announces an interview with Carol Shields. In the front page headings, Shields, that year’s winner of the Governor General’s award, is said to be “playing with convention” and “staking out the territory where fiction, biography, and autobiography intersect,” signalling the magazine’s endorsement of the blurring of genre boundaries that was to become a trademark of writing today but was less common at that time.

During Stuewe’s editorial tenure, the magazine worked to reflect and shape what was, or was about to become, of interest and concern to its readers – the social, political and economic effects on the nation of its government’s multicultural policies, of ecological challenges and of Quebec’s maturing literary voice. The content of Books in Canada published during his mandate suggests furthermore that Stuewe was aware of a book-review magazine’s responsibility to reflect and respond to contemporary trends in literary criticism.

b. Olga Stein (2001-2008)

While Stuewe’s editorial vision for Books in Canada was “strictly Canadian,” a study of some of the thematic threads that Stein identified in the books that publishers sent her, threads
that she then wove into each of her issues, suggests an endorsement of conservative Canadian
tastes and interests, together with an inclusion of international authors and their concerns
alongside those of Canada. My use of “conservative” in the following analysis leans heavily on
the sense of wishing to preserve traditions, of being “averse to rapid change,” of seeking to
“conserve” as defined in *Oxford Canadian Dictionary*, in a social and cultural context, and even,
as discussed in Chapter VI, a political sense. The endorsement manifested itself primarily in a
privileging of history books and of books that favour traditional cultural forms and tastes.

The November/December 2001 issue illustrates this trend. It offers reading fare that is
often historical in nature, such as a review of *A Concise History of Canadian Architecture*, by
Harold Kalman, reviews of two books about the history of Canadian Black Africans, one of
which is *A Map to the Door of No Return*, Dionne Brand’s research into her family’s history.
The other, reviewed by George Elliott Clarke, is a collection of slave narratives edited by Peter
Meyler. There is also a review of Timothy Findlay’s novel *Spadework*, a book that the reviewer
describes as “an entertaining love letter to the Stratford, Ontario, Shakespeare Festival and to the
town itself” (Papinchak 18). At the same time, the issue includes a review by Nicholas Maes of
*Literature in the Greek and Roman Worlds, A New Perspective* and a review of *The Fourth
Hand*, by the American writer John Irving in which the reviewer appeals to traditional tastes with
his concluding remark that a return to books that offer old-fashioned closure is not “necessarily a
bad thing” (Lawrence 4). Alongside those reviews, is one of *Thinks*, a novel by British writer
David Lodge, in which Stein, through the act of publishing the review, is issuing an invitation to
readers to poke fun at “pretentious” academics and literary theorists in the same way that
reviewer Nancy Wigston writes that Lodge is known for doing (8). A good portion of the content
of this issue, that is, its reviews and the headings that Stein gives to them, acts as an editorial
endorsement of culturally conservative, anti-academic, tastes.
Stein does pick up and incorporate other threads when she edits. She does this in that same issue, for example. One of the threads she follows there results in a review of *Clara Callan* by Richard B. Wright, winner of the Giller Prize that year, while another leads to a lengthy review of five books about Canada’s North, grouped under the heading “Arctic Lessons.” Nonetheless, with each page that is turned in that issue alone, there is evidence of the editorial endorsement of culturally conservative leanings: here is a favourable review by Harold Hoefle of David Solway’s *The Turtle Hypodermic of Sickenpods*, a treatise on what is wrong with our “technophiliac society” (Hoefle 31) and government policies bent on “‘accomplishing our docility and servitude,’” (Solway qtd. in Hoefle 31) and here is a favourable review of a religious study of Saint Saul, and here, a review of a book about Rasputin by Edward Radzinsky. And, just as this list comprises yet another conservative historical thread that Stein followed, it also shows her inviting her readers to meet the work of authors writing elsewhere in the world, as she has done with the Russian author Radzinsky.

The October 2002 issue is another example of Stein’s combining of conservative and international interests when deciding which thematic threads to pick up. She devotes five and a half pages of text and photographs to three books celebrating the 50th anniversary of Canada’s Stratford Theatre. In the same issue, she publishes two extensive articles aimed at reacquainting her readers with the neglected early twentieth-century Canadian poet Charles Bruce and the traditional poetic tastes that his work exemplifies.

In the April 2003 issue, Stein again displays a preference for traditional poetic forms by featuring reviews of recent sonnet anthologies and of books on Shakespeare, two full pages of sonnets written by well-known contemporary English-Canadian poets and an article by Montreal poet Robyn Sarah on the sonnet “Cathleen Sweeping” by George Johnston. Sarah concludes her article with the comment that reminds readers of the attitudes of ‘greatness’ that underlie
traditional poetic aestheticism. She writes that “such unobtrusive and seemingly effortless fusion of form and meaning is the mark of poetry at its greatest” (31). Later that year, Stein publishes a review of *River of the Brokenhearted*, a novel by David Adams Richards, and sets a tone of nostalgia with the title she assigns to the review by Cynthia Sugars: “The River of Now and Then.” The review echoes this nostalgia when Sugars begins her review with a plea for the return of “sincerity”:

> It is no longer cool to care. The Ivory Tower meets Joe Millionaire. This may be all the more true for a teacher of Canadian culture. Margaret Atwood’s call to arms in the 1970’s, ‘we need to know about here, because here is where we live,’ is now all too often greeted with a resounding shrug as students fumble for their cell phones. (Sugars 8)

Adams’ story, Sugars concludes, “provides a tonic for a dispirited age” (8). The comment suggests that a return to the past by reading this story may help readers cope with the present. In the same issue, Stein publishes a review by Paul Dutton of two books about the poet and literary critic bpNichol. Once considered a poetic rebel for discarding traditional poetic conventions in his work, and now a revered and oft-anthologized example of the beginnings of the postmodernist trend in Canada, Nichol blurred creative boundaries with his concrete poetry and his attempts to convey meaning through the sound of the words. This sense of nurturing a preference for the known rather than the unknown occurs again with a review by Peter O’Brien of *The Group of Seven and Tom Thomson*, a book by David P. Silcox about Canada’s most revered artistic icons. Similarly, in “Catch a Cannonball,” a review of a book about the legacy of the rock group The Band, the reviewer writes that The Band is “the sort of group critics – as well as the likes of Bob Dylan, George Harrison, Eric Clapton, and Elvis Costello – describe as ‘arguably the greatest rock group ever’” (D. Brown 14).
Taken as a whole, Stein’s selection of these particular books for review and the reviews about them read like an invitation to return to a cultural identity that is governed by conventional form and content, by a preference for trend-setters of the past, by nostalgia. Granted, such choices of books to review may have also been a reflection of publishing trends at the time and of the “thematic threads” that she sees running through the books that publishers had sent her (Stein Interview). Still, it was she who decided to pick up that nostalgic thread, to solicit people to review the books that she selected from it, and to publish those reviews.

But this is not to imply that Stein drowned her readers in excessive nostalgia and conservative aesthetics in the issues she produced throughout her tenure. Especially in issues from 2004 onwards, her choices contribute to this era’s globalization of Canadian authors by positioning reviews of their work alongside reviews of well-known international, often politically controversial, writers. In the April 2006 issue, for example, a good half of the reviews focus on books by Canadian authors, Michel Tremblay first among them, followed by a review of Mark Frutkin’s novel Fabrizio’s Return, a review of Leah McLaren’s first novel The Continuity Girl, an interview by Patrick Watson with Karen Solie, a poet originally from Saskatchewan, then living in Toronto and an overview of the novels which made the 2005 Amazon.ca/Books in Canada First Novel shortlist. The other half of the reviews in the April 2006 issue consists of treatments of recent publications from the U.S. or the United Kingdom. These include a review by Matt Sturrock of The Angry Island by the Scottish author A.A. Gill, a review by Hugh Graham of Harold Pinter and the Twilight of Modernism by Varun Begley, and of Jesus and Yahweh: The Names Divine by the American author and anti-postmodernist literary critic, Harold Bloom.

Stein’s selection process here offers a balance of Canadian and international material and stands as an example of how her editorial choices worked to reflect and broaden the scope of the
Canada’s cultural identity. It also illustrates how the magazine helped to render obsolete any “anxiety of influence” left over from the Canadian nationalism eras of Clery and Stuewe and to counteract what Faye Hammill, in her study of Canada’s internationally celebrated authors, refers to as the ‘colonial cringe’ (167). At the same time, Stein’s choices might also be symptomatic of “the continuing desire for foreign approval” that Hammill argues is the reason why Canadian critics and journalists repeatedly haul out the same list of Canadian authors’ names who have achieved international acclaim as proof of the maturity of the country’s literature (167).

In the December 2006 issue, however, Stein stretches her editorial privileging of those conservative, internationalizing tenets to the limit through a deliberate endorsement of right-wing anti-government conservatism. A reproduction of Goya’s “Auto da Fe” painting on the front cover of the issue announces an eighteen-page essay, a dense, pre-trial defence of convicted corporate fraud criminal Conrad Black, written by Olga and Adrian Stein. As discussed in Chapter VI, it was an editorial decision that almost certainly contributed to the magazine’s demise barely a year later.

ii. Reviewers and Their Métier

If a study of the ideologies reflected and espoused by the editorial decisions of two key editors of *Books in Canada*, Stuewe and Stein, leads to a better understanding of ways that editors shape cultural identity, then a study of how certain book reviewers approach their profession may shed light on how reviewers can influence the depth and scope of the national literary imaginary.

In a telephone interview in December 2003, publishing analyst Roy MacSkimming spoke of the need for book reviewers to do more than simply inform the reader about the contents and
readability of the book. Reviewers, he said, should show their “personality.” They should
demonstrate a certain “flair” in their writing, work to offer the reader a “reading sensation,” and,
whenever possible, impart a personal philosophy of a cultural, social or political nature
(MacSkimming Interview). In other words, book reviewers do cultural work through the way
they manage their own participation in the review.

MacSkimming’s review for the *Globe and Mail* of a book on Harold Innis by Alexander
John Watson is an example of a review in which the reviewer is almost entirely absent, yet
always in control. Throughout his lengthy text, MacSkimming’s presence is barely noticeable.
He uses only one first and one second person pronoun, “us,” in the concluding sentence, and the
possessive “your” twice, and that in the same sentence where he hides his presence behind his
summary of the author’s approach: “Intuitively, Watson has chosen ‘to apply Innis to Innis.’ He
adopts the man’s own research method: setting aside received wisdom, burrowing deep inside
your subject and learning to think like your material” (D10, my emphasis). His use of the
second-person pronoun startles readers because until that point, MacSkimming, as the reviewer,
had been invisible. Suddenly, with his use of “your,” the possessive form of the universal “you,”
instead of “the,” as in “the subject,” and “the material,” his formulation reaches out to readers
and asks them to think like researchers too. Apart from the slight disruption in the flow of the
review caused by these two shifts in perspective, MacSkimming remains an invisible interpreter
of the book. The effect of MacSkimming’s disappearing act might be termed the “omniscient
reviewer effect,” one in which the reader assumes that the reviewer sees and knows all, and
should therefore not be doubted. This type of review does cultural work through its assertive,
practically pugnacious, nature. It challenges readers to argue with the reviewer, and thus shoves
the book into the cultural identity ring.
Self-effacement by the reviewer in the way that MacSkimming has done in the above review is, however, rare. He, and most accomplished reviewers, usually negotiate their presence in the review to lesser and greater degrees so that readers are reminded that the reviewer is there to be argued with, thus inviting them to agree, or differ. Besides, writing reviews without making any reference to oneself is difficult and time-consuming because of the grammatical gymnastics it requires. Hence, experienced writers and reviewers who wish to reap the credibility of the omniscient reviewer, among them Frye, Avison, and in the case of *Books in Canada*, W.J. Keith, Keith Garebian and Roxanne Rimstead, for example, will rely on the impersonal pronoun “one,” or “the reader,” and somewhat less frequently, the first person plural pronoun “we,” along with adjectives and other vocabulary whose linguistic connotations imply approval or disapproval, to help them convey to readers what they see that is significant about the book.

Rimstead’s review of *The Fight of My Life: Confessions of an Unrepentant Canadian* by Maude Barlow is an example of how effective this judicious, inclusionary approach to book reviewing can be in doing cultural work. She wastes no time in drawing readers, that is, “us” into her discussion circle when, in her second sentence: “. . . Barlow would rouse us against the harsher consequences of globalisation . . .” (22). The reader is alerted to the need to pay attention to Barlow, but also to what Rimstead is about to say about Barlow’s book. A similar sense of reader inclusivity is created in the paragraph which begins with Rimstead’s assertion, “The information about Canada in this book is vital” (23). She explains that this is because Barlow has focussed on important social concerns that “we,” as a nation, must confront (23). Rimstead invites readers of the review to follow Barlow’s lead, by writing that Barlow’s biography shows “how we all can do the same” (23). This inclusive style is rendered polite and professional, and therefore convincing, through Rimstead’s occasional withdrawal from the inclusionary circle and reference to the reader in the third person noun “the reader” and “readers.” She writes, for
example, that the book is structured in such a way that “the reader” can skip from “chapters on feminism to those on international environmental and labour concerns . . .” (23).

This review by Rimstead also offers good examples of the way that a reviewer's lexical choices do cultural work through the interaction with the reader that they invite. For example, her use of the colourful adjective “feisty” to describe Barlow’s pose on the front cover image connotes for readers the energy and doggedness that Barlow is known for, and that Rimstead is about to highlight in this review of her latest book (22). A similar intellectually galvanizing effect on readers is created by Rimstead’s use of the adjective “fascinating” to describe The Big Black Book, Barlow’s study of what Rimstead summarizes as the “elitist, anti-feminist, anti-nationalist, and rightwing views of Conrad Black and Barbara Amiel” (23). The participle “fascinating” connotes transfixion or irresistible attraction. Rimstead’s use of it works to highlight Barlow’s ability in books like the one Rimstead is reviewing to hold the reader’s attention even when discussing controversial matters and infamous individuals. Also, Rimstead’s decision to describe Barlow’s treatment of prominent political figures, Pierre Trudeau, Jean Chrétien and Brian Mulroney among them, as “eye-opening” and Barlow’s book as an “honest engagement” with the issues touches readers physically by referring to their eyes, and emotionally by appealing to their own sense of honesty.

Alternatively, there are reviewers whose ubiquitous presence results in a review that does cultural work, but in a rather backhanded fashion. A review published in the Globe and Mail next to the above-mentioned review by MacSkimming suffers from this rare form of self-indulgence. In his review of Building Canada: People and Projects that Shaped the Nation, by Jonathan F. Vance, reviewer Charles Wilkins uses the ruminative but still imperative “say” at least four times, too many first-person pronouns and several repetitions of “which is to say” and “this is to say.” Distracted by so many implied commands by the reviewer to pay attention to
him, readers are forced to wrestle the reviewer's opinion out of his or her powerful grip on the
text. Nevertheless, this wrestling process helps to make the review a site of cultural work. The
reviewer is so much "in the face of" the reader that the latter cannot ignore what the former is
'saying'.

To their credit, many reviewers manage a high-degree of permeability with aplomb and
success. Terry Castle is one of those. She announces her presence in her work with gusto. Her
review for the London Review of Books of a book on Willa Cather, by Joan Acocella, begins this
way:

First, a fiery allegory – the reviewer's house is burning down! After tossing the cats
out of the window, she has time only to save one object before fleeing: either a
compact disc reissue of Sarah Bernhardt declaiming from Phèdre or an old sepia-tinted
postcard of Eleonara Duse in D'annunzio's La Città morta. Quick! Which one to
choose? . . . (Castle <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v22/n24/terry-castle/pipe-down-back-
there>)

Having projected herself onto the threshold of the review by talking about herself in the third
person, Castle allows her knowledge of Cather's books and background to control her text
throughout most of the remainder of this long review, without calling undue attention to herself.
Granted, the reader is consistently reminded of Castle's presence and the cultural messages she is
conveying by her lively vocabulary, pithy insights and dynamic phrasing, but after her initial,
startling burst into the review, Castle only comes to the forefront again via strategically-placed
clusters of provocative rhetorical questions such as:

Were all the critical manoeuvres executed by Cather scholars over the past two decades
as foolish as Acocella makes them sound here? Was everyone so dumb and self-
serving? And even if they were, shouldn't literary critics be allowed to take their
inevitable (yet often illuminating) wrong turns? (Castle

<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v22/n24/terrv-castle/pipe-down-back-there>)

Rhetorical questions like those above, coupled with provocative lexical choices like “executed” “dumb” and “wrong turns” in the above excerpt, incisive attitudes and penetrating analyses such as those of both Castle and Rimstead, do cultural work by engaging readers’ imagination and appealing to their appreciation for writing that jumps off the page.

Similarly, Carmine Starnino, associate editor for Books in Canada prior to its demise, is a reviewer who writes with aplomb, perspicacity and energy. He infuses a high degree of personal presence in his reviews by eschewing the third-person pronoun in favour of ‘speaking’ directly to the reader in rich, convincing and energetic language. His frequent use of “we” results in an insistence that the reader join him in the argument he is making. For example, in a lengthy contribution that is part articulate shakedown of poetry editors, W. H. New and David Staines among them, and part review of a collection of poetry by Peter Trower, a poet they have largely ignored, Starnino writes: “Given the perception of his work as clodhopping in its clarities, it’s not surprising we’ve lagged in recognizing Trower for what he is: a poet capable of remarkable beauty” (34). In this incisive, thorough review, Starnino does cultural work by insisting his readers shoulder at least some of the blame for overlooking Trower through his inclusionary ‘we,’ his unthreatening style created by his use of contractions, but especially through his close reading of a large selection of Trower’s poems.

This increased degree of reviewer presence in reviews and thus the ability to do cultural work would seem to have reached its saturation point with reviews by online customer reviews. As Linda Hutcheon writes:

In the 20th century, we have seen the development of the modern Professional (e.g. Cyril Connolly) and the postmodern Academic as Public Intellectual (e.g. Mark Kingwell). But
today, to this once professional and professionalized group, we have to add the customer reviewer, the blogger, the book club member. Expertise has now been democratized – or made irrelevant, perhaps. (Hutcheon 6)

The fact that today anyone can write and publish a book review diminishes the power of a reviewer to do cultural work. No matter how articulate and informed the lay reviewer is, the fact that the review has not been filtered through an editor, let alone an editorial board, reduces the review to being just one reader’s opinion.

The manner in which professional reviewers negotiate how much of themselves they choose to project into the review and how they choose to do so, is, as we have seen, a highly-skilled balancing act, a sort of hide-and-seek game that reflects an awareness of the nature of their own cultural identity and the degree of cultural capital they possess. Moreover, reviewers do cultural work through their awareness of the reading process itself. Reviewers, like novelists, must, in order to write their texts, first be aware of what it is to read. They exploit the essence of reading in order to tell their own story about the book. To continue with the hide-and-seek game: the way the novelist plays the game is that at the end of the book, the story is revealed to the reader in its entirety, in the reader’s mind. The book is “it.” The reviewer’s version of the game mirrors the hide-and-seek game she or he plays while writing the review. Reviewers are never entirely in view. Rather, they are always negotiating the way they view themselves, efface themselves from the reader’s sight or project themselves into the face and minds of readers. Reviewers are never “it.” They do cultural work by revealing parts of the book (but never the ending) and hiding others, with the intention of sending readers off in search of the book, or as the case may be, of crossing it off their reading list. Book reviewers, like novelists and poets, play seriously with the essence of cultural work. The only difference is in how they play the game.
CHAPTER IV:  
Front Covers: Cultural “Billboards”

When it comes to books about general-interest and/or special-interest magazines, often it is the cover-art that ‘speaks volumes’ about the interests of the people who read them and the society in which they circulate. The covers of some of the most popular magazines in America including Time, Mad, The New Yorker, Rolling Stone, Esquire, the Journal of the American Medical Association, Golf and Sports Illustrated are the subject of numerous books currently available in most North American bookstores.31 Vogue Covers – On Fashion’s Front Page, one example of these book-length treatments of the front covers of magazines, was reviewed in the “Style” section of the Globe and Mail newspaper in 2008. Reviewer Maggie Wrobel describes the 249-page book as “... a perfectly fabulous walk down memory’s runway” (L2). Like the magazine covers discussed in those books, Books in Canada’s front covers are designed to attract the attention of readers with the hope that readers will be tempted to purchase the magazine. Front covers of a book-review magazine are potential sites of cultural work for the way that they appeal to the intellect of reader and their curiosity about the books being reviewed and their authors. In this chapter, I follow Richard Ohmann’s lead by examining selections of Books in Canada’s front covers for ways that they invite interaction between the text, image and reader and, much as he does with the visuals he studies, I “speculate” about the ways that cultural work is being done in the mental “bridging” process, an assessment that is, just as he writes that his thoughts are, “open to dispute” (Ohmann 265).

Ohmann begins his chapter “The Discourse of Advertising” by acknowledging the “problem of sampling” (175). This is an approach that I too am using. Like him, I direct the reader’s attention to “exemplary” samples, visual content that I have chosen because it is a particularly effective site of the mental negotiating process that cultural work depends on
(Ohmann 175). Unlike Ohmann, who focuses his analysis on advertisements, I cannot use huge advertising expenditures as a way of proving my contention that the front covers of *Books in Canada* work to create a sense of cultural identity for readers of the magazine. Ohmann argues, however, that when it came to advertisements,

> [r]eaders knew their conventions; the language they used was embedded in consciousness. To think otherwise is to believe that advertisers spent millions of dollars sending consumers unintelligible messages, or messages that, if intelligible, seemed outlandish to their audience. The effectiveness of the advanced ads, measured in sales, make that unlikely. (Ohmann 175)

Similarly, I suggest that *Books in Canada*'s readers were aware of certain artistic conventions that recast the front covers as effective sites of cultural work. In the same way that advertisers spend large sums of money to convey messages about products, editors and illustrators spend large amounts of time, and of what might be called intellectual capital, on visual content that will, they believe, attract readers' attention and invite them to turn to the reviews and articles that the visuals accompany.

As I announced at the beginning of this dissertation, an analysis of the nature or the number of advertisements in *Books in Canada* is beyond the scope of this study. That is not to say that ads were not plentiful in *Books in Canada*, nor that they were not sites of cultural work. They were on both counts, and especially in its first two decades. Not surprisingly, almost all of the advertising space was purchased by publishing houses, both large and small, local, regional, national and international.

On average, publishers' ads can be found on every second page of most issues of *Books in Canada*. Rarely in more than two colours, usually black on white, they ranged from full page ads on the back cover, to half-page ads filling the bottom or top half of the page, and frequently
they filled a 2 ¼ inch band running the length of the outside column of the favoured right hand page. In their ads, publishers featured their latest title, or titles, and clusters of text describing or lauding one or more of their products and/or their authors.

A cursory analysis of the advertisements in *Books in Canada* must acknowledge the grounding, or reassuring, effect they have on the reader’s reception of the magazine’s presence on the literary continuum. Without doubt, the consistent presence of publishers, especially the major publishers of the day, McClelland & Stewart, MacMillan, Clarke Irwin among them, lends credibility to the magazine. It telegraphs the message to the reading public that the magazine must be worth purchasing if it has succeeded in attracting publishing dollars. In this sense, the ads lend what Bourdieu calls institutional cultural capital to the magazine’s contents. They also lend the magazine characteristics of what Bourdieu calls “social capital,” that sense of belonging or of “membership in a group” (Bourdieu “Forms” 51). This sense of belonging is particularly apparent in advertisements placed by publishers of books for children, or in ads promoting gift books at Christmas, and in ads promoting membership in a reading club like that of the “Readers Club of Canada” in the May 1979 issue. That full-page ad features a young, amiable dark-haired family of five hugging together on a tight-tweed upholstered sofa at the bottom of a text-filled ad. The header reads “Why join the Readers’ Club of Canada? Because your family deserves the best Canadian writing” (36). The ad promises a copy of *Colombo’s Canadian Quotations* at a special price for new members. Such promotional material in *Books in Canada* is indicative of ways that advertisements other than those of book publishers do cultural work, by implying that reading is a family affair, and that it is not just individual literary-types who read books, and *Books in Canada*. Families do too. Moreover, the ad acts as an indication of the magazine’s cultural democracy by promoting a reading club that appeals to tastes ranging from the popular to the scholarly. This cultural democracy and sense of social belonging is also created by ads like
that published in the May 1987 issue by the Canadian Give the Gift of Literacy Foundation in which readers are told that "More than four million adult Canadians can’t read well enough to fill out a job application or understand the directions on a medicine bottle" and that readers "can help" by donating money or time to this campaign (4). The ad's pathos creates a sense of communal belonging by appealing to readers' awareness of social injustices. Obviously, they are able to read since they are reading the magazine and the ads it contains, but many people around them cannot.

With all of the above in mind, the study of advertisements in *Books in Canada* would reward an investigation into the cultural work of publishers more than it would reward the present investigation into the cultural agency of the periodical in which they appear. This is because the majority of ads in *Books in Canada* are those of publishers. An investigation into the cultural work of publishers in terms of these ads might then ask questions about the merit of advertising in a book-review magazine versus advertising in more scholarly journals, and about the role that a visible and consistent presence in a book-review magazine plays in the successful marketing of new titles. One might even conclude from such a study that publishers placed ads in *Books in Canada* as a way of promoting, even enriching, their own "symbolic" cultural capital – the larger the ad, the larger the publisher's reputation for recognizing worthy talent. It is for those reasons that I have restricted my analysis of ways that the visual content in *Books in Canada* help to shape a Canadian cultural identity to a selection of some of the more eloquent front covers in order to "hear" and "see" the cultural messages they are transmitting.

In *How Images Think*, Ron Burnett asks how technologically-created and enhanced images, those we receive via television, or in computer games, for example, are received by the human brain, how they "operate as information, objects for interpretation, sites for empathy and creativity, and windows onto the world" (xvi). Among the approaches he takes to answer these
questions is to analyse the Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer’s use of light to convey a woman’s state of mind. Burnett writes that he chose Vermeer “because his exploration of light and materiality in painting and his concern for accuracy and detail has provided modernism with one of its most important foundations, the assumption that there is a link between images and what they depict” (89). Similarly, it is the links between images in selections of the visual content of Books in Canada and what they depict about Canada’s cultural identity that I am interested in understanding. Burnett concludes his study of Vermeer by reiterating his “central concept,” namely that

... images are never representations in the sense exemplified by that term, nor do they simply represent the intentions of their creators. The minute an image finds a spectator ... the ‘object’ is no longer the main focus. As a consequence, viewers are in a middle zone between seeing, materiality, understanding, and feeling. (Burnett 89)

In Canada, we need go no further than a recent issue of Maclean’s to be convinced that front-cover images and their accompanying text have the potential to communicate political, social and/or cultural messages in addition to their literal messages (Fig. 1). So loaded is the political message lodged in the middle zone between image and text on the front cover of the October 4, 2010 issue of Maclean’s that representatives of Rogers Publishing had to issue a written apology for any insult that Quebecers might have inferred from it and the contents of the article. CBC’s Online News website reports that in his statement, issued on September 30, 2010, Rogers’ President Brian Segal expresses his regret and writes: “The cover of this issue and the feature story clearly offended some readers, and this has been the subject of much debate”

MACLEAN'S
THE MOST CORRUPT PROVINCE IN CANADA

ACCUSATIONS OF INFLUENCE-PULLING IN
Jean Charest's cabinet are just the latest
test: Why so many political scandals
happen in Quebec. p. 36

Figure 1

Figure 2
In other words, some Quebec readers, especially those in Quebec City, interpreted the picture as an insult to their city and to the annual winter festival that takes place there. Premier Jean Charest and the rest of the province’s political parties “in a rare show of solidarity,” condemned it as “Quebec bashing” (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/story/2010/09/30/rogers-apologizes-for-bonhomme-cover-page.html>). More to the point of this dissertation, however, is the cultural misunderstanding that the image highlights.

In this cover, there is a gap that readers need to identify, and then bridge intellectually, a lacuna where cultural work can occur even if it is through the misunderstanding that is signalled by the use of the image. For the editor(s) who chose to use the image and for the general anglophone reader, Bonhomme seems to represent the province of Quebec as a whole, including its fun-filled winter culture. The text labels all of Quebec as corrupt. In reality, in the province of Quebec, Bonhomme is associated primarily with the city of Quebec, the city that is famous for that fun-filled festival, known internationally as Carnaval. In Quebec, Bonhomme does not represent all of Quebec. It represents Quebec City, the City whose Carnaval committee members, according to the CBC news article, “has threatened legal action against Maclean’s, alleging that the magazine violated its intellectual property by using Bonhomme’s image” (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/story/2010/09/30/rogers-apologizes-for-bonhomme-cover-page.html>). In the case of the Maclean’s cover, the “intelligence” that had been “programmed” (Burnett xviii) into the image and the accompanying text was faulty. For the magazine’s editors, Bonhomme symbolizes the entire province, but in Quebec it does not. In the design of this image, the middle zone became a site where readers gained access to a clearer understanding of what the Bonhomme Carnaval image conveys to people living in the province of Quebec, and how that understanding differed from readers living elsewhere in Canada.
Burnett, who is interested mainly in how the brain behaves when confronted with simulated images, identifies this middle zone as the place where simulation can be shaped and limited. I see this middle zone as a site for what Will Straw, in his treatment of the Canadian presence in American movies, calls “cultural expression” (24). Messages that reflect and shape readers’ cultural identity are encoded by the creators of the front covers, there to be recognized and interpreted by readers of the magazine. In this sense, they are lodged in the same ‘gap’ or ‘lacuna’ between image and text that, as Ohmann shows, requires a mental “bridging process” on the part of the reader, the gap in which, I am suggesting, cultural work takes place.

In his inaugural editorial, Clery wrote: “In the 1970’s, our national hunger seems to be to know ourselves and our society better. Books, our own books, remain the most accurate record and reflection of what kind of people we really are. We need to know that if we are to persist” (5). Clery’s editorial expression of this ideology, an ideology rooted, as I have explained in Chapter I, in his Irish understanding of nationalism, resulted in front covers that worked, as my analysis below shows, to reflect the magazine’s commitment to take Canadian issues and the books about those issues seriously, but not too seriously.

The front cover of the August 1972 issue is a good example of the pointed irreverence that magazine editor Clery and managing editor Marshall were encouraging through their visual content. “Tory History Story” is the title of a review by Glen Frankfurter of Towards the Discovery of Canada by, as Frankfurter describes him, “without doubt, the best known and most influential professional historian in the country,” Donald Creighton (Fig. 2).

Front covers like these do cultural work through the connotative and symbolic meanings of the various components of the artwork. They invite scepticism, a mental distance, between the reader and the contents of the review, a gap that readers interpret for themselves, with the help of the artwork, before wading into the text. For example, the thick, solid block letters of the title of
WANTED

CHARLES TEMPLETON
FOR EXECUTIVE KIDNAPPING & CONSPIRACY TO THRILL

PATRICK WATSON
FOR ECOLOGICAL FASCISM & HARD BOILED PLOTTING

RICHARD ROHMER
FOR AMERICAN IMPERIALISM & ATTEMPTED SUSPENSE

PLUS REVIEWS BY: Abraham Rotstein, Mel Watkins, Léandre Bergeron, Greg Curnoe, Edgar Z. Friedenberg

Figure 3

BOOKS IN CANADA

Spider Robinson’s journey to the centre of his mind
Ian McLachlan’s new novel: Are we doomed to survive?
Biographies of Muggeridge, Carleton, Fadlmc, and Smith

Science Fiction in Canada: The Invasion from Inner Space

Figure 4
the article, and the repetition of that font in a slightly thinner version for the book’s title, suggest
the weightiness of the contentions being addressed in the book itself. Each of a torn half of the
Canadian flag being held by the plotting caricatures of American and British politicians implies
that the author’s argument is easy to shred. The sketched-in blinkers added to an actual
photograph of the man himself hints at what the reviewer states in his review, namely, that even
reputable historians sometimes wear blinkers. Depicting Creighton as “sticking pins” into a
Mackenzie King doll conveys the message to viewers of the cover that, as Frankfurter contends
in his review, weaknesses in the book’s argument may be grounded in Creighton’s personal
prejudices.

The front cover of the December 1974 issue (Fig. 3) with drawings by David Annesley, is
another example of images doing cultural work. The feature review that it announces was written
by Paul Stuewe who would, some twenty years later, become an editor of Books in Canada. As
mentioned above, the style of such line-drawings is reminiscent of those often seen in Punch
magazine, a British weekly venue for humour and satire published from 1841 to 1992. The
cover borrows from irreverent political cartoonists to alert the magazine’s readers to recently-
published Canadian mystery novels, while conveying the ironic ‘message’ that authors of such
books are generally considered ‘outlaws’ by the more established literary community and
therefore ought not be vaunted on the front cover of a national book-review magazine.

The cover’s format, a two-colour adaptation of the kind of “Wanted” posters that are used
to alert the public to dangerous criminals, and the title on the inside page: “Two Potboilers Go
To Market” and its subtitle, “One’s by Dick, the other by Chuck; Chuck’s has flair but Dick’s is
muck,” work, together with the subsequent review by Jon Ruddy of a “media thriller” by Patrick
Watson, to instil the irreverent, popular culture personality that Clery and Marshall, his
managing editor, sought to ascribe to the magazine (3). Moreover, portraying mystery novelists
as 'criminals' alerts readers to the marginal status mystery novels normally occupy with regard to the boundaries of the country's cultural identity. Featuring the genre on the front page of a national book-review magazine suggests that readers ought to reconsider their preconceptions about the read-worthy merits of the genre. The change in perception is further supported by the institutional capital associated with the names of the authors themselves. As Stuewe notes in the initial paragraph of his review of Richard Rohmer's mystery Exxoneration and of Charles Templeton's The Kidnapping of the President, the fact that the authors are “public men” helps the publishers’ marketing efforts. Both Rohmer and Templeton are “particularly well suited to contribute to that bandwagon psychology, that ‘Everybody’s reading it why aren’t you’? syndrome” (3). While Stuewe favours the idea that “a national literature ought to encompass ‘potboilers,’” he worries that in venturing into the realm of the mass-market best seller we are also importing some rather dubious techniques of hoopla and ballyhoo, of star systems and cults of personality, that are going to have a radical, and probably undesirable, effect upon the health of our national literary life. (3)

The intelligence, or interpretation, that was “programmed” into the front cover image is the message that Stuewe expresses in his review, namely one that invites readers to expand their sense of what genres a national literature can include. The cover image takes leaps from the idea of a marginalized literary form like ‘potboilers,’ to the social status of the authors, to their feature placement on the front cover of a national book-review magazine.

The artwork by Joss Maclennan featured on the front cover of the January 1981 issue (Fig. 4) acts as a similar attempt to that of Stuewe to expand readers’ sense of what the country’s cultural identity can consist of. It depicts two meteor-like typewriters (remember, this is 1981 – before every household, especially writers’ households, had a computer). The larger of the two, a
white one, is flying towards the lower forefront of the picture, two metal legs on each side extending out as landing gear, while the other smaller red flying typewriter is entering the stratosphere of the large reddish ‘planet’ they are both orbiting from the upper right hand corner. All about them in the black ‘outer space’ are ‘stars’, white, red and yellow dots and even a Saturn-like planet. Just below the smaller of the two typewriters are four lines of title-like text in yellow Times New Roman font – Science Fiction in Canada: The Invasion from Inner Space. The links programmed into this visual image, its front cover placement, together with the two-page article it refers to, “Future Imperfect,” by science fiction writer Terence M. Green, work together to encourage readers to include science fiction, which, like all literature, consists of stories written from the “inner space” of the mind, in their notion of what Canada’s cultural identity encompasses.

The front cover of the March 1978 issue (Fig. 5) extends an invitation to readers to consider the effects of federal multicultural policies on Canada’s cultural identity. As the present Citizenship and Immigration Canada’s website explains: “In 1971, Canada was the first country in the world to adopt multiculturalism as an official policy” (An Inclusive Citizenship). (The Canadian Multiculturalism Act was passed in 1988.) The policy was introduced by Pierre Elliott Trudeau’s government a year after the October Crisis, the politically-charged and ultimately tragic series of events during which Trudeau implemented the War Measures Act in response to the kidnapping on October 5, 1970 of British Trade Commissioner James Cross by the Front de libération du Québec (the FLQ). The policy “affirmed the value and dignity of all Canadian citizens regardless of their racial or ethnic origins, their language, or their religious affiliation.” It “also confirmed the rights of Aboriginal peoples and the status of Canada’s two official languages.” By 1978, the policy had been in place for seven years. The centrepiece of this front cover is a black and white drawing by
AN ETHNIC FEAST
Will multiculturalism nourish CanLit or give it indigestion?

Comments from
Jozef Skworecky
Irving Layton
Robin Skilton
George Jonas
and others

Figure 5

Who wrote the best first novel of 1978? See page three.
Drama issue: domestic alarms and Talonbooks' excursions.
A Gothic end to the prolific apprenticeship of Matt Cohen.

Figure 6
David Gilhooly of "frogchef," identified as such on the inside back-cover where he invites readers to enjoy "up to 10 full-course meals a year" by subscribing to Books in Canada.

Frogchef is half-hidden on both the front and inside back-covers by all sorts of ethnic food stacked upon numerous cookbooks – Ukranian, Jewish, French, Russian among them. In his left hand, Frogchef is waving a book entitled Inuit Whale Cookery. To the right of him on the front cover is the title text, a question, in red lettered-font: “AN ETHNIC FEAST Will multiculturalism nourish CanLit or give it indigestion?” Below that, in black lettering is the ‘teaser’ to notify readers that the issue offers them comments on the question “from Josef Skvorecky, Irving Layton, Robin Skelton, George Jonas and others.”

This cover is doing cultural work by requiring readers to make links between the “feast” of ethnic literature that is suggested by the pots and plates of food and the cookbooks, all from various countries, and the question that complements the image – how will it affect the nature of Canada’s book and literary culture? In addition, by signalling that well-known authors, Layton, Skvoreck, Skelton and Jonas among them, consider this question important enough to comment on, the cover provokes readers to think about what it might mean to their own sense of Canadian cultural identity to include books written by authors who were not born in Canada or whose cultural background is different from their own.

The six-page article that Frogchef introduces is entitled “The Verbal Mosaic.” It begins on the inside right-hand page of the magazine. The relatively substantial editorial intervention that acts as a preamble to the article is again an example of the magazine’s ability to work at reinforcing or reconstructing the boundaries of readers’ sense of what a collective Canadian cultural identity can consist of. The preamble states:

We in this country are embarked on an extraordinary experiment to see whether a democratic nation conceived in muddled and theoretical pluralism can long endure.
Whatever happens between Quebec and the rest of us, our constitution – such as it is – will be modified beyond the dreams of our forefathers... In the following pages we examine some of the implications for our literature – such as it is – of this ideal of multiculturalism. To lead off the section, freelancer A. F. Moritz asked several Canadian writers of different cultural backgrounds to comment on the statement and question: ‘Canada is not a melting pot; it is a cultural mosaic. How does this advance or retard the development of a Canadian literature?’ (3)

The editor’s use of inclusive, first-person plural pronouns (we, us, our) in this preamble is noteworthy for the type of cultural work it, and the front cover, are doing. They both reflect and work to create a collective sense of English-Canadian cultural identity, but one that excludes Quebec, as implied by referring to Quebec as being not part of “the rest of us” and as suggested by making the ‘chef’ a ‘frog,’ a derogatory anglophone term for francophones. The phrasing reinforces the divisiveness that Quebec’s cultural distinctiveness implies for English-Canadian readers, asking them to put it aside and think about the discussion that follows.

Pier Giorgio Di Cicco, described in the accompanying biography as a “Canadian of Italian descent,” responds to the question by noting that most writers in Canada draw from the notion of Canada being a “cultural mosaic,” either “directly or indirectly for their work” (4). He proposes that “the whole anti-American feeling led to a pursuit of the ‘pure’ Canadian, which of course didn’t exist (Di Cicco 4). He proposes that most writers do not think in terms of national literature (Di Cicco 5). His comments work to remind readers that Canadian book publishing had, prior to the 1970’s, been controlled by American, and to a lesser degree, British publishers.

Robin Skelton, known for his Marxist interests and leanings, suggests that the term “Canadian Literature” is problematic because it “could imply that books written in Canada have more in common than their authors’ nationality. He considers the term “Literature in Canada” a “less
loaded expression; if we substitute LitCan for CanLit, the question can be answered in positive terms” (Skelton 7). Skelton sees cultural diversity as something that “will result in an invigorating complexity that will spare us the domination of a cultural élite, which has devitalized much literature in other countries” (7). The variety of opinions on the question expressed in this article, and in other related articles in the issue, expands on the cultural work that began for readers with the mental links the front cover image required them to make. For example, it invites them to think, if only for a moment, about the impact of ‘anti-American’ attitudes on Canada’s literature, on the fact that some of the authors publishing in Canada at that time had come to Canada to, as Di Cicco says he did, “to escape the ‘melting pot’ of the United States” (Di Cicco 5) and, in some cases, to escape American military duty in Vietnam, and about the impact that such attitudes and decisions might have on Canada’s book and literary culture, and on their own sense of what Canadian culture consists of.

Black and white line drawings, often caricatures of the faces of authors whose work is reviewed in the magazines, alternated with full-cover black and white headshots or full-body shots of authors as front cover material on issues published at the end of the 1970’s and into the 1980’s. The April 1979 issue features a self-portrait of Gordon Pinsent, complemented by the teaser “A Man of Many Parts” (Fig. 6). By featuring an actor who, by that time, was well-known to Canadian television viewers and theatre-goers, together with an acting-related pun that they will readily understand – a man of many parts – the cover reads as a light-hearted blurring of creative boundaries (a television and theatre actor’s artistic rendering of himself on the front cover of a book-review magazine). The cover invites readers into the discussion that the issue offers of the vitality of drama in Canada and of Canadian drama’s status within a global context.

A two-page profile of Pinsent written by Toronto free-lance writer Phil Surguy appears in a section eight and one-half pages long that carries the heading ‘DRAMA’ across the top edge of
each page. The section includes an essay by Eleanor Wachtel about the history of Talon Books, “the largest publisher of plays in Canada” (Wachtel 20) and an essay by Tim Heald about plays by renowned British playwright Edward Bond. Heald poses the question of how well Bond thinks his plays would ‘translate’ to Canada because of the British class distinctions around which they are constructed. Bond’s reply, cited in the article, would have given readers of the magazine much to think about in terms of Canadian culture and society:

... In fact, in places like Canada and America you find class society heightened, not lessened... Perhaps you could say the class world of Canada was encapsulated – there are perhaps no obvious slums (apart from those of the Indians, I believe). But class structures have world-wide mega-forms, and the culture of Canada seems to be that of a class society as much as America’s is. Culture in Canada is derived from the norms and activities of capitalism. (Heald 23)

The article is doing cultural work in the connections Bond makes between capitalism and class structure in Canada (in contrast to Britain where class is based on heritage, education and upbringing) and particularly in the way that Bond conflates Indian reservations with “slums.” While poverty and squalid conditions are frequently associated with both types of geographical locations, in Canada, Indian or First Nation Reservations are tracts of land that the government has, according to *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, “set aside for the exclusive use of registered or status Indians.” They are the result of treaties and other formal arrangements made by the government to compensate Aboriginal bands for land in Canada that was confiscated from them by the governments of Britain and France and subsequently settled by immigrants.

In contrast, slums are run-down areas of a city. They are often inhabited by poor people who choose or are forced to live there because housing and rental costs are lower there than elsewhere in the city. Bond’s slippage is symptomatic of a misconception that Harvey McCue
explains in his entry for the *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. McCue writes that many people equate the reserves to “rural ghettos” or to “enclaves where Aboriginal people can escape the demands of modern society” <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index>. This way of thinking comes out of the attitude that doing away with reserves would “force” the Aboriginal people to assimilate and that “with assimilation, many of the problems that affect reserve populations would vanish” (McCue). What it does not taken into consideration is that, according to McCue, most Aboriginal bands are against assimilation. They are convinced that federal and provincial assistance to the reserves for improvements to social and economic infrastructures will help Aboriginal people maintain their culture and heritage: “To many Aboriginal people, reserves represent the last tangible evidence that they were the original people of Canada. Reserves nurture a sense of Aboriginal history and culture where indigenous language, spiritual beliefs and values are shared” (McCue). Despite the “host of problems” associated with the reserves, they are still the “physical and spiritual home for many Aboriginal people” (McCue).

Thus, Figure 6, the front cover of which announces the issue’s focus on drama, does cultural work in at least three ways: first, by reinforcing the idea that drama is an important component in a country’s culture; second, by announcing the issue’s allocation of more than eight of the magazine’s thirty-four pages to the genre and third, by enticing them to read an outsider’s misguided assessment of Canada’s social strata, and especially of the Aboriginal’s place within that strata. Heald’s article challenges readers to question and agree or disagree with parts or all of it, thus reconfirming, shaping, or reshaping, their personal grasp of what constitutes a Canadian cultural identity and the country’s social structure.

When front covers of the magazines feature images of representatives of a genre such as drama, or of a people, such as the January 1976 front cover photograph taken by amateur
photographer and Inuit historian, Peter Pitseolak, they are doing work in the viewer’s mind, inviting them to link the images with what they already know of Canadian culture and to allow previously unknown or little understood ideas expressed in the issue’s articles and reviews to influence their own sense of cultural identity. In the case of Figure 7, the front cover announces a focus on Inuit culture. The black and white photograph of a young Inuit couple, identified in the book under review as “Kooyoo, breast-feeding Mary, and her husband Kovanaktilliak Ottochie. About 1950” (Pitseolak 130) acts as background for the assertion “We’re Losing This Race” that has been placed across the lower third of the front cover image.\textsuperscript{xvii} The gravity of the play on the word “race” renders the assertion arresting and disconcerting: it suggests that not only are we losing this race of people; we are also losing the race to keep them and their culture from disappearing forever from Canada’s cultural identity. Also, the solid-white letters used to make the assertion lend a ghost-like, soon-to-disappear quality to the statement. Not only does the white emphasize the imminence of the loss. It also recalls the cause of it, the coming of white people to Inuit communities.

Moreover, the review of the book that the photograph is taken from, People from our side: A Life Story with photographs by Peter Pitseolak and oral biography by Dorothy Eber, heightens the potential of the front cover to do cultural work. From the reviewer, Peter Such, readers learn for example, that Pitseolak was ambivalent about whether or not to allow white nurses and teachers into the community. He realized, he told Eber, that his community would be “left behind” if he decided against it, but he knew that “‘it would be the beginning of difficult times’” (Such 9). Perhaps the review’s greatest potential to do cultural work lies in its concluding sentences:
Figure 7

Figure 8
Hurtig has done us a great service with the publication of *People from our side*; buy it, put it on courses in schools. It is as close to the real experience of Cape Dorset Inuit as the eye can glean from print and picture. And as close to the experience of meeting a true human heart as any novel you might have read. (Such 9)

The review works to shape the reader’s cultural identity especially in this section first by the reviewer’s use of inclusive language such as the “us” to mirror the “we” in the cover text who are “losing this race,” second, through his acknowledgement of the importance of the book and the people it features, and third through his use of imperatives, commanding readers to buy the book and ensure that it is taught in schools (Such 9).

Dale Blake, in his overview of Inuit literature, works with four categories that “serve to contain contemporary Inuit prose,” categories that Robin McGrath, a writer and critic had, according to Blake, previously identified: “(1) modern stories, (2) memoirs or reminiscences, (3) history of the material culture, (4) articles and essays on contemporary life” (Blake 536). Blake, who was writing his entry for the *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada* (2002), places Pitseolak’s book in the second category, a category which, according to Blake had, at least up until the time he was writing his overview, “received little critical attention” (Blake 536). His remark suggests that the attention that Marshall brought to Inuit culture by reviewing Eber’s book and by featuring one of Pitseolak’s photographs on the front cover has, in the end, added little to the cultural identity of readers. However, and as I explain in Chapter V, in terms of the cultural work of book reviews, there can be no doubt that the cover, coupled with the review, gave Eber’s book a place in that cultural identity that it may otherwise never have had, if only by documenting its existence and its significance.

Many of *Books in Canada*’s front covers while Marshall was editor were not as dire in their messages as that one. The May 1979 issue (Fig. 8) features a caricature by Howard Engel of
Robert Weaver sitting next to his typewriter smoking a pipe, wearing his trademark large, square eyeglasses. Weaver, front and centre on the cover, is framed by cartoon-drawings of Margaret Atwood, Northrop Frye, and Canadian novelist Hugh Garner amongst a crowd of other sketched-in bodiless heads trailing back into Canada’s green hinterland. A microphone hovers above Atwood’s head with a CBC electrical outlet emerging from behind, a stack of books that includes an Oxford anthology of short stories, and something that resembles a drop-sheet or a blank sheet of paper to the left of Weaver on which a revolver, a dagger, two bullets and other unidentifiable objects have been placed.

Will Straw uses the term “visual imagery” in his study of ways that U.S. movies and photographs “stage the nation” (Hogan qtd. in Straw 29) and Canada’s presence on that stage. This front cover depiction of Weaver offers readers evocative visual imagery. The illustration by Engel appeals to readers’ senses of taste and smell in the sketches of cups of steaming tea or coffee, the pine forest and the pipe, to sound with the microphone, to touch with Weaver’s fingers on the typewriter keys and with the knife and the revolver – the latter being suggestive either of mystery-books or possibly of the back-stabbing impulse, jealousy and frustration that can taint a literary community, and of course to sight in the nods it gives to Canada’s more recognizable critics and writers. The “visual eloquence” (Hariman and Lucaites qtd. in Straw 28) of this cover places Weaver center-stage in the theatre of the nation’s literature. It telegraphs or, in Straw’s words, is “hieroglyphic” (26) in its depiction of the scope of Weaver’s contributions to Canada’s book and literary culture in his capacity as program editor at the CBC, and as founder of Tamarack Review. The interpretation process that the hieroglyph requires imposes on its viewers the appreciation of Weaver that Mark Abley expresses in the six-page lead article to which the cover refers.
Indeed, the front cover of the December 1979 (Fig. 9) issue is a particularly active example of the way that images have the power to stimulate cultural work by proposing links between what is present in the image and what is present in the minds of the readers. This cover has been designed to actually force readers to make the links physically by featuring a line drawing of Margaret Laurence in which the lines have been replaced by intermittent numbers (Fig. 9). The accompanying text, which addresses readers as “Kids!” and invites them to “Connect the dots and discover a FAMOUS CANADIAN AUTHOR (Hint on p. 15),” introduces the idea that Laurence is now writing books for children, an idea confirmed by Sandra Martin in her review, playfully titled “Laurentian play-pens,” of Laurence’s *The Olden Days Coat*, and *Six Darn Cows*.

Cultural work occurs here when readers attempt to negotiate the gap between the front cover image and the capitalized “famous Canadian author” heading that suggests they should be able to recognize the face. It is unlikely that they are able to do so because Laurence’s features are barely discernible without the lines. Once readers turn to the review as the “hint” instructs them to, and see the photograph of Laurence that the dotted sketch is taken from, they again have to recall what they know about Laurence and adjust it to include the books for children that are being reviewed. It would surely come as a surprise to some readers to learn that Laurence also wrote books for children. Moreover, once they have read the review, readers will be required to weigh the validity of the possible reasons that the reviewer offers about why Laurence has moved into the genre and add those suppositions to what they know of Laurence and her place in their own sense of Canada’s cultural identity. Martin suggests that while the Governor-General prize that Laurence won for *The Diviners* earned Laurence “heaps of praise from critics and fans,” it also earned her “piles of abuse from tormented souls who found it obscene,” an experience that Martin proposes “must have been traumatic for Laurence” (Play-Pens 15).
Another sort of cultural work is going on in the June/July 1980 cover image by Michael Solomon. Entitled “Literary Gatherings,” it offers a sardonic look at the people who attend such events, and the nature of their conversations (Fig. 10). The illustration, which resembles a page in a comic book, with each character’s contribution to the conversation presented in cartoon ‘bubbles,’ recalls what Bond had to say in the quoted excerpt above about Canada’s culture, namely that it ‘turns on’ capitalism, or at least has much to do with money (23). For example, in the centre of the image is a frumpily-dressed white-haired woman remarking to a balding, stately-looking gentleman: “I think we have in common a strong academic background and an ability nevertheless to ‘cash in’ if you will” to which the gentleman replies: “Of course I’ve never had a grant of any kind...” On the far right of the image, a thin priest wearing a halo above his head is quoted as saying “A tenth part of the sales, as you know” while on the far left side, two sleazy-looking males, one wearing a loud green and yellow polka-dotted tie, bemoan the state of “notre métier.” Other comments depicted in the bubbles mock the superficiality of dialogue that occurs among some writers. For example, one male author in the picture comments that “...unflinching realism’s my game, mate...” Another comments to a youngish female author: “The interminable sentence becomes our national style,” to which she responds “Pre-cast concrete prose...” A third male, tucked in the background says to no-one in particular: “Well, yes it did start as Horatian satire...” With this front cover, the magazine is confirming its own popular cultural leanings and that of those who choose to read it by inviting readers to join the circle of readers, who, like the cover suggests, reject the premise that authors are not interested in financial success, or readers who take pleasure in poking fun at the cultured literati.

The front covers of *Books in Canada* during the early 1980’s anticipated the trend to celebrity culture that York treats in her study of Atwood’s, Ondaatje’s and of Carol Shields’ response to fame. *Books in Canada* both reflected and contributed to the trend. In the twentieth
anniversary retrospective that he published in May 1991, Stuewe comments that with the arrival of Michael Smith as editor in February 1981 after Marshall had stepped down, “one of BiC’s periodic redesignings resulted in 11 consecutive black-bordered covers between June/July 1981 and June/July 1982” (Stuewe May 1991 18). He added that “there was nothing terminal about what went on inside however” (Stuewe May 1991 18). Several of the front covers he is referring to feature a headshot, full-body photo, or drawing of a well-known Canadian author – among them W.O. Mitchell, Raymond Souster and Louis Dudek and Roch Carrier. Front covers like these shorten the gap that readers have to negotiate in the shaping of their cultural identity. By drawing attention to the ‘look’ of Canada’s authors, the cover attributes the ‘star’ quality that Stuewe talked about to them and, by extension, to the books that they write.

Full-colour head-shots of authors are a staple of the front covers of Lettres québécoises. André Vanasse, current director of Lettres québécoises, in the interview I had with him, addressed the “consecration” or validation that a front-cover image garners an author. It does not result in direct sales, he said, but inserts the author into the “literary consciousness” of readers (Vanasse Interview). In her study of women’s magazines, Ellen McCracken writes that their front covers serve not only as genre identifiers and consumer enticers, but also as a frame for the advertisements that appear in the magazine (13-37):

If the cover image and text do not succeed in enticing large groups of readers, the reach of the other ads inside will be diminished. The commercial women’s magazines will have failed in their principal goal – to deliver quality audiences to the advertisers who sustain their publications. (18)
The covers of *Books in Canada* magazine were striving towards a similar goal: to entice readers to buy the magazine, but not so much in order to expose them to the messages in the ads, but rather to entice them to search out and interact with the messages in the reviews or articles that the front cover text refers to, and thereby be encouraged to consider purchasing the books. The front covers, as those discussed above illustrate, were “programmed” more to entice readers to the reviews rather than to the advertising. The mental links that the front covers stimulated in their viewers solidified the cultural work that began the moment readers took note of the front cover image and of the text that tells them what there is to read in that particular issue.

Examples of front-covers that “stage the nation” during the 1980’s include those on the August/September 1981 issue and of the May 1983 issue. The former features an arresting line-drawing by Donna Gordon of a large stylized fiddlehead growing up within the slats of a lobster-trap (Fig. 11). Gordon’s artwork proposes that Canadian cultural identity includes literature from the Eastern provinces where finding and steaming fresh fiddleheads are popular springtime rituals. The latter cover consists of a provocative illustration that depicts the cultural “wall” that exists between French and English culture and society as one that can be scaled, metaphorically, by way of the ladder that is supported by books (Fig.12).

Such an interpretation of the latter image is confirmed by the essay it refers to. Entitled “The Other Solitude,” by Alberto Manguel, the sub-heading – “An outsider surveys French-Canadian fiction, and finds in it some of the most venturesome – and successful – writing today” invites readers to learn about fiction from Quebec by reading further in the article. Manguel writes, for example:

... The influence of the French language on English-speaking writers in Canada is not noticeable and probably non-existent. The influence of the English language on French-speaking Canadian writers is clear and almost deliberate; it makes the language richer; it
has the effect of music played on instruments other than the ones one is accustomed to hear. (7)

Covers like these, or like that of the January-February 1986 issue of a stylized, androgynous translator working on a page of what looks like columns of Greek, Chinese and Arabic letters, and the complementary text: “Other Words, Other Worlds: The Translator’s Choice” (Fig. 13), raise translators and their profession to that of social scribes, thereby encouraging readers to consider books from other parts of the country and of the world as knowledgeable guides into “other worlds.”

Several of the front covers of Books in Canada published during the 1990’s, with Stuewe as editor, signal a move away from requiring obvious intellectual links that are then confirmed by the content of the reviews themselves. Covers during his tenure often demonstrate characteristics of postmodernism in their self-reflexivity and their blurring of artistic boundaries. A good example of the latter is the use of one creative art form, a picture by the celebrated Maritime artist Mary Pratt, entitled “Salmon between Two Sinks” (1987), to announce the March 1992 focus on books from the Atlantic provinces, another creative art form (Fig.14). Pratt is known for her unique approach to art, one that the Canadian Government’s Library and Archives website calls photo-realism, and for her domestic subject-matter. Featuring the artwork of a well-known contemporary Canadian artist, one that is neither entirely photograph nor entirely painting, of a fish, a product of nature leaping from one metal kitchen sink to another, is a clever way to suggest the “fish-out-of-water” marginality that books by
OTHER WORDS, OTHER WORLDS: THE TRANSLATORS' CHOICE

Lonesome travellers:
the writers of Acadia
And an interview
with George Faludy

Figure 13

Atlantic Provinces Issue

A LOT OF THERE, THERE:
Fraser Sutherland on How Canadian Literature Rose in the East
KENNETH J. HARVEY's The Flesh So Close
The Golden Threads: ANN COPELAND in Interview
BILL GASTON's Ties to the Earth
A Cornucopian Catch of Poetry, Children's,
and Atlantic Region Book Reviews

Figure 14
Maritime authors often suffer from in Canada, a marginality that the issue’s contents are about to address.

In many of the covers of the magazine during Stuewe’s editorial tenure, however, the links between the image and the ‘messages’ that the editor and/or artist programmed into it are not obvious. They need to be mulled over, deciphered. For example, the front cover of the Summer 1993 issue elicits a question along the lines of “What does this image of a flower have to do with this issue’s contents?” (Fig.15). Only upon closer inspection can viewers of the image note that the petals are decorated by tiny festive drawings of open books, sailboats, sunglasses, beach balls and parasols, can a link be made. Readers need to deconstruct the image and then decipher its relationship to the contents. They might conclude, for example that this issue, because it is a summer issue and the cover consists of a single stylized flower, will feature reviews of books that are suitable for light summer reading. However, such intellectual ‘closure’ eludes the reader, a circumstance that is, as Hutcheon has shown, typical of the era’s art forms, including architecture (the discipline, Hutcheon notes, where the term “postmodernism” was first used), cinema, visual art and literature (Politics 1-2). There is in the sixty-six pages of this issue of Books in Canada a substantial omnibus review of books for children entitled “Bound for the Beach,” by Alison Sutherland, a two-page omnibus review of gardening books by Brian Fawcett entitled a “Sense of Humus” visually complemented by a deep pink orchid against a sky-blue backdrop, and a two-page review by Robin Skelton of crime fiction entitled “Diminishing Returns.” The remaining books reviewed, however, are not what would generally be considered light, summer reading. They include a review by George Galt of two collections of correspondence, The Letters of John Sutherland, edited by Bruce Whiteman, and Margaret Laurence – Al Purdy: A Friendship in Letters, edited by John Lennox, a review by David Homel
of Clarke Blaise’s haunting autobiography entitled *I Had a Father* and a profile by Gordon W. E. Nore of social justice advocate, Marlene Webber.

Figure 15

This approach to cover art suggests a deliberate appeal to the reader’s intellect, inviting a consideration of the ‘disconnect’ between the covers and the contents of the issues. These covers do cultural work in that they resound with the newest developments in cultural ‘aesthetics,’ or in that they challenge readers who are not familiar with these trends to become so. Content, like the essay mentioned in Chapter III entitled “Whatzzahappenin’ in Lit Crit,” by Stan Fogel (Fig. 16), published in the magazine’s twentieth anniversary issue, or the expanded “CanLit Acrostic” published regularly during Stuewe’s tenure, (Fig. 17) support this “reading” of the intellectualized nature of the cultural work being done by the magazine during Stuewe’s five-year editorial tenure.
WHAZZAPPENIN’ IN LIT CRIT

A guide for those perplexed by literary scholarship’s abandonment of confident answers in favor of problematic questions

By Stanley Fogel


Figure 16

Figure 17
The March 1991 cover (Fig. 18) offers a particularly rich cultural message. A luminous banner wafting beneath a stylized sun features a line of text that ends with the word “livre,” the French word for “book.” The banner is an obvious play on the now infamous proclamation, at least in the context of events in Quebec that led to the October crisis, the incendiary words of French President Charles De Gaulle delivered to a large crowd from the Montreal City Hall during Expo 67: “Vive le Québec libre!”

This front cover does more than simply announce the issue’s focus on literary fiction from Quebec. The Quebec flag, attached to what resembles an official book, soars towards a sun-kissed golden banner that waves above it, above a church spire and above a collection of red-roofed stone row houses of the kind often found in old Montreal. The result is a subliminally evocative collage that presents Quebec in an optimistic light (the red sun) and as a culturally-rich, passionate province (the gold and the red of the banner) that is on the move towards independence from Canada (the solidly-supported, wing-shaped flag). These techniques work to place the validity of Quebec’s insistence on the distinctness of its culture and on the vitality of that culture squarely in front of an English audience of readers, readers who are about to enter Quebec’s culture via the reviews to be found in the issue.

*Books in Canada* was to undergo radical changes to its size and front cover format when the Steins purchased it in 1995. With the Steins as publishers and Doidge as editor, *Books in Canada* covers assumed an ‘artsy,’ worldly, *London Review of Books* (*LRB*) look and feel to them that broadened the intellectual leap that readers would have to make between image and
Figure 20

Figure 21
On behalf of everyone born in 1961, David Eddie reviews

Boom, Bust & Echo: How to Profit from the Coming Demographic Shift

—and in order to profit from the Baby Boom Echo, the

New Kids' Books Section

Feferling—Thing of Letters
pro- and anti-Choyce Opposing Views of How Do You Spell

Paul Wilson speaks with Rohinton Mistry

Donna Orwin on Jesus in Russia

So Hot, So Fiery: Just with Layton

First Novel Award Shortlist

Mcluhan Unplugged
content. Dramatically different from any previous *Books in Canada* format, the magazine’s covers now had the same large, broadsheet format, and similar quality of stock as the *LRB* or the *Times Literary Supplement*. Rather than being dominated by one independent image whose relation to the magazine’s content or theme either explicitly or implicitly related to specific content or to a general theme, the cover page was now the product of a graphic artist commissioned to design it. Covers for the November 1995 (Fig. 19) and December 1995 (Fig. 20) issues were divided into three or four rectangles stretching across the width of the cover. The top and bottom rectangles were divided into two square blocks with the magazine’s name taking up the top left hand block and teaser text balancing out the other half of the two-block-long rectangle that filled the upper rectangle.

The name of the magazine, in thick solid letters was offset with the first BO and ‘in Canada’ on a separate line above the remaining “OKS” below it, and the line “The Canadian Review of Books” holding it all together. One side of the large centre block was sometimes filled with the photograph of an author, Jane Jacobs, for example, on the November 1995 issue (Fig. 19), or of Allan Bloom on the December 1995 issue (Fig. 20), while the opposing block featured textual teasers for four or five of the reviews. Other times, the centre portion was filled with abstract artwork like that of the May 1996 issue (Fig. 21) or of October 1996 (Fig. 22).

If, as McCracken writes, “the cover serves to label not only the magazine but the consumer who possesses it” (quoted in McLoughlin 5) then front covers of *Books in Canada* during the latter half of the 1990’s labelled the people who were reading the magazine as cultural sophisticated, capable of training their eye on and appreciating the calibre of graphic art it saw there, while at the same time taking in and following the lead to the titles and issues that the cover’s textual content were alluding to.
The magazines credit listing names VictoR GAD as either the artistic consultant or cover designer throughout Doidge’s tenure which ended in 1998. He continued producing artwork for the magazine through the editorial tenure of Gerald Owen, Doidge’s former Assistant Editor, from March 1998 to September 1998, that of Diana Kuprel from October 1998 to February 2000, and into Olga Stein’s tenure which began in May 2001. The majority of GAD’s images served as ultra-modern, technologically-produced visual anchors on covers that were otherwise busy, sometimes very busy, blaring out content teasers in large black, red or white font. Among these is a highly stylized pink and purple image on the October 1996 issue of a mother reading to her child who is reading yet another book, and of the mental images each is making (Fig. 22).

Other of GAD’s contributions are calmer but no less striking. For example, the cover of the March 1996 consists of a colour photograph of Rohinton Mistry from the waist up sitting casually in front of a wall of Egyptian carvings in a mustard-yellow sandstone wall (Fig. 23). Mistry’s name is in the same bright orangey-red as the BOOKs of the magazine’s title, while the letters of other teasers are white with a thin-red shadow. Across the bottom of the entire image is a two-inch solid black band with the teaser text aligned to the right – “The Royal Road to African-Canadian Literature,” which leads readers to turn to a three-page article by George Elliott Clark in which Clark traces the history of African-Canadian literature and its authors. Clark’s overview reads like an essential history lecture that has been long overdue in Canadian culture.

Commissioning images from artists like GAD and paying for the services of art directors like Gordon Alexander, whose name also appeared on the magazine’s credit listing during that period, may well have been a costly endeavour. When Olga Stein took over as editor from Diana Kuprel, she soon took charge too of the front cover design. The background to the cover images and text became solid white. The name of the magazine now stretched across the entire top
portion of the cover instead of being broken up onto two lines as it had been from 1995 to 2000 with BOOKS still larger than "in Canada." The magazine's subtitle, "The Canadian Review of Books," is on a separate line beneath the title's textbox. The lettering of the teasers alternates between black and another colour, with BOOKS in large thick white letters against the second solid colour.

The teasers in the early years of Stein's tenure suggest an attempt to augment the attention the periodical was giving to international literature. For example, the August 2002 front cover features textual teasers to reviews of a collection of Jacques Derrida's philosophical essays, of a book about British history and of a book by renowned British professor of neurology and psychiatry, Oliver Sachs (Fig. 24). This move, like the earlier editors' move to mirror the look of the major British and American book-review magazines, could be read as an attempt to attract international advertisers. Alternatively, it may have been in keeping with the internationalization of the publishing business at the expense of Canadian publishers at the time as documented by MacSkimming in his study of the publishing trade. From a more positive perspective, it could also have been in response to the international acclaim that Canadian authors were garnering as of the early 1990's. As Robert Fulford notes, throughout the 1990's, several Canadian authors enjoyed international success, a trend that began in 1992 when Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* shared the prestigious 1992 Man Booker prize with Barry Unsworth (Fulford).

Stein cannot be accused, however, of neglecting to feature Canadian content on her front covers. The August 2003 issue features a digitalized photograph of Canadian author and former
Self-Portrait of a Literary Savant
Eric Ormsby reviews
The Author of Himself: The Life of Marcel Reich-Ranicki

Scientists and their Passions:
Stephen Hawking's Universe in a Nutshell
Lee Smolin's Three Roads to Quantum Gravity
Thomas Kuhn's The Road Since "Structure": Philosophical Essays, 1970-1993
Oliver Sacks's Uncle Tungsten: Memories of a Chemical Boyhood

Interviews with Elisabeth Harvor and Jonathan Ames
Primo Levi's The Double Bond

Uncle Tungsten: Memories of a Chemical Boyhood reviewed by Donald H. Akenson.
Jonathan Safran Foer's Everythig luminated reviewed by David Coupland's All Academic.

Telling it Like it is:
Brian Fawcett's Tough Stance against The Way Things Are in His Home Town

Review with Tim Bowling

Non-Fiction: John F. Hellwell Globalization and Well-Being
Paul Theroux's Dark Star Safari
Potter Returns

Figure 24

Figure 25
Books in Canada acting editor Brian Fawcett complemented by the title of his latest book, Virtual Clearcut, by announcements of reviews of books by the German author W. G. Sebald and Swedish writer Sven Lindqvist, and by teasers to the magazine’s Canadian content – an interview with Canadian poet Tim Bowling and a review by Patrick Watson of Paris, 1919: Six Months that Changed the World, by Margaret MacMillan (Fig. 25).

Stein continued this basic, artistically unadorned format of a photograph or a drawing of a well-known Canadian author’s face, complemented by teasers that announced the magazine’s mix of national and international authors and subjects, until the magazine’s demise in 2008. In April 2007 she featured a blue-tinged photo montage of Margaret Atwood, the last of which has Atwood wearing scuba-diving gear, as a way of enticing readers to John Moss’s tribute to Atwood and to the prestigious Literary Grand Prix for lifetime achievement that she had just been awarded at the annual Blue Metropolis Literary Festival (Fig. 26).

From there, the cover’s representations of authors were frequently caricature-driven, such as the picture of a “shocked” Naomi Klein on the cover of the January/February 2008 issue, complemented by the satirical teaser “The Knotted Knickers of Naomi Klein Nicholas Maes reviews The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism” (Fig. 27). The “label” that these covers were offering readers was becoming less sophisticated and more opinionated. The cover art combined with groups of book titles, sometimes including either the names of their authors or of the reviewers, was functional, busy and, depending on viewers’ tastes and political ideologies, either funny, or sarcastic. The picture of Klein, for example, suggests the ultra-conservative leanings of Books in Canada in its final days. The caricature demeans the author, making light of the left-wing critique of capitalism that Klein, an internationally best-selling Canadian author and provocative social activist, offers in the book under review. One might argue that
Fiction: Linger Awhile by Russell Hoban, King John of Canada by Scott Gardiner, My Name is Bosnia by Madeleine
Stephen Brunwell’s Paths of Glory: The Life and Death of General James reviewed by David A. Furlow
Bernard Williams’s On Opera, reviewed by Rózia Szabados
Andrew Roberts’s A History of the English-Speaking People, reviewed by Pat

Scuba Diving with Margaret Atwood
A Tribute by John Moss
To this Year’s Winner of the Blue Metropolis Literary Grand

Poetic Imperative
John Barton asks, “Where Have all the Poets Gone?”
Lyle Neff on Selected Poems of Earle Birney, One Muddy Hand
Anqo-Quebec Poetry by Jason Camlot

Stellar Physicist
Lee Smolin’s The Trouble with Physics: The Rise of String Theory, The Science, and What Comes Next reviewed by Peter Such

Andrew Roberts’s A History of the English-Speaking People, reviewed by Pal

Science, and What Comes Next reviewed by Peter Such

Figure 26

The Gathering by Anne Enright, the Far Shore by Negovan Rajic, The Savage Detectives by Roberto Bolado, Her’s Trilogy, The Jam Fruit Tree, Takada Yaka, Once Upon a Tender Time

Poetic Imperative
John Barton asks, “Where Have all the Poets Gone?”
Lyle Neff on Selected Poems of Earle Birney, One Muddy Hand
Anqo-Quebec Poetry by Jason Camlot

Stellar Physicist
Lee Smolin’s The Trouble with Physics: The Rise of String Theory, The Science, and What Comes Next reviewed by Peter Such

Stellar Physicist
Lee Smolin’s The Trouble with Physics: The Rise of String Theory, The Science, and What Comes Next reviewed by Peter Such

Figure 27
Stein was attempting to return to the irreverence that Clery and Marshall had originally aimed for. Also possible is the argument that these simpler, text-heavy front covers were being designed with the Steins' professed intention to offer a digital version in mind. The functional front covers would expedite the process of down-loading them on a computer. Both of those would be valid arguments were it not for the front cover of the December 2006 issue – a disturbing deviation in front-cover content that works to foreshadow the demise of the magazine (Fig. 28).

The dark, full-colour reprint of Goya's "The Inquisition Tribunal," because of its unexpected, sombre presence on the front cover, piques readers' curiosity, tempting them to turn to the 18-page essay written by the Steins (discussed in more detail in Chapter VI) announced in the photo caption about the financial "plight" of Conrad Black. In hindsight, the December 2006 cover, coupled with the stately photograph on the cover of the September 2007 issue of newspaper baron Conrad Black, found guilty by the American judicial system in July 2007 of three counts of mail fraud and one count of obstruction of justice, and with the preceding front covers featuring satirical cartoon drawings of certain Canadian authors, were all symptoms of a serious editor-reader estrangement. These covers privileged the interests and opinions of the editor and of her husband, the magazine's publisher, over those of her readers. Her editorial decisions were foisting certain labels on her readers, labels that many of them might be uncomfortable wearing. McCracken, in her study of the front covers of women's magazines, writes:

the cover functions as an interpretive lens for what follows by offering us pre-embedded definitions through the magazine's title, the headlines, and the photo. . . . Readers are not deterministically required to view the inside according to the cover frame, but a given model of interpretation is part of the cover's code and exerts strong influence. (37)
Fiction: Consolation by Michael Redhill, DeNiro’s Game by Rawi Hage,
The View from Castle Rock by Alice Munro, Home Schooling by Carol Windle,
The Friends of Meager Fortune by David Adams Richards

Adrian Goldsworthy’s Caesar: The Life of a Colossus, reviewed by David A. Field
Peter Ames Carlin’s Catch a Wave: The Rise, Fall & Redemption of the
Beach Boys’ Brian Wilson, reviewed by Ray Robertson
Simon Callow’s Orson Welles: Hello Americans, reviewed by Todd Swift

Auto da Fé
Conrad Black, Corporate Governance, and the End of Economic Mas

America and the World: David Salway on Mark Steyn’s America Alone: The End
the World as We Know It, Paul Drolet on Political Equality by Robert A. Dahl
Does American Democracy Still Work? by Alan Wolfe

Interview with Noah Richler

Figure 28
As editor, Stein would have to have been aware of that influence and particularly with this cover, harnessed it in order to promote interests and opinions that may not have been those of the majority of her readers, an initiative that would not have gone unnoticed by granting organizations and by any readers who had been and still were outraged by Black’s fraudulent and insouciant behaviour.

Over the years that *Books in Canada* was part of Canada’s writing milieu, the model of interpretation and the definitions of identity that their front covers offered its readers moved from overt nationalism to subtle intellectualism to personal ideology. While readers might have been prepared to be associated with the labels the magazine offered them during the first three decades of its existence, if the demise in 2008 of the magazine is anything to go by, they were becoming less and less interested in doing so.

The design of the front covers of the periodical during its final few years may or may not have contributed to that demise. Nevertheless, it needs to be said that if the front covers of each issue of *Books in Canada*, from the rise of the magazine in 1971 until its demise in 2008, were exhibited one next to the other and grouped by decade, the result would be an evocative portrait of key moments and members in the evolution of Canada’s vibrant cultural expression. Each cover, even the most functional, rewards serious consideration of the contribution it makes to English Canada’s cultural identity.
CHAPTER V:  
Books Reviews – Cultural “Bills of Goods”

A book review is similar to Northrop Frye’s definition of literary criticism, “a structure of thought and knowledge in its own right with some measure of independence from the art it deals with” (Frye, Anatomy 5). And like literary criticism, book reviews are “essential to” culture (Frye, Anatomy 3) and capable of influencing the cultural development of a nation. If the front covers of Books in Canada were sites of cultural work through the intellectual bridging processes they invited, the magazine’s “bills of goods,” in other words, its merchandise, book reviews, were also cultural worksites through their capacity to express and shape the aesthetic values and social and cultural priorities of those who read them. To illustrate ways that the contents of book reviews do cultural work, I begin this chapter with my own experience of reviewing the 2005 republication of the early 20th century Canadian novel entitled Rockbound, by Frank Parker Day. That is followed by a close-reading and discussion of the cultural work of a selection of other book reviews published in Books in Canada over the years.

While preparing to write my review of Rockbound, I read a 1958 review by former Dalhousie University professor Allan Rees Bevan of the original 1928 volume, published in The Dalhousie Review. Bevan’s review is an excellent example of ways that ideas about, and efforts to change, an era’s social and cultural values can be deduced from a review’s contents. His is particularly useful here because of the references it makes to reviews published shortly after the book’s first appearance.

Bevan quotes from reviews in which Day is faulted for allowing his realistic setting to “overshadow plot and character” (339). This kind of critical response is to be expected. As Robert Lecker notes, the majority of literary criticism prior to the 1950’s, “was an amateurish public cheerleading discourse aligned with patriotism. It was driven by a monologic interest in
myths of nationalism, communal value, and the importance of nation-building through literary building” (73). It stands to reason, then, that many reviewers of the 1928 edition would find fault with Rockbound, especially given, for example, Raddall’s obvious attempt to permeate his novel with a rich and realistic Maritime dialect. At the time of the book’s first publication, such privileging of realism may well have disappointed many of that era’s literary critics.

Similarly, the protagonist’s name, David Jung, privileges the modernist preference for exploring the psychology of fictional characters, rather than focussing on a character’s physical behaviour. Also, the fictional self-reflexivity of Raddall’s novel – for example, Day has his protagonist reflecting on the craft of writing, and on questions of time and space – and the novel’s inter-textual characteristics that include Chaucerian epigraphs at the beginning of each chapter and Day’s weaving of ruminations on English literary ‘greats’ such as Shakespeare and Byron into the thoughts of his protagonist, may not have worked in its favour, given their relative novelty at that moment in the development of Canadian literature. These kinds of techniques would become common to novels published decades later, but they may have ill-suited the values of some literary critics of his day.

On the other hand, as Bevan’s review shows, some reviewers of the 1928 edition praise Day’s embrace of the “new” trend in early twentieth-century Canadian novels towards realistic, ordinary settings and struggles – Frederick Philip Grove’s Settlers of the Marsh (1925) is another example of this characteristic of early-modernism in Canadian literature – over the more romantic literary output of the preceding decades, the poetry of Charles G. D. Roberts and Archibald Lampman, the novels of Lucy Maud Montgomery and the animal stories of Charles G. D. Roberts and Earnest Thompson Seton, for example. Bevan cites a letter written by Archibald MacMechan, an English professor at Dalhousie University, to Day in 1928, in which MacMechan congratulates the author for “bringing realism” to “the amateur state of Canadian
fiction" (Bevan 338). The congratulatory tone frames realism as an improvement on the status quo and conveys to MacMechan’s readers the idea that Day’s novel represents an advancement in the developmental process of Canadian literature. It does so through what Gérard Genette in Seuils, a typological study of the various discursive elements that accompany a work of fiction, calls the “illocutionary force” of the sentence, in this case, the generally positive and encouraging nature of a congratulation (10).

When Bevan’s review was published, it introduced a mid-twentieth-century generation of readers to Day’s novel, providing them with a contemporary interpretation of the novel’s social and culture value:

Day’s beliefs as expressed in his writing are positive and consistent; whether or not they are beliefs by which most of us attempt to fashion our lives does not really matter. It is enough to see that for Day life is something to be cherished, something wonderful and mysterious (Bevan 347).

The inclusive language, the “us” and “our,” in the clause “by which most of us attempt to fashion our lives” works to promote a sense of community among readers, a sharing and affirmation of certain social values.

Bevan’s review can also be seen to be doing cultural work in places where it interprets Day’s narrative techniques for the reader. For example, the comparisons that Bevan makes between Day’s protagonist and that of Henry Fielding in Tom Jones, “one of the world’s greatest novels,” according to Bevan, suggest to mid-20th century readers that Day’s novel carries as much literary influence and deserves as much respect as those of the 18th century British novelist. The review also notes Day’s “pleasantly surprising habit of introducing each chapter with an appropriate quotation from Chaucer” (343). Qualifying the author’s choice of chapter headings as “pleasantly surprising” encourages readers to also find them pleasant because of the
surprise, rather than “smacking too much of the academic” as, according to Bevan, some critics complained of. As well, the review offers readers an interpretation of the timelessness of Day’s novel when Bevan writes that with those chapter headings, “Day seems to be implying something of what Dryden meant when he wrote about Chaucer in 1700: “We have our forefathers and great-granddames all before us, as they were in Chaucer’s days: the general characters are still remaining in mankind,...” (343).

The review’s allusion to John Dryden, the influential 17th century poet, playwright and literary critic, communicates the idea that Day’s novels hold their own when compared to the novels of some of Britain’s most celebrated canonical writers. And finally, the concluding sentences have the effect of a strong suggestion if not a command; first, that readers read Day’s books. Bevan writes, “Frank Parker Day’s literary output, although limited to the four novels I have mentioned, is worth reading” (347), and second that a publisher should publish a new edition. He writes, “now Rockbound is not easy to find. Perhaps some enterprising Canadian publishing house will give us a new edition, thus making this admirable book available to a new generation of readers” (Bevan 347). The University of Toronto Press did pick up on Bevan’s advice, albeit fifteen years later, when they reprinted the novel in 1973 with an introduction by Bevan, and again in 1989 with an afterword by Gwendolyn Davies at the University of New Brunswick. The 1989 edition has since been reprinted three times, in 1997, 2004 and 2005.

My own review of the 2005 reprint of Rockbound contrasts a negative on-line review by an Amazon.ca customer and disparaging remarks about the novel made by residents of Ironbound, a fishing village on an island off Nova Scotia’s South Shore that provides the basis for the book’s setting, the island of Rockbound, with Bevan’s enthusiastic mid-20th century endorsement of the book’s literary merits, and with the early 21st century positive reaction to it of Donna Morrissey, the book’s successful defender on CBC Canada Reads program. Ultimately,
the contrast in my review works to create a space in today’s literary aesthetics for Day’s narrative style, a mixture of traditional, modernist and postmodernist literary characteristics, alongside the self-reflexive, fragmented, poly-vocal narrative style common to many novels today.

I am, of course, not the first to discuss ways that book reviews do cultural work. Foremost among other commentaries is Linda Hutcheon’s incisive essay “Reviewing Reviewing Today.” I argue that the manipulative capacity of book reviews is similar to that of the forms of paratexts that are the focus of Gérard Genette’s typological study of the various discursive elements that accompany a work of fiction. In a paper I presented for a conference in 2006, I explain that Genette divides these elements into two categories of paratexts. According to his schema, the title of a book, epigraphs and prefaces are among those elements he calls “peritexts” while interviews with the author, an author’s diary or letters, and any public relations decisions made in consultation with the author fall into the category of “epitexts” (344). Genette’s definition of paratexts – “a text that the author or one of his associates accepts responsibility for” – leaves no room for book reviews (9). Indeed, Genette excludes them explicitly when he writes that magazine reviews and verbal recommendations of a book are not paratexts because paratexts are “characterized by an authorial intention and assumption of responsibility” (3). Book reviews have no acknowledged connection to the author, and the author cannot and does not accept responsibility for them. Nevertheless, and as I argue in the conference paper, like paratexts, book reviews frequently make use of some or all of the paratextual elements of a book in order to a) interpret the intentions they signal, and b) to put these intentions into “a different conceptual framework” (Frye Anatomy 16). The book’s author usually has no control over the contents of a review, or its effect on contemporary or future readers. This satellite status of book reviews
invites the addition of a third and complementary element to Genette’s theory, one I call ‘ectotexts’ from the Greek meaning of ‘ecto’ as ‘outside’ or ‘external’.

The point of Genette’s study, as Richard Macksey explains in his forward to Paratexts is that “by recognizing the complex conventions of ‘the book’ we are thus invited to understand how we unwittingly are manipulated by its paratextual elements” and “to push beyond the poetics of liminal structures toward a consideration of the way these discursive functions interact with the more general question of literature as a cultural institution” (Genette xxi). We have only to read “‘This is Not a Novel’: The Rhetoric of Denial in Nineteenth-Century Quebec Novel Prefaces” by Anthony Purdy to witness ways that paratexts manipulate readers’ social and cultural values. Here, Purdy sees the rhetoric in the prefaces of the books he studies as an attempt by 19th century novelists in French Canada “to impose a different set of norms or conventions for fiction-making” (12). These new codes and norms were, Purdy writes, “more in keeping with” the socio-cultural codes of the period, and in response to the liberal excess that shaped novels from the ‘old’ countries, the countries “que la civilisation a gâté,” to borrow Purdy’s citation of Patrice Lacombe (qtd. in Purdy 12). Similarly, the contents of a book review must manipulate us as readers to some degree, by shaping our sense of book and literary culture, but the question is, how?

Buckler, one of the authors interviewed, taken from the latter collection. In his interview with Donald Cameron, Buckler tells the interviewer that, “writers are the dreariest people you can possibly know because they are just stuffed up with words, like dry-bread dressing up a Christmas Eve goose’s ass” (Christy 56). The illocutionary force of the off-colour simile draws the reader into the review by inviting the question of why anyone would read either of the books under review if writers are such a dry lot. The first paragraph moves from the unexpected vulgarity in the epigraph to a blunt assessment of the Gibson’s collection:

This, anyway, is the opinion of one Canadian writer, Ernest Buckler, of his colleagues and if you don’t share it now you are liable to after reading Graeme Gibson’s interviews with Eleven Canadian Novelists. These dialogues prove definitely false the book jacket claim that they are ‘revealing and wide ranging’ offering ‘A rare and intimate view of the novelist, his work and the world in which he lives.’ What they actually offer is a couple of hours of sheer boredom. The book’s high point comes when Austin Clarke asks Gibson for a cigar. (56)

The sharp contrast Christy makes between the book jacket claims and the quality of the interviews in Gibson’s book reads as a contentious claim that readers can only evaluate by reading the book. The second paragraph continues the motivating contention:

It is regrettable that somewhere out there Mr. or Ms. Average Reader is going to pick up this book as a sort of introduction to modem Canadian literature, read it, or try to, and come to the same conclusion as Buckler. (“If they talk like that imagine how they must write!”) (Christy 56)

Addressing readers as “Mr. and Ms.,” capitalizing their names, that is, “Average Reader,” and providing an imagined interior dialogue draws the average reader into the review by appealing to
their sense of equality with the reviewer, while piquing her or his curiosity concerning the blunt contentions that are made, a curiosity that is rewarded in the next paragraph.

The second paragraph of Christy’s review sustains the reader’s curiosity with the conjunction, “Nevertheless,” followed by an assessment of who is at fault for the boring content: not the interviewee, but the interviewer (Christy 56). The conjunction prepares readers to accept the subsequent positive interpretation of the merits of Cameron’s collection of interviews:

Cameron adapts himself to the personality of each novelist, he makes himself conversationally negotiable whereas Gibson asks Marian Engel the same things he asks Matt Cohen. His repetitious interrogations are concerned strictly with the Work and he gets in return the ‘dry-bread’ stuffing and nothing more. (Christy 56)

Here, the review interprets what is required to make an interview with writers worth reading. Christy’s assessment of Cameron’s style raises readers’ awareness of the fact that an interviewer needs to engage the interviewee in a conversation, by asking open questions, instead of questions like those that Christy quotes from Gibson’s book: “do writers know something special?” and “does being a writer demand a particular kind of selfishness” (Christy 56). At the same time, by bringing readers of the review full-circle back to the opening reference to “dry-bread stuffing,” the review elicits a sense of closure.

The illocutionary force of the sentences in the final paragraph of Christy’s review works on behalf of book and literary culture in Canada: “Especially at this time and place in Canadian literature,” an interview should “urge you to read those writers whom you have neglected” (Christy 56). The review emphasizes the importance of the latter book when it states that, “Cameron emerges as the main chronicler of the modern Canadian literary scene and as a master of that particularly modern form, the interview” (Christy 56).
This close reading of Christy’s review illustrates ways that the illocutionary force of rhetorical techniques works to shape a reader’s knowledge about a subject. In this particular case, Christy’s review broadens their knowledge about the writers interviewed in both books, and about interviewing techniques.

Reviews of books about Canada as a nation or about Canadian literature, are fertile territory for cultural work. A review entitled “Down on the Farm,” published in the May 1991 20th anniversary issue of *Books in Canada* under Paul Stuewe’s tenure, is an example of such a review. Here, Amy Friedman reviews three books that have Canada as their subject, one of which is *From the Country: Writings About Rural Canada*, edited by Wayne Grady. The review begins by inviting readers to join the reviewer in mulling over the relationship that writers have with what Friedman calls “our national character”:

> I often wonder why it is that so many Canadian writers seek and struggle to define this country. Canada is, without doubt, a real and distinct place; and the quest to explain *who* and *what* we are, while sometimes provoking a broader, wider, richer notion of our national character, often seems as self-deluded as the adolescent who broods and stewes and grumbles, ‘Leave me alone. I’m trying to find myself.’ Sometimes I want to tap teenagers on the shoulder and whisper, ‘Hey, stop looking so darn hard. You are someone,’ and the same impulse descends on me when writers try, in Wayne Grady’s words, ‘to accurately reflect the reality of Canada itself.’ (Friedman 37)

The opening introspection of why Canadian writers seem so fixated on defining the country acts as an invitation for readers to think about the question themselves and to reflect on whether or not Canadian authors they are familiar with are indeed fixated on *who* and *what* we are. The comparison of the Canadian character to that of an angst-ridden teenager suggests that Canadian authors who do this are immature and, consequently, so is the literature that they produce. But
this impression is then balanced out for the reader when the review introduces the titles and authors of some of the stories Grady has included in the collection, for example, “The Closing Down of Summer,” by Alistair MacLeod with the following conditional sentence: “If anyone can convince us that the quest for defining self-identity is not fruitless, Grady can” (37). The conditional sentence acts as a challenge for readers to test Friedman’s contention by reading the book.

Linda Morra’s review of Susan Crean’s book *The Laughing One: A Journey to Emily Carr*, (2001), published in the August 2001 issue of *Books in Canada* is another example of a review doing cultural work. The first paragraph of the review alerts readers to Carr’s literary and artistic status. From it, readers learn about the “growing body of critical work that is proliferating around Carr,” about the “sharpening critical divide over the position of Emily Carr as both artist and writer within English-Canadian culture” and that there are “ambivalences that Carr and her creative output . . . contain” (Morra 7). Morra’s attention to the detail that Crean brings to her study succeeds in introducing or reintroducing readers to the life and work of Emily Carr. But the review is also doing culture work when it reiterates contemporary writing and thinking, what Morra calls “postmodern truisms” such as, “reality is elusive because all is filtered through one’s subjective perceptions, that each writer and critic has an ‘angle’ or interest in their own work . . . and that biographers . . . are thus not objective purveyors of factual information about their respective subjects” (8). This review exposes readers to, or reminds them of, contemporary scholarly approaches to the study and the appreciation of biographies while at the same time alerting them to the new knowledge Crean’s biography brings to the existent scholarly bank of knowledge about Carr and about the biography-writing process.

As these close-readings of selected book reviews demonstrate, book reviews, in their capacity as ectotexts, nourish the book and literary culture that launched them into orbit. They
validate a book's presence in that culture by communicating and documenting for future reference the fact that at least one person, the reviewer or the book-review editor, *someone other than the author and not associated with the author*, considers the book worthy of public attention. While the publication process gives life to a book, and paratexts help the book to age gracefully as the world around it changes, ectotexts transmit selected information about the contents of the book, and of the book's relationship to literary tastes, social customs and literary judgements of its era. Advertisements and literary awards enrich the present life of a book, but if nothing is written about the book, its lifespan is defined only by the length of time purchasers, bookstore managers and friends and followers of its author, keep it on their bookshelves.

Considering the illocutionary force of ectotexts such as book reviews is one way to locate the cultural work of book reviews. But book reviews also do cultural work through their capacity to contribute to cultural agendas. As Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw write:

> Agenda setting is considerably more than the classical assertion that the news tells us *what to think about*. The news also tells us *how to think about it*. Both the selection of objects for attention and the selection of frames for thinking about these objects are powerful agenda-setting roles. . . . (McCombs and Shaw 62)

A book review is not a form of mass media in the same way that headlines and articles in national newspapers or news magazines are because book reviews and the magazines in which they are published, lack the characteristics of "mass coverage" – they are not capable of repeatedly telling readers how to think about one or more recently published books, for example. Nevertheless, a review is a communication medium that frames objects, that is a book, its author and the ideas, themes or events that the book deals with, and presents them to readers in a particular way for them to think about. For example, the above analysis of the review by Christy of the two collections of interviews with Canadian writers is framed in such a way as to convey
Christy's idea that the interviewing process and an interviewer's methods can affect the informative value of the content of a book. Similarly the review by Morra of Crean's book contributes to the national literary imaginary by drawing attention to the subjectivity that is inherent to the biography-writing process and to ways it can affect the end-result.

Translation reviews also set cultural agendas in the sense of framing the way other cultures are read. The cultural work of translation reviews is obvious: they introduce readers to books from other cultures, and often to the translation métier. In the case of *Books in Canada*, the majority of reviews of translated books, on average one review per issue, are reviews of books published in Quebec. John Grube's review in the Aug-September 1974 issue of Marc Laurendeau's *Les Québécois violents* and of André d'Allemagne's *Le RIN et le débuts du mouvement indépendiste* is a good example of the illocutionary force of a translation review doing cultural work:

The whole subject is of enormous importance to anyone following the Canadian political scene or even its reflection in Canadian literature, and while these two books will undoubtedly appear in English in a year or two, they are well worth reading now for anyone with a reasonably fluent knowledge of French. (Grube 20)

The assertion that "the whole subject is of enormous importance" to anyone interested in politics or literature illustrates the way that reviews of books from Quebec translated into English can heighten readers' awareness of the value of expanding their sources of information about political, social and literary developments in Canada to include translated books.

The October 1977 issue provides an example not only of the inclusive nationalist attitude apparent in translated reviews in the last half of the 1970's, but also of the reviewer's attempt to educate readers about translation principles. A three-page section entitled "Chez Us," written by Marion McCormick, is devoted to Québécois literature. The section is complemented by a half-
page photograph of Sheila Fischman and begins with a two-page article entitled “Life in Translation” in which Fischman discusses her technique and her translation philosophy: “The aim in every case,” says Fischman, “is to be faithful to the spirit of the book, not to the author’s actual words.” She tells McCormick, and thereby the magazine’s readers, that “the test of a good translation... is if it reads as if it had been written in English in the first place” (McCormick 22).

As Jane Koustas notes, the attention that René Levesque was attracting in the anglophone press led to greater interest in works from Quebec on the part of English-speaking Canada. Events in Quebec motivated readers “to seek greater understanding of Quebec through its literature” (1126). Koustas cites the advent of translation grants from the Canada Council to publishers, the improvement in the quality of the translated books and the increased validation of the translation process as reasons why publishers both large and small were suddenly more interested in books from Quebec (1125-6). Naturally, the increased number of translated books on the market resulted in an increased number of critical articles about them, especially in the late 1980’s. Kathy Mezei attributes the growth in the number of reviews of and critical articles about translated books from 1986 onwards to three circumstances: the increased number of translated books in the late 1980’s, the shorter time lapse between the publication of an original and a translation of it, and to the proliferation of Quebec publishers “entering the translation field” (Mezei 5).

Michael Smith, Books in Canada editor from 1981-1987 was doing cultural work when he responded to these developments by devoting more than half of the contents of the January-February 1986 issue to translation. The front cover of the issue features a stylized rendering of an androgynous-looking translator working on a page of Greek letters and Egyptian hieroglyphs (Fig. 13). The picture is complemented by three two-line headings: one in bold white font,
"OTHER WORDS, OTHER WORLDS: THE TRANSLATORS’ CHOICE”, and below that in smaller font, “Lonesome travellers: the writers of Acadia,” and “And an interview with George Faludy.” Smith devotes another four pages of the forty-two page issue to a survey entitled “In Other Words” introduced with the heading: “Some of the country’s leading translators nominate the books and writers they would most like to see translated into English, and explain why.” The opening paragraph conveys a tone of respect for the work that translators do and signals the informative and varied nature of the responses that it features. The article begins:

BY NATURE, translators are unusual alchemists: they want to turn gold into gold. But where do they find the stuff? That was the question Books in Canada had in mind when we asked some notable translators what books not already translated should be rendered into English, and why. The answers proved as various as the translators themselves, and revealed much about the state of the art these writers practise. (Smith 12)

Translators surveyed include Philip Stratford, M. G. Vassanji, Ray Ellenwood, and Kathy Mezei. The survey highlights the capacity of the magazine to do cultural work by introducing readers to the scope and nature of books being published and read in Quebec in the 1970’s and to the people who were making them available by translating them. Moreover the discussions around these books, and the positive reception they were receiving from English-Canada’s reviewers and the magazine’s editor, sensitized readers to the ways in which political and social developments in Quebec are affecting the shape of English-Canada’s book and literary culture.

John O’Connor foregrounds the dynamic cultural work of translation reviews when he insists that reviewers “must be familiar with both the source language and its cultural context, not only to determine how correctly the voice of the original is echoed in the translation, but also to identify the original text’s subtle allusions – for example, to a poem by Nelligan or a song by Leclerc” (122). Similarly, Barbara Godard, in her article for the Fall 1988 issue of the University
of Toronto Quarterly, refers to changing attitudes within the field of translation. For example, in her discussion of the inaugural issue of the Université de Québec’s journal TTR (Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction: Etudes sur le texte et ses transformations), Goddard writes:

The advent of this new academic periodical testifies to the increased self-consciousness and recognition of translation in Canadian and Quebec cultures. It will expand opportunities for the serious examination of the translator’s craft, which until now has had a limited forum. (77-78)

Books in Canada’s contents in the same year raise reader’s awareness of this movement to focus on translation techniques, in other words, on metatranslation, in literary criticism and reviews. In tune with political and social realities, the effect of these translation reviews is one of encouraging readers to consider the place of these authors, their lives, their writing philosophies and their status in the Québécois culture in their own English-Canadian cultural identity.

The growing acceptance of Quebec’s special status within the country is both reflected and encouraged in Paul Stuewe’s treatment of literature from the province in general, and in the metatranslational approach of his reviewers. In his introductory comments to a six-page article that appears in the March 1991 issue of Books in Canada under the rubric “Symposium” and entitled “Quebec Writers Speak - A Sampling of Literary Opinion from la belle province” Stuewe refers to Hugh MacLennan’s novel Two Solitudes and writes:

This separation is as evident in literature as it is in other fields; as will be apparent from many of the statements below, Quebec writers are often largely unfamiliar with the work of their confrères elsewhere in Canada. As part of what we hope will be a much greater Quebec presence in these pages in the future, Books in Canada asked some of the province’s leading literary figures to talk about their principles and perceptions. (Stuewe “Quebec Writers” 12)
The article presents eleven Québécois authors’ detailed responses to a list of questions concerning linguistic and cultural differences in Canada. The respondents include Yves Beauchemin, Monique Bosco, Jacques Brault, Ann Charney, Louis Dudek and Naïm Kattan. In the same issue are a three-page interview with Nicole Brossard, the introduction of which lists those of her oeuvre that have been translated into English, a section entitled “Book Reviews” that discusses in detail the books of the five nominees for the French-language Governor General’s Award, Betty Bednarski’s review of Patricia Smart’s *Writing in the Father’s House* and of Anthony Purdy’s *A Certain Difficulty of Being: Essays on the Quebec Novel*, and a review of *In a Minor Key*, David Lobdell’s translation of Gilles Archambault’s *L’obsédante obèse et autres agressions*. In her review, Bednarski comments on each author’s approach to translation, noting that Smart’s book is a translation of her own work, and that Purdy writes his own text in English while retaining the original French for quotations.

Also in this issue is a three-page “Feature Article” by Joyce Marshall entitled “Found in Translation” as well as a two-page essay by Wayne Grady entitled “The Other Side of the Tapestry.” In the former, Marshall traces and comments on the history of translation in Canada. Her article includes photographs of Marie-Clair Blais, Roch Carrier, Anne Hébert, Antonine Maillet and Gabrielle Roy (Marshall 30-32). In the latter, Grady describes the way he approaches the translation of a text, and stresses the need for a translator to “hear the authorial voice” in the text (Grady 34).

Editors that followed Stuewe did not demonstrate the same interest in exposing their readers to books from Quebec or to recent developments in the field of translation studies until Olga Stein took over as editor in 2001. Content published during Stein’s tenure indicates a preference for translation reviews that provide some insight into the translation process. Anne Cimon’s review in the September 2003 issue of *Parrot Fever* by Joe Rosenblatt and of its
translation *Le Perroquet Fâcheux* by Andrée Christensen is one example (Cimon 36-37).

Ultimately though, Stein admitted that whether or not she reviews translated books depends on whether or not she can find a bilingual reviewer for it, which she often cannot (Stein Interview, 21 December 2003). She also explained her treatment of translated books in an e-mail in reply to my question of how she decides which translated books to review:

> The way I make decisions about which translated book to review is two-fold: First, I look at the importance of the author. For example, someone like Marie Claire-Blais commands attention among both French- and English-speaking Canadians. So if I think the author is well recognized or is beginning to come to prominence, I have their translated work reviewed. Secondly, because I think BiC must perform a function of introducing French-Canadian authors to the English readers, I look at the subject matter of books. If I feel there's a universal appeal to a book, particularly, a novel, or if it covers ground which is of political and social importance, I take the opportunity to spoon feed English readers—which is to say, here is something you should read, and by the way, it's written by a French-Canadian. I'm killing two birds with one stone that way. An example of such a book is the recently translated *Sunday at a pool in Kigali*. (Stein e-mail 24 September 2003)

Her explanation highlights the cultural work of translation reviews. If, as Itamar Even-Zohar argues, translated texts ‘speak’ on behalf of both cultures, then reviews of translated books do too (Even-Zohar 192). The publication of translation reviews influences not only the translation norms, behaviour and policies of the culture into which they are being introduced, but also that culture’s social, literary and historical “network of relations” (Even-Zohar 192). In addition to reviews of translated books, Stein frequently published translations of poems by Quebec writers, especially those of Pierre Nepveu, by David Solway, one of the magazine’s two associate editors.
during Stein’s editorial tenure. Her featuring of these translated poems, in framed, shaded rectangular insets, acted as consistent signals of Stein’s expressed commitment to Quebec’s literary culture.

Not all of the reviewers of translated books in Books in Canada were translators. Those who were not reviewed the book in its English version, and restricted their remarks about the translated nature of the book to a positive or negative assessment of the quality of the translation. What can be ascertained from reading reviews of translated books is that they are cultural agents in that they enable books that have been written in languages other than English, and their authors, to cross provincial and national literary borders, thereby providing the tastes and ideologies that these books and their authors represent with an opportunity to enter and do their best to reshape the sense of cultural identity of those who read them.

More than a year after I had written the conference paper on book reviews as ectotexts, I discovered the dissertation by Meadow Dibble-Dieng. While I compare book reviews to orbiting space-ships, Dibble-Dieng compares them to insects, a comparison that is less lofty but as effective, if not more, in depicting the cultural work that book reviews do. In a section of her dissertation entitled “You Are What You Read: Reading Reviews in Liberté, volumes I & II,” she suggests that “reviews are among the most undervalued of all genres and rarely attract scholarly interest” (Dibble-Dieng 294). Moreover, in a footnote to her discussion of their placement in literary journals, that is in the last pages, she observes “what is clearly a convention among literary journals” namely the order in which genres are presented. Essays usually precede prose and poetry, and book reviews “are consistently placed last” and “a cramped layout further participates in consolidating their inferior status” (294). But, she asks, are they inferior?

Just as insects eventually get the better of every superior species, reviews are infinitely more powerful than they appear. As a means of consuming a text for the benefit of
readers by presenting, summarizing, examining, and judging it, reviews are invested with the authority to effectively legitimate or undermine the object under consideration. (Dibble-Dieng 295)

When it comes to the purpose of book reviews themselves, Dibble-Dieng’s comments reinforce my discussion here of the cultural work of book reviews. She emphasizes the importance of book reviews to the “literary journal enterprise” (295) and writes:

... because reviews provide journals with the opportunity to exercise critical authority, very few are prepared to dispense with this genre. Quite to the contrary, in fact: reviews constitute a basic staple of the literary journal enterprise. Appearing to satisfy a strong demand on the part of readers, who appreciate the advice of enlightened guides, they serve as the primary means by which journal editors and close contributors ... explicitly and directly express their preferences, thus informing taste and orienting trends. (Dibble-Dieng 295)

As my analysis of a selection of book reviews published in Books in Canada over the last three decades has shown, “informing taste and orienting trends” is a concise answer to the question explored in this chapter: what cultural work do book reviews do as an entity in themselves and how do they do it? A close-reading of selected book reviews, translation reviews among them, reveals their capacity to shape book and literary culture through the illocutionary force of their message and through their ability to broaden the cultural horizons of their readers.
CHAPTER VI:  
The Demise

i. The Legacy

*Books in Canada* reviewed close to 15,000 books published in Canada from 1971-2008. Despite the loss of the cultural work that *Books in Canada* magazine was doing through its front covers, its editors, and through the consistent attention its contents brought to books from all regions of Canada, the magazine has left behind an important cultural legacy in library archives, in online access to those archives through its own “Back Issues” site, and through the reprint of its reviews on the Amazon.ca book site, copyright controversies notwithstanding.

A second legacy it leaves is the *Books in Canada* First Novel Award, a prize that Olga Stein is particularly proud to have maintained during her tenure as co-owner and editor of the magazine. Since 1976, the year it was created, the award put into practice James Tait Black’s comment that “a better way of perpetuating the memory of anyone dear to us than by founding a named literary prize has yet to be devised” (qtd. in Graham 1). With the award, Stein and the owners and editors before her perpetuated the media presence of a periodical that was dear to them and that they had all worked so hard to produce and sustain as a site of cultural work in Canada’s book and literary culture.

According to Bessie Graham, “a book that wins a prize wins readers” (1). While this is not necessarily true of academic prizes, as most publishers will admit, in terms of fiction, literary prizes usually mean an increase in the number of readers. Moreover, such prizes help the book to transcend time and space: “Prizes help to sell ‘old’ books as well as ‘new,’ and keep the books of yesterday still in demand today” (Graham 1). Since 1976, the *Books in Canada* First Novel Award has acted as a springboard for the careers of some of Canada’s most accomplished writers of fiction. Of the three contemporary authors that York focuses on in her study of literary
celebrity, Margaret Atwood, Michael Ondaatje, and Carol Shields. Ondaatje was a co-winner of the *Books in Canada* First Novel Award in 1976, the first year it was awarded for his *Coming Through Slaughter*, along with Ian McLachlan for *The Seventh Hexagram*. Shields, with her novel *Small Ceremonies*, was one of the eight nominees the first year it was awarded. Evidently then, the *Books in Canada* First Novel award represented a form of *institutional cultural capital*, a sort of celebrity ‘start-up fund’ for these authors as it must have done as well for winners in subsequent years, many of whom continue to enjoy international critical success: among them Clark Blaise in 1979, Joy Kogawa in 1981, Nino Ricci in 1990, Rohinton Mistry in 1991, Anne Michaels in 1996, Joseph Boyden in 2005, and Madeleine Thien in 2006, to name only a few. As Olga Stein proudly points out in an e-mail to me, the prize “has launched the careers of some of our best-known authors. All three Canadian Booker Prize nominees had been shortlisted for the BiC First Novel Award (Rohinton Mistry actually won it in 1992)” (Stein e-mail 29 Sept. 2002). Since that message, among the *Books in Canada* First Novel Award winners and nominees who have received additional national and international acclaim are Joseph Boyden, winner in 2008 of Canada’s foremost prize for fiction, the Giller, and Rohinton Mistry, winner in 2011 of the bi-annual Neustadt International Prize for Literature.

When *Books in Canada* folded in 2008, representatives of Amazon.ca told James Adams of the *Globe and Mail* that they intended to continue their involvement with the award, one that they have been supporting since 2001 (<http://www.theglobeandmail.com>). Accessed in 2009, the web page for the Amazon.ca First Novel Award, as it is now called, featured a brief history of the award, pictures of the front covers of the six novels nominated for that year’s 33rd Annual First Novel Award and a photograph and a brief biography of Canadian novelist Aritha van Herk, that year’s judge. Joan Thomas won the 2008 prize for her novel *Reading by Lightning*. 
Accessed in November 2010, the Amazon.ca First Novel Award page looked very similar to the Amazon.ca book selling pages with a picture of the front cover of the winning book, complete with a “Look Inside” feature, and a brief biography about the judges for the “2009 34th Annual Amazon.ca First Novel Award,” among them Stuart Woods, editor of *Quill & Quire* magazine. Former Amazon.ca First Novel Award winner Joseph Boyden is the second of the four judges listed along with Priscila Uppal and Hal Wake. Below the announcement of the winning book, *Come, Thou Tortoise*, by Jessica Grant, are lengthy summaries of each of the nominated books complemented by photographs of their covers, several of which offer the “Look Inside” feature. A sidebar invites readers to “browse by Year” the winners in previous years by clicking on the title, which takes them to the Amazon.ca book purchase page. There is no longer an “About the Award” description. Amazon.ca has evidently appropriated its support of the award to serve as just another e-commerce tool.

At one time, when *Books in Canada* lacked the funding to offer it, Smithbooks came to its rescue, as did Chapters bookstore, until Adrian Stein made the agreement in 2001 with Amazon.ca. In recent years, winners of the award have, according to Adams, received a cheque of $7,500, awarded at a lavish ceremony in Toronto (<http://www.theglobeandmail.com>).

The year 2010 marked the 35th anniversary of the award. Nominees were announced in February 2011. Whether or not it will continue to be a significant source of institutional cultural capital for new authors depends on whether or not there will be people like Olga Stein and Aritha van Herk who consider it and the effort it involves worthwhile. In a recent article about literary prizes and the authors who do not win them, Linda Leith notes the increased importance of literary prizes due to the decrease in the number of book reviews and book-review venues (Leith <http://montrealserai.com/2011/12/29/literary-awards-and-the-spurned-writer/>). As she points out: “Books that don’t make it on the shortlists – and benefit from that kind of publicity – simply
disappear from bookstore shelves" (Leith). If the First Novel Award should go the same way as its
instigator, *Books in Canada*, the demise of the award would mean the removal from Canada’s book
and literary culture of a powerful springboard for the national, and eventually international, careers
of the country’s aspiring novelists.

**ii. The Before-Closure**

The beginning of the end of the *Books of Canada* enterprise can be traced back to an
agreement that Adrian Stein, publisher and co-owner of *Books in Canada* since 1995, made six
years later with the online book merchant, Amazon.com. In 2001, Amazon and Stein signed an
agreement that enabled the magazine to resume reviewing books after close to a year’s hiatus
due to a lack of funding. In his coverage for the online journal *Wired* of the response of some
reviewers to Amazon.com’s announcement of the arrangement, Charles Mandel, calling *Books in
Canada* “one of Canada’s most famous literary journals,” reported that the Periodical Writers
Association of Canada (PWAC) was concerned that the agreement would “violate the copyright
of scores of writers across Canada” (1). This is because it would give the e-commerce site access
to more than thirty years worth of book reviews, Mandel noted, many of them written by PWAC
members, and among them, some of Canada’s better and best-known authors (1). PWAC
threatened to sue. According to Mandel, Adrian Stein responded to the furor with a letter in
which he stated that, “*Books in Canada* would not license any material without proper
copyright” (1).

As chance would have it, in 2003 I contacted Nora Abercrombie, one of the outraged
contributors, by phone without knowing anything about the scandal. I had simply wanted to
comment on an article she had written about her interview with Irving Layton published in *Books
in Canada*. Upon hearing that I was writing a dissertation on *Books in Canada*, Abercrombie, an
active member of PWAC at the time, bluntly announced that she had sworn to never again write for Adrian Stein “except at gunpoint” (Abercrombie Interview). She was outraged that Stein had made reviews she had written available to Amazon without asking permission or reimbursing her for her copyright to the reviews. Evidently, Canadian writer Eva Tihanyi felt much the same.

According to an article in the May 1, 2000 issue of *Quill & Quire*, Tihanyi, whose earlier contributions to the magazine included “approximately 200 reviews and 11 full-length interviews,” had asked Stein to remove the online version of a review that she had written for the February 2000 issue because she had not been paid for it nor for two others she had written (Toller 4). The matter eventually disappeared from the book-review radar screen – Tihanyi’s review is currently accessible via the *Books in Canada* back issues website – but it left a trail of rancorous residue that continued to taint the magazine’s reputation as a respectable venue for book reviews up until its final demise in January 2008.

Indeed, a contributing factor to that eventual demise may have been the fear that *Books in Canada* would become the subject of formal copyright infringement charges, given that a similar class action lawsuit was already in the courts. In 1996, Canadian journalist and author Heather Robertson launched a class action suit on behalf of freelance writers against CTVglobemedia Inc., Thomson Reuters Canada and The Gale Group for unauthorized reproduction in their online editions of articles freelancers had written for the print editions of the *Globe and Mail*. Robertson won the case when the defendants agreed in 2009 to settle and pay members $11 million (CBCNews [http://www.cbc.ca/news/arts/media/story/2009/05/05/robertson-globe-freelance-database-lawsuit.html]). Robertson undertook a second class action suit in 2003 against Toronto Star Newspapers Ltd., Rogers Publishing Limited, CEDROM-SNI Inc. and ProQuest Information and Learning LLC and other publishing venues. That case was also upheld by the

Whether or not the threat of a similar lawsuit was a contributing factor in the decision to fold, it does appear that free-lance writers like Crombie and Tihanyi were not alone in their feelings of bitterness towards the Steins. I had already met with a similar reaction from former editor Paul Stuewe. In the interview I conducted with him in 2003, he recalled the take-over process when the Steins first purchased the rights to the magazine in 1995. Most of the editorial staff were either terminated or resigned of their own volition, he said. From his description of the process and the animosity it created, I sensed that the manner in which the staff was let go was rather roughshod. And indeed, Scott Anderson, in his article in the October 1995 issue of the publishing trade magazine *Quill & Quire*, writes that the publisher, Anita Miecznikowski, and Barbara Carey, managing editor at the time, “were fired by Ribosome President Adrian Stein within hours of the takeover” (21). Each had been with the magazine for six years. According to circulation manager Susan Aihoshi, who left a few days later, Miecznikowski and Carey had met with Adrian Stein for lunch only a few days prior to their dismissal. Aihoshi told Anderson: “We realized that when a company is sold, there is no guarantee that your jobs are safe, . . . but this was a shock” (qtd. in Anderson 21). Anderson adds in his article that “Stein was not available for comment” (21).

During the interview I conducted with the Steins not long after I had talked to Stuewe, Adrian Stein defended his methods by saying that there is nothing unusual or untoward about new owners who act on their belief that the magazine will be more productive if they replace current staff with people who share the new owner’s values (Stein interview). The Steins hired Norman Doidge to replace Stuewe as editor, together with Gerald Owen who, according to Anderson’s article in *Quill & Quire*, “had formerly worked as Managing Editor for The Idler”
(21). Mark Wegierski, a Canadian writer and historical reviewer, in a webpost for the “Enter Stage Right” website, describes *The Idler* as “a precocious journal of literary-artistic-cultural pretensions, with some sotto voce conservative philosophizing” (Wegierski). Robert Fulford, in his farewell message to Owen (posted by *National Post* columnist Jonathan Kay in August 2007 upon Owen’s move from the *National Post* to the *Globe and Mail* newspaper) describes Owen as a columnist who “always fought a noble (even if at times losing) battle against tired language, exemplified by the ever-proliferating jargon words such as iconic, literally, and convergence” (Fulford “Goodbye”). These two men, Doidge and Owen, would continue the gradual swing of *Books in Canada* from Clery’s irreverent, humorous mood towards a snappy, conservative, sardonic one, modeled perhaps after Owen’s experience with *The Idler* whose motto as announced next to its title on its webpage is “refusing to apologize for the things we enjoy” (<http://idlermag.com>).

In the three years Doidge stayed with *Books in Canada*, his editorial approach signalled the new owners’ intentions to get readers talking about the magazine, not about the internal politics associated with the change of ownership, but rather about the books and authors that were being reviewed. For example, Owen told Anderson he and Doidge planned to make a number of changes including “a move away from reviewing fiction toward non-fiction, reflecting a perceived corresponding shift in the Canadian book market; fewer author interviews and profiles; more omnibus comparative reviews, in the style of the *New York Review of Books* . . . .” (Anderson 21).

The changes, particularly the larger broadsheet format typical of the *Times Literary Supplement* or the *London Review of Books* that Doidge introduced, succeeded in diverting readers’ attention away from its internal politics. Responses to the new look, published in the ‘Letters to the Editor’ section of the February 1996 issue, were lively and controversial.
Comments on the contents, which included reviews that range from books about hosting an Ottawa radio program, to Thai cooking, to the Catholic church, to fishing, to a collection of essays on the aesthetics of book design, generated more positive than negative responses from readers. For example, Audrey E. N. Holiday writes that, “Due to your reduction of a useful, viable, portable magazine to a piece of JUNK MAIL, I am no longer interested in subscribing to, or even buying separately” this version of the periodical (Holiday’s emphasis, 38). Another particularly negative letter was that of noted Canadianist Stephan Henighan who found that “by reviewing fewer books at greater length” the magazine was doing [its] readers a disservice” (38). In his list of nine “main problems with the new incarnation,” Henighan finds the “freshman erudition of the editorials . . . embarrassing” and a sign of “intellectual insecurity,” and the format “ill-suited to our lean times” and costly to mail (Henighan 38). Other readers, like Melita Hume of Melbourne, Quebec, “greatly enjoyed the new format – read it from cover to cover – underling and arguing, . . .,” (Hume 38) and Vicky Johnston of Yellowknife finds the redesigned magazine “really meaty. Less slickness and more content is very agreeable,” she writes (Johnston 38). Evidently, the impact that the new ownership and editorial staff had on the look and content of Books in Canada served to reawaken interest in the magazine. The changes stimulated controversy around the magazine as a source of insightful information about books recently published in Canada. At the same time, they effectively pushed any residual resentment over the changeover process out of the magazine’s book-reviewing framework.

Ten years into the Steins’ ownership the reputation of the magazine suffered a second, and what might arguably be termed a self-inflicted, mortal wound. In 2006, Olga and Adrian Stein chose to use their book-review magazine as a forum in which to plead the innocence of media mogul Conrad Black. In a case that dates back to November 2003 when he resigned from his position as Chairman of Hollinger International, Black was finally charged in November 2005
with eight counts of fraud by the American judicial system. Months before the trial began, the Steins dedicated eighteen of the forty-eight pages of the December 2006 issue to a detailed history of Black’s company Hollinger Inc., of the corporate deals and of the personal betrayals that led to Black’s arrest. The article is, essentially, an in-depth pre-trial defence of Black, who was convicted the following year.

The relationship that editors establish with their readers is one of the most important sites of a magazine’s cultural work. This is because most editors design the look and content of a magazine to appeal to an image they have of their readers. Michael Robert Evans, author of The Layers of Magazine Editing writes: “Smart editors begin their thinking with readers” (11). As Evans shows in his book, editors conduct surveys, they can and do act on comments and opinions expressed in readers’ letters to them, and they can and sometimes do seek out the opinions of focus groups to help them identify a target audience (18-39). While such information may help editors to get a fix on who their readers are and what they want, more often than not editors rely on the image they have of their reader – someone who is a lot like they are – to guide their editorial decisions. William Whitworth, editor of The Atlantic says: “I assume that readers are like us, with the same tastes and interests” (qtd. in Evans 34). George C. Larson, editor of Air & Space writes: “We watch reader mail and occasionally do an informal reader survey, but we mostly trust our own gut to sense what’s interesting to people out there” (qtd. in Evans 34). Assuming their readers were just like they were certainly seems to have been the case when it comes to the Steins’ decision to publish the defence of Black, an ill-fated assumption to be sure.

In her “Editor’s Note” in the December 2006 issue, in a manner reminiscent of Zola’s masterful newspaper article, “J’accuse,” Stein uses editorial space to justify her decision to devote a good third of the issue to their politically-charged, complex, investigative report on the case against newspaper baron Lord Black of Cross Harbour.
Maude Barlow has convincingly demonstrated why there are few grey opinions where Black is concerned. *The Big Black Book: The Essential Views of Conrad and Barbara Amiel Black*, the analysis by Barlow and James Winter of the innumerable supercilious remarks made in the media and to the media by the press baron and his wife Barbara Amiel, is a wake-up call to the threat that this couple poses to fundamental democratic principles including freedom of the press. By 1999, Black was among the three largest newspaper publishers in the world. He had also earned a reputation for, as Sarah Challands and Amanda Taccone writing for CTV in March 2007 put it, “taking over newspapers and raising profits by cutting costs and slashing jobs” (<http://www.ctv.ca/CTVNews/Specials/20050922/conrad_black_timeline_050922/>). But it was, perhaps, his decision in 2001 to renounce his Canadian citizenship, at the insistence of the former Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien, in order to become a member of the British peerage, that raised the greatest ire and distain among a good many Canadians.

At least some readers must have therefore been surprised and perplexed when they read Stein’s “Editor’s Note” in the December 2006 issue, that is, months before his trial had even begun. She writes that, as Black

is a writer in his own right . . . a full card-carrying member of the writing community.

As an author, he deserves the same consideration we show any persecuted writer the world over – a thorough investigation of the circumstances, and when deemed necessary, an honest defense! With the popular media almost absent in its coverage of the ‘other side’ of the story, and with the business community either too complacent or inarticulate to say anything, it is morally incumbent on the literary ‘estate’ to speak out. We have stepped up to the plate in the hope that some shaft of light, some “truth” might come out of this story and influence the course of events. This essay is intended to spur other journalists and writers to investigate further, in a spirited effort to defend Conrad
Black as his trial date approaches this March . . . . (Stein, “Editor’s Note” December 2006 2)

This unusual exploitation of her position and her power as editor and owner of a government-subsidized, pan-Canadian magazine, in order to proselytize the unpopular cause of Conrad Black had the potential to offend, even astound, many of her readers. Her behaviour suggested that she assumed subscribers to the magazine would also subscribe to her “spirited effort” to defend Black, long before the trial had even begun, and would endorse her unexpected foray into corporate politics. The irony in equating the plight of a multi-millionaire to that of “persecuted writers the world over,” the claims that accusations against Black’s corporate complacency were unfounded, and the self-righteous tone of the “moral incumbency” with which she justified her decision harbours the potential to initiate a stand-off involving the editor and her readers.

Moreover, her motives may have been seen as questionable. Did Stein, when she wrote that she considers it her duty to defend Black, expect to be blamed if she had not, and if so, by whom? Surely not by readers who come to the magazine seeking information about the latest books and their authors. They would not expect her to defend him. Could the Steins have been hoping to curry favour with Black’s ‘in-group’ or even with Black himself? Or, perhaps it was simply a publicity stunt intended to draw attention to the periodical? Regardless, the article, and her decision to publish it, was one from which the majority of readers might indeed wish to distance themselves.

A close reading of the article shows that it was the result of extensive research and analysis, even if the bibliography is sparse and incomplete. The paratext, for example, the title, “Auto da Fé: Conrad Black, Corporate Governance, and the End of Economic Man,” complemented by a medieval painting entitled “The Inquisition Tribunal” all work to suggest
that the charges against Black were “trumped up.” Insets featuring pithy quotes concerning the notion of ‘truth’ excerpted from Umberto Eco’s *Baudolino* further this impression. The accompanying line-drawing by Montreal illustrator Geneviève Caron depicting America’s Corporate Governance as an octopus, and the drawing’s by-line: “Different arms of this governance octopus will be able to wrap themselves around large, established firms” serve as visual representations of the article’s central thesis, namely that the accusations against Black are a threat to capitalism. Other books reviewed in the same December 2006 issue, two that deal with American politics, one of a book about Orson Wells, and one about Julius Caesar entitled *The Life of a Colossus*, by British military historian Adrian Goldsworthy, seem designed to act as subtle buttresses for the argument.

Densely detailed in its erudite explication of the case against Black, the structure of the essay is reminiscent of a theatrical production. The article’s opening may well have been intended to impress readers of *Books in Canada* much like a stunning set is meant to impress the audience the moment the lights come up. The article begins with an insider’s description of one of the most important gatherings for the “literary, social and business elite of New York...the annual *Kenyon Review* award for literary distinction” (Stein, “Auto da Fé” 16) an event where, the Steins write, “the propinquity of New York wealth and philanthropy, with the glitterati of the publishing and literary world made for a special frisson” (Stein, “Auto da Fé” 16). Even the mayor Michael Bloomberg, still flushed with his landslide victory, was present, entertaining the crowd with a bit of doggerel he had written to honour both events (16). In what might be described as “the prologue” to the play, the Steins provide a list of previous winners of the award, among them Umberto Eco. Eco’s fascination with truth and falsification, particularly as it is expressed in *Baudolino*, then acts as a leitmotif in the authors’ dissection of the case against Black.
The media mogul, whom they describe as “a man of lively wit and intelligence,” whose name “turns up over 15 million individual items” on a Google search, and whose financial success has, they write, benefitted many of the people attending was notable in his absence (Stein, “Auto da Fé” 17). In his place was “the rising star of corporate governance, and [Black’s] usurper, the ethics czar and ex-SEC chairman, Richard C. Breedan” (Stein, “Auto da Fé” 17). Breedan, the authors predict, stands to benefit the most from Black’s dilemma (19). Referring to Breedan as “the Grand Inquisitor of American business, a modern day Torquemada” for whom Black is the “most important penitent,” they write that he “may yet become the first governance billionaire, a remarkable achievement to have turned the knotty subject of ethics, so deeply mooted with epistemological difficulties, into a financial fortune” (18-19). The blatant biases that permeate the Steins’ references to Black and to Breedan, the head of the special committee investigating Black, may soon have had some readers of the article who had come to the December 2006 issue expecting to find a variety of fair-minded book reviews wondering about its suitability for the magazine. Others who did not share their opinion of Black may have recoiled at the authors’ whole-hearted endorsement of him and at their scathing indictment of the American corporate investigative process.

The two main “characters” having been introduced, the essay continues with introductions of each of the numerous major and minor supporting characters involved in the case along with an elaboration of their roles in the “inquisition” of Black. Among these “actors” are Paul B. Healy, Laura Jereski, Richard Perle and other board members of Hollinger International. The essay, though so obviously one-sided, is persuasive because of the sheer mountain of details the authors have marshaled in Black’s defence and because of its ominous depiction of the destructive impact the trial could have on democracy in America and on the fundamentals of private enterprise, should Black be found guilty.
Readers must have wondered what the real reasons behind this extraordinary exercise were. What did Stein know of her readers and had she considered her readers before deciding to give the Black affair such prominence in her publication? Did she anticipate any backlash from other contributing editors, reviewers, authors or book publishers, and if she did, would it have mattered to her? Had she received any reactions from readers, and if so, was she planning on publishing them?

Olga Stein’s response to a delicate compilation of some of these questions in my June 7, 2007 e-mail to her was only to say that several American magazines were considering reprinting the essay, that she considers Black “an incredible individual – a man of remarkable fortitude, grace and dignity,” and that she would let her husband respond to my other questions, given that “so much of the impetus” had come from him (Stein e-mail 10 March 2007). Adrian Stein never replied to an e-mail I sent him, despite the fact that, according to one fellow contributor, he had worked on the essay for over nine months.

The problems surrounding the decision to publish the long article in defence of Conrad Black point to the ability of a book-review magazine to do cultural work by virtue of what the Steins did and did not do with their magazine in this case. The first problem is that the initiative catches the Steins in the act of exploiting Olga’s position as owner and editor, and Adrian’s as publisher, and both of them in the act of using provincial and federal periodical subsidies in order to advocate on behalf of a personal, and generally unpopular, cause – the innocence of a controversial newspaper kingpin, rather than using their editorial and publishing power to carry out the aims of a national book-review periodical, that is, to assess and promote Canada’s book and literary culture.

A second problem with the decision to publish the article on Black is the dubious reasoning that Olga Stein uses to explain their decision. Despite the deception, however, her
reasoning does at least demonstrate how a book-review magazine can help to shape a country's cultural identity. Stein defends their decision by telling her readers that the magazine is carrying out a book-review magazine’s duty, that is, to defend the rights of persecuted authors. Defending a country’s authors may or may not be part of the mandate of a particular book-review magazine, and thus a part of the cultural work that it does. However, Black was not being persecuted for anything that he has written in his books, but for actions that he had taken as Chairman of Hollinger International, one of the largest newspaper corporations in the world. Thus, Stein’s argument undermines the role of a book-review magazine to defend writers’ rights. However, it does signal another of the ways a book-review magazine can help to shape cultural identity, namely by publishing a grounded defence of the right for authors to speak out against human injustices.

The third problem with the decision to publish the article and the accompanying explanatory editorial is Stein’s claim that she is, as she writes, “stepping up to the plate” and executing a responsibility that comes with being part of “the literary estate” (Stein, “Editors Note” Dec. 2006, 2). Who, besides she and her husband, belongs to the estate is not specified, thereby implying that she is voicing the opinions of a majority of authors and members of the book industry and critical establishment. To make a public assumption that the majority of these people believe that Black, known more for his condescending attitude to journalists and fellow authors alike, is innocent would have, not surprisingly, alienated, many of the magazine’s readers, especially those who are writers themselves. In terms of cultural work, these editorial decisions highlight the responsibilities of both editors and contributors to conduct objective analyses of issues and events of concern to the majority of the people who have a stake in the representation of, and evolution of, a country’s national imaginary.
If there were letters to the Editor from readers expressing their support of the initiative, or their dismay with it, none were published in subsequent issues to indicate public reaction to it. The publication of the Black article is, as former Advisory Editor Brian Fawcett wrote to me in an e-mail in November 2008, the year the magazine folded, an example of what happens when "private sector entrepreneurs with factional ideas" run a magazine (Fawcett e-mail). Although the Black article received little attention from the public media, its potential to contribute to the ultimate demise of the magazine by eroding the magazine's reputation as a source of fair-minded book-related content, cannot be ignored.

Aside from that flagrant expression of political partisanship, other factors – the cultural context, technological changes, changes in the book industry and changes in reviewing itself – may have contributed to the demise of Books in Canada. Its departure from the nation's book and literary cultural conversations as of the January/February 2008 issue adds it to the growing number of casualties that, according to Martin Levin, editor of the Globe and Mail's book section, are presently at the centre of "passionate debates" on the U.S. National Book Critic's Circle blog about the future of "book talk" (D17). It seems that the format of thoughtful, research-supported reviews of recently published books, as well as their forum, will require a complete overhaul if book-review magazine editors hope to attract today's Black Berry, I-Pod, e-zine comfortable readers, readers for whom "thumbing through books" is taking on new meaning, especially with innovations like the Kindle electronic book.

Olga Stein and the magazine's publisher, her husband Adrian, had, in fact, already acknowledged their intentions to move with the times. James Adams offers a comprehensive assessment of the history of the magazine's financial troubles in "This Award Night Comes With a Twist," his coverage for the Globe and Mail of the Books in Canada First Novel Award for
2007. The twist is, he writes in the October 1, 2008 online issue of the national newspaper, that "Books in Canada has ceased publication" (Adams).

According to Adams, in August 15, 2008, Adrian Stein had announced to the Globe and Mail that he and his wife were working on the website and had hoped to have a new one ready in time for the announcement of the 2007 award (Adams). In a subsequent e-mail to Adams, Stein told the reporter that they were working on a digital version of Books in Canada which was to consist of "reviews, interview material, profiles, blogs, multi-media etc." and that "there were plans to 'extend the e-commerce side of the business and . . . integrate this component into the Amazon affiliate system'" (Adams). While those intentions have not yet panned out the way Stein promised they would, they did at least result in the somewhat useful and accessible database of back issues, available by Googling "Books in Canada back pages," begun by Olga Stein in 2003.

The database, at least when last accessed in December 2011, is structured in such a way that the "Books in Canada back issues" page consists of links, identified by month and year that, when clicked on, take the reader to the contents of the issue published in that month and year. The contents of issues published from May 1971 to December 2006 are available either in a PDF format or in a list format, the latter directly linked to the Amazon.com website.

In terms of the PDFs, the contents of each issue can be searched by right-clicking and using the PDF 'find' function. The contents of issues available through the list format cannot be searched, making the list format less researcher-friendly. In the list format, the first paragraph of most of the contributions, whether it be a review, an article, an essay, or letters to and from the editor, is displayed with access to the rest of the contents available by clicking on the "Read more..." link. Clicking on the image that accompanies the first contribution takes the reader directly to the Amazon.ca page that gives the book’s price, availability and publishing details and
consumer reviews in typical Amazon.ca fashion. There is no link to Amazon.ca for the issues that are available in PDF. Also, neither the images that accompany the article in the paper version, nor the page numbers, nor the advertisements, nor the inside-cover credit-listings giving, for example, the names of the editorial board, contributing artists, and contributors’ biographies at the time, are given for issues available through the Amazon-linked list format. Also, the text of some reviews available in the list format, once opened, are often difficult to read given that they have been scanned. The letters of some of the words are indecipherable. Some sentences are run together and there are no indications of where paragraphs begin or end. This problem also occurs, but less frequently, in the PDF versions. However, given that with the PDF version the researcher is actually viewing a photograph of each page in the periodical, it is easier to decipher incorrectly scanned letters and words.

The online database enhances the magazine’s value as a cultural archive in that at least it enables access to thirty-five years worth of book reviews and other content, some of it in PDF format, without having to go to a library. Still, readers and researchers will have to have the interest and patience to wait for sometimes indecipherable PDF formats to download, in the case of earlier issues. In the case of later issues, they will have to be prepared to struggle through massive ‘globs’ of unparagraphed text and to do without the visual content and other forms of paratext such as editorial comments and complementary insets that accompanied the reviews in the original paper version.

While the failure as yet to follow through on plans to re-emerge as an electronic version may have been one reason for the magazine’s disappearance from the cultural scene, in his article, Adams signals a second reason: severe cut-backs in federal and provincial grants. He reports that the magazine had enjoyed the “long-standing support” of organizations such as the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council and the Canadian Heritage Fund, only to
learn that the latter’s contribution had dropped from $27,206 in 2005-6 to zero in 2006-7. Since the Black article is not likely a reason for this reduction given that it was published in the December 2006 issue, months after such grants would be allocated, other factors, such as cutbacks to the arts in general, and competition by the *Literary Review of Canada*, may have played a role. The OAC, which had been contributing about $30,000 annually “in the 1990’s,” had reduced their annual investment to $5000. According to Adams, the Canada Council was still subsidizing the periodical: “Its writing and publishing division has given [*Books in Canada*] a total of more than $225,000 over the previous five years. Included in that is $46,600 invested in the magazine” in December 2007 intended to cover the costs of publishing the magazine in 2008 (Adams). The Council had, he writes, given the grant “in good faith” and was assuming that “... *Books in Canada* will have produced the issues in print, that they received funding for —” (Adams). The Steins succeeded in publishing only one issue that year before the magazine folded.

Added discouragement to continuing to publish a paper version of the magazine must surely have been the notice the Steins would have received in mid-2007 of Canada Post’s plan to increase postal rates including those for magazines beginning in January 2009. As Cathi Gulli writes,

as of Jan. 12, [2009] Canada Post changed the way it charges publishers to ship magazines and other periodicals across provinces. In doing so, it raised the rates by one and three pennies respectively (per weighted bundle). The company believes the new distance-related pricing (DRP) is a more equitable way of administering postal fees. . . . For critics though, the rate hike represents nothing short of Canada Post abdicating its cultural responsibilities to deliver mail to all Canadians regardless of where they live. . . .
The spectre of having to cope with these cutbacks, coupled with Canada Post’s decision to cut the $15 million it contributed annually to the Publications Assistance Program, must have been a daunting and ultimately insurmountable one for the Steins. Not surprisingly then, in response to a query of mine in April 2008, Stein informed me by e-mail that the Spring 2008 issue would be “digital only” (Stein e-mail 30 April 2008).

With no incentive on the part of the government to assist the dissemination of new knowledge about Canada’s book and literary culture, and cutbacks in both federal and provincial funding, why do it at all? As Don Kummerfeld, president of the International Federation of the Periodical Press tells Gulli, “Postal subsidies for magazines were introduced in Canada ‘to encourage literacy and help bind the nation so that everybody can read the same literature no matter where they are’” (qtd. in Gulli, 15). By cutting its long-standing funding to defer the costs of mailing magazines, including *Books in Canada*, the government was, according to Mark Jamison, CEO of Magazines Canada, abdicating its cultural responsibilities. As he tells Gulli, “‘We have to view our postal delivery system as part of the cultural and social mechanism that helps keep us together. It’s as important as building the railroad was’” (qtd. in Gulli, 15). Just as the railroad is a tangible symbol of federal unity, of Canada’s identity as a federation, magazines are tangible conveyors of the social and cultural values and of the interests of that federation.

The question of whether or not a move to an electronic version would have saved *Books in Canada* remains open, given that the Steins, or any other owners, could still pursue those plans. Whether or not they should is increasingly debatable. Signals from the world of book publishing and book reviewing are contradictory. For example, the *Wall Street Journal* is bucking the popular notion that the advent and rapid improvement in quality of e-books and online newspapers and magazines augur the death of the book-review magazine. The book publishing trade magazine *Quill & Quire* announced as recently as September 2010 that the *Wall
Street Journal was about to launch its “first-ever book-review section in the coming weeks”
(Woods Quillblog, 9 September 2010). Woods quotes The New York Observer:

Book sections in newspapers have been killed left and right over the last few years. The
Washington Post cut its standalone book section last year. The Chicago Tribune did it the
year before, and the L.A. Times did it the year before that. There have been a lot of
obituaries written in honor of book sections over the last few years, all lamenting a dying
art in a printed newspaper that Rupert Murdoch – naturally – will now stubbornly try to
revive (Woods Quillblog, 9 September 2010).

On the other hand, barely a month later, Woods reports in his Quill & Quire blog that the
Toronto Star would be “carrying content from the New York Times’ Sunday book-review
section” (Woods Quillblog, 13 October 2010). Although Woods was told by the Star’s
spokesperson Rob Hepburn that the decision would have no impact on the Star’s “existing book
coverage,” the move is symptomatic of the internationalization and eventually globalization of
book and literary culture.

Another question that has yet to be answered is whether or not Lettres québécoises will
experience the same reduction in the capacity of its contents to continue framing a distinct
cultural identity. Highly-publicized, boundary-crossing prizes like the “Prix-littéraire France-
Quebec,” awarded in November 2009 to Magog author Michèle Plomer by a committee of 500
voters in 19 regions of France who selected it from among three finalists, is a small but important
indication that Quebec’s book-review culture may not remain immune to the effects of
technology and globalization.

It would seem that the ability of a print version of a professionally-edited book-review
magazine to contribute to a cultural identity unique to one nation diminishes in direct proportion
to the degree to which technology eases access to the contents of a much larger roster of books to read and to an unprecedented supply of opinions, professional or otherwise, about those books.
CONCLUSION:

Of course, *Books in Canada* was not the only periodical publishing book reviews in English Canada at the time. Many, but not all, of the country’s English literary journals include a section for book reviews, sections that vary in size and location. The scholarly journal *Canadian Literature* reviews more than 100 books, some briefly, but most in detail, in each of its quarterly paper issues, and most reviews are also available online, including forthcoming ones. Poetry journals such as *The Fiddlehead*, a print quarterly out of New Brunswick, and the Ottawa-based *Arc Poetry Magazine*, a bi-annual print publication, review on average seven and twenty books respectively. *Prairie Fire* is a venerable venue for creative writing that does not publish reviews in its printed version. Rather, it directs readers to its web page where more than thirty books are reviewed. The monthly trade magazine *Quill & Quire* is a respected source of succinct book reviews and of author profiles in addition to news about the publishing trade. Canada’s major newspapers also review books. The Saturday issue of the *Globe and Mail* newspaper reviews, or at least mentions the titles of, about twenty books a week or close to 1000 books a year. Still, one thousand books is less than a tenth of the 16,000 new titles that, according to key findings in 2008 by the Canadian Heritage’s Book Publishing Industry Development Program, are produced by Canada’s publishers annually (*Book Publishing 1*). In light of such book publishing prolificacy, it is worth noting that with the folding of *Books in Canada*, the *Literary Review of Canada* is now the only print magazine in English Canada that consists almost entirely of in-depth reviews of books.

From 1971 until 1991, the year the *Literary Review of Canada* was founded by P. A. Dutil, *Books in Canada* was the only English magazine in Canada whose main purpose was to review books. While the large-size format of the two periodicals and the length of their reviews
are similar, 1000 to 2000 words, the range of types of books reviewed in the *Literary Review of Canada* is noticeably different. A general survey of the tables of contents of the latter since it began publication shows a marked preference for reviewing books that deal with historical, social, political and economic topics rather than literary works. Despite its title, the *Literary Review of Canada* reviews on average, only one novel per issue. In contrast, on average, at least half of the books reviewed in any given issue of *Books in Canada* were novels. For example, in a random comparison, the January/February 2008 issue of the *Literary Review of Canada* reviews only two novels. The January/February 2008 issue of *Books in Canada* reviews sixteen novels and two collections of short stories. Also, unlike *Books in Canada*, which consistently reviewed books of poetry – the last six pages of the sample issue of *Books in Canada* consists of reviews of four books of poetry – the *Literary Review of Canada* states in its submission guidelines that it "does not review poetry."

This study of the rise and demise of *Books in Canada*, with its comparative chapter on *Lettres québécoises*, has sought to better understand how the cultural work of a book-review magazine is in part to respond to, nurture and shape a reader’s sense of cultural identity. It discovered that *Books in Canada* did its cultural work not only through its historical presence, but also through the contract the founder made with his readers, and the way he and subsequent editors executed that contract, through the messages conveyed by the front covers of the periodical, and through the contents of the reviews and the writing styles of the reviewers.

In Chapter I, the magazine’s cultural work was located in the collective optimism and cultural nationalism that Val Clery, the founder of *Books in Canada*, was both reflecting and advocating in his inaugural issues. I showed him in the process of creating a reputation for the magazine as a venue of informed insight into the contents of books being published in Canada at the time, and as an impetus for writing quality that would be judged to be good, not only in
Canada, but also elsewhere in the world. From there, I investigated two “cracks” in the foundation that undermined that reputation and thus the ability of the magazine to do cultural work.

In Chapter II, I compared the cultural “contracts” that Val Clery, founder of *Books in Canada*, and Adrien Thério, founder of *Lettres québécoises*, made with their reading publics by creating the periodicals – what each hoped to achieve with their publications and the challenges they faced in designing a periodical that would reflect and nurture the book and literary culture that produced it. I then contrast the projects that these two founding editors gave themselves through an analysis of contents selected from the inaugural issues of each periodical. The same qualitative versus quantitative approach is then applied to selections from the twentieth-anniversary issues of each periodical. My analysis of the selected reviews and interviews published in these milestone issues of each periodical show the stated aims and practices of each in the process of reflecting different cultural realities and shaping distinctly different cultural identities.

In Chapter III, I furthered the investigation into editorial activities by focussing on selections from issues published by two of the magazine’s key editors, Paul Stuewe (1990-1995) and Olga Stein (2001-2008). I showed how an editor’s tenets and political leanings can have a major impact on the cultural identity of readers. This was emphasized when I juxtaposed Stuewe’s nationalist and literary initiatives – enigmatic front covers, more omnibus reviews, expanded CanLit Acrostic and a “Work-in-Progress” feature that introduced readers to the actual creative writing process of some of Canada’s well-known authors – with Stein’s tendency to favour international, conservative, content. I also looked at ways that reviewers themselves do cultural work through their stylistic approaches to writing reviews.
In Chapter IV, I examined ways that several of the magazine’s front covers do cultural work. A visually-enhanced analysis of the magazine’s front cover images located cultural work in the intellectual bridging process that the images required readers to make between the front cover pictures and text and the content to which the front cover material overtly, or subtly, referred. I proposed that the intellectual bridging activity that such gaps instigate acts as a cultural work site in that it requires readers to negotiate what they know and have yet to know about the subject, thus making the referent material – the book and the review – more meaningful and memorable.

In Chapter V, I focussed on a selection of book reviews, one of them my own, in order to explore the capacity of book reviews, as cultural entities themselves, to do cultural work. I argue that a book review demonstrates many of the same characteristics that Gérard Genette attributes to paratexts. Like paratexts, book reviews convey information, an intention or desired interpretation, a decision, a commitment, advice, and/or a command. Unlike paratexts, however, book reviews are not connected to the author. Thus, I suggest that they be thought of as “ectotexts.” In this chapter, I used my own experience of reviewing a republication of Frank Parker Day’s novel _Rockbound_ to illustrate how book reviews can add historical depth and breadth to the cultural identity of its readers, and I conducted a close reading of the illocutionary force of sentences in a review written by Jim Christy, among others. Moreover, in this chapter, I explored the agenda-setting potential of book reviews as well as the cultural work that translation reviews do by introducing readers to many of Quebec’s and the world’s authors and their works.

In the first part of Chapter VI, I considered the significance of the _Books in Canada_ First Novel Award. Referring to York’s study of celebrity culture in Canada, I discussed the award’s capacity to contribute to celebrity culture in Canada.
The magazine became a fertile site for the creation of a national cultural identity under Paul Stuewe’s direction. However, as I showed in the second part of Chapter VI, that capacity for cultural work suffered two serious blows at the hands of its new owners with two seemingly self-serving editorial initiatives. One was the copyright uproar sparked by the agreement that Adrian Stein made with Amazon.com in 2001 in order to breathe life back into the magazine after a nine-month hiatus, and the second was the decision by the Steins in December 2006 to publish their eighteen-page essay that is essentially a pre-trial defence of Conrad Black, the former newspaper mogul who was convicted in 2007 for several counts of fraud. There can be little doubt that these two questionable editorial decisions sowed seeds of doubts in some readers’ minds about the magazine’s ability to act as a trustworthy arbiter of taste and foreshadowed the demise of the magazine in 2008.

In Chapter VI, I also described ways that Olga Stein tried, as Editor, to respond to the demands of our current technology-driven society by overseeing the creation of a Books in Canada website and search engine. I then put Books in Canada’s demise into context, noting that its departure from the nation’s book and literary cultural conversations as of the January/February 2008 issue adds it to the growing number of book review casualties that, according to Martin Levin, editor of the Globe and Mail’s book section, are presently at the centre of “passionate debates” on the blog of the U.S. National Book Critics Circle about the future of “book talk” (D17). I suggested that the format of thoughtful, research-supported reviews of recently published books, as well as their publishing forums, must be completely overhauled if book-review magazine editors hope to attract today’s I-Pod, e-zine comfortable readers, readers for whom “thumbing through books” is taking on new meaning, especially with innovations like the Kindle electronic book.
Marshall McLuhan once wrote that “Gutenberg had, in effect, made every man a reader. Today Xerox and other forms of reprography tend to make every man a publisher” (179). As we all know now, and as Hutcheon explains in her 2009 article, the Internet, the post-Xerox generation of technology, has also made every man a reviewer. Hutcheon sees the democratization of the book-reviewing process not as a cause for “lament” but as a way to “satisfy our different needs and thus the different demands we make of reviews and reviewing” and a “cause for self-reflection” (7). Perhaps the demise of Books in Canada need not be a cause for “lament” either, but rather a cause for reflection on the part of Canada’s authors and their publishers. They need to reflect on the multi-faceted nature of those demands. They also need to think of how best to ensure that book-review magazines of the future can continue to exploit to the fullest their ability to enrich the awareness that readers have of the importance of book and literary culture to society and to their own lives, be it delivered in print or in pixels.
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ENDNOTES:

In contrast to the attention afforded them to date in English Canada, book-review magazines have been the subject of book-length studies of a socio-historical nature in Britain and in the United States. Critical Times, a 600-page centenary history of the Times Literary Supplement (TLS) (2001), by Derwent May, is a British example of the increased interest in the evolution of contemporary book-review magazines and in the contribution they have made to literary culture. May describes the history of the Literary Supplement and traces the steady growth in popularity that led to its current independent format. He follows the reviewing careers of such famous contributors as Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, William Empson and F. R. Leavis. He also documents the initial reception by other, lesser-known, reviewers of works by James Joyce, Philip Larkin, Dylan Thomas, Iris Murdoch and Kingsley Amis, among many others – books which are now considered classics, despite being ‘panned’ at the time.

In the United States, there is clearly a growing awareness of the fact that book-review periodicals express and influence a nation’s literary culture. For example, in 2000, the editors of the New York Times Book Review published Books of the Century: a Hundred Years of Authors, Ideas, and Literature. This 688-page anthology of the reviews, essays, interviews and letters published since the magazine’s inception in 1896 offers readers a strong sense of shifts in American literary concerns and writing styles over the past ten decades and of their connection to social and cultural trends.

Partisan Review (PR) is another influential American literary journal that has been the subject of several books. Founded in New York in 1934 by Philip Rahv and William Phillips, it ceased publication in 2003. The Rise of the New York Intellectuals: Partisan Review and Its Circle, 1934-1945 (1986) by Terry A. Cooney, is one of many publications to document the history of Partisan Review (PR). Cooney’s book follows the development of the magazine itself and of the politics conveyed in its articles and reviews.

Book-length analyses of the contents of Québec’s French-language periodicals, be they specific-interest magazines, or book- or literature related magazines, include the doctoral dissertation by François Yelle. It offers a thorough history and examination of the reflexive literature concerning media communication studies in Québec universities and in their scholarly journals. In Censure et littérature au Québec – Des vieux couvents au plaisir de vivre, 1920-1959, Pierre Hébert and Élise Salain define censorship and document its presence in religious tracts and church letters published during the first half of the twentieth century. Their book builds on Hébert’s initial study of censorship and its impact on literature in Québec, written in collaboration with Patrick Nicol, Censure et littérature au Québec : Le livre crucifié (1625-1919).

A selection of these networks is the subject of Traduction littéraire et sociabilité interculturelle au Canada (1950-1960) by Patricia Godbout.

Marshall’s quote from Lubbock’s note ends with the latter’s sobering comment that “it was all so hairy that the chief technician committed suicide after the first few shows.” In the same issue, next to Marshall’s contribution is a reprint of the speech given by Kildare Dobbs at the funeral service for Clery. Dobbs refers to Clery’s moral integrity and writes that Clery was “immoveable where his conscience was concerned” and that “it was for conscience’ sake” that Clery resigned from the CBC.

Paul Stuewe had a regular “Work in Progress” section in which he featured excerpts of new work currently being written by established authors.

New’s expression, the “illusion of a clear definition of a cultural identity” testifies to the difficulty that one encounters when attempting to define concepts such as identity and culture.

More recently, in a “historique” published in the Winter 2011 issue on the occasion of Lettres québécoises’ 35th anniversary, André Vanasse notes that he has never been able to prove Thério’s assertion. He writes, “La vérité est que je n’ai jamais pu vérifier de cette assertion. De plus, Naïm Kattan, à l’époque directeur du CAC, m’a assuré à plus d’une reprise que cette supposition n’était pas du tout fondée” (Vanasse 5).

That same year (1976) Gérard Godin became a candidate in the Parti québécois and defeated Robert Bourassa, the incumbent Premier of Quebec, in the riding of Mercier in the 1976 provincial election. Godin served in the
governments of René Lévesque and Pierre-Marc Johnson. From 1982 to 1983, he was the minister responsible for the application of the French language charter (Bill 101). Winner of the Prix du Gouverneur général in 1987, he died in 1994 in Montreal. (Wikipedia).

ix My translation.

x The four-page feature article comes right after a second, three-page-long feature article in this anniversary issue entitled “The Way They Were” (12-14). In the latter of the two, Margaret Atwood, Hugh Hood, Irving Layton, Al Purdy, Mordecai Richler and Rudy Wiebe respond to a request by the editors of Books in Canada to “look back at what they were up to when they were 20” (12). A photograph of each author sits next to their half-page-long responses. Atwood, for example, replies that she was “[g]oing to university, wearing Existentialist Black, drinking draft beer at 10 cents a glass – or could it have been five? – at the King Cole Room in the basement of the Park Plaza Hotel . . .” (12). Layton, meanwhile, writes that he was “an idealistic, magnificent loafer” (13).

xi An incorrect date, “mars 1975,” appears on the front cover of the inaugural issue of Lettres québécoises. However, the table of contents page carries the correct date, that is, “Mars 1976.” André Vanasse, the current director of Lettres québécoises, commenting in an interview with Robert Chartrand for Le Devoir in March 2004 on the occasion of the magazine’s nomination as a finalist for the Grand Prix du Conseil des arts de la Ville de Montreal, recalls that the mistake was indicative of the “cauchemar” that Thério endured in the magazine’s early days.

xii The globalization movement is qualified here as “this era’s” because as Nick Mount writes, “Literary cosmopolitanism didn’t arrive in Canada with The English Patient, any more than globalization arrived with the internet. Globalization is not a uniquely postmodern phenomenon: it can be difficult to see in some periods in history, because it doesn’t progress evenly, but waxes and wanes, accelerating in diasporic, cosmopolitan moments like the literary exodus and decelerating in periods of isolationism and nationalism” (162).

xiii Black’s presence in Books in Canada via an 18-page essay, written by Olga and Adrian Stein, concerning events and personalities that led to Black’s arrest and conviction for fraud is addressed in Chapter V of this dissertation.

xiv A webpage devoted to the front covers of books by Lucy Maud Montgomery discusses the kind of information that can be gleaned by studying the covers of books or magazines. The authors of the page write that the popularity of Montgomery’s books “makes examining the book covers an adventure in understanding something about literature, popular culture, the female hero, and marketing” (Montgomery <http://lmm.confederationcentre.com/english/covers/covers-l.html>).

xv Punch was re-launched in 1996 by Mohamed Al Fayed and “soon positioned itself as a thorn in the side of the Establishment with a series of irreverent exposés.” However, it never regained the popularity it had enjoyed for so long and folded again in 2002 (www.punch.co.uk).

xvi Moreover, depicting the chef as a frog orchestrating the whole thing, barely recognizable as he is as such until one gets to the inside back cover where he is identified, may suggest, at least to some of the magazine’s more cynical and anti-Québec readers, that there is a link to be made between Canada’s multicultural policy and the official linguistic status that the policy confirms for the French language.

xvii Kooyoo is pictured with Mary earlier in the book and identified as the second daughter of Peter Pitseolak (Pitseolak 10).

xviii Currently a prolific graphic artist living in Toronto, GAD now has clients worldwide. In Canada, his roster includes Prentice-Hall Publishers and the Globe and Mail. On GAD’s webpage, Eric Nelson, art director for the Globe and Mail writes that “VictoR gad is one of those rare illustrators who can provide the most provocatively lateral visual solutions to the most relentlessly linear manuscripts” and Jill Tedhams from Business Law Today magazine writes that “VictoR is the artist to go to when you’ve got impossible content you need illustrated.” (http://www.victorgad.com/all_pages/_v_life/index.html). The body of work that this talented graphic artist produced for Books in Canada forms a sophisticated, impressive oeuvre that could stand on its own as an exhibit of contemporary art. As front cover art, it suggested a rise in the intellectual tenor of the magazine.
Mistry had been featured on the front cover of the April 1992 issue as winner of the 1991 Smithbooks/Books in Canada First Novel Award for *Such a Long Journey*.

Moss, a former teacher of Canadian literature whose life “is defined to a surprising extent by Margaret Atwood – not by the person whom I admire but hardly know – but by the cultural phenomenon . . .” (10) is editor of *Margaret Atwood, The Open Eye*. In the article for *Books in Canada*, he examines the paradox he discovered while scuba-diving, namely that none of his Canadian scuba-diving companions had ever heard of Atwood. This is paradoxical because, as he writes, she is “one of the most widely taught writers in the world today; among those both living and dead, she is second in the United Kingdom only to Shakespeare” (10).

The conference paper appears in the conference proceedings entitled *Perspectives subliminales/Subliminal Perspectives: Actes des 6ième et 7ième colloques annuels en litterature canadienne compare/Proceedings of the 6th and 7th Annual Comparative Canadian Literature Conferences, Université de Sherbrooke, 2005 & 2006*.

Atwood was a contributor to *Books in Canada* in its founding years. Her books have been reviewed in the magazine over the many years she has been writing, and her image in one form or another has been featured on the front cover of at least one issue each decade. Carol Shields’ image is featured on the front cover of the December 1993 issue, the year she won a Governor General’s award for *The Stone Diaries*.

A review by Roxanne Rimstead of the book by Barlow and Winter, published in the April 1999 issue of *Books in Canada*, is discussed in more detail in Chapter III - “Reviewers and Their Métier.”

Maclean’s journalist Mark Steyn refers to the *Books in Canada* article in “Conrad Black: The Inquisitor,” an article published in *Maclean’s* on 12 March 2007. Steyn writes that it was “via *Books in Canada* of all unlikely places” that he first learned of the complex nature of the case against Black (54).