

EVA DARIAS-BEAUTELL, editor

Unruly Penelopes and the Ghosts

Narratives of English Canada

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Unruly Penelopes and the Ghosts: Narratives of English Canada

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These scholarly essays do not wait patiently. They do not long for peace, order, and good government in Canadian literary criticism. They are not haunted by “our lack of ghosts.” A testament to the power of unruly imaginings, this collection rips into the fabric of Canadian literary history and its cognitive institutions and weaves new possibilities for our global self-positioning. Argumentative, readable, ultimately hopeful—this is what critical scholarship can look like in the service of genuine social change.

– **Stephen Slemon**, Department of English and Film Studies,
University of Alberta

This collection of essays studies the cultural and literary contexts of narrative texts produced in English Canada over the last forty years. It takes as its starting point the nationalist movement of the 1960s and 70s, when the supposed absence or weakness of a national sense became the touchstone for official discourses on the cultural identity of the country. That type of metaphor provided the nation with the distinctive elements it was looking for and contributed to the creation of a sense of tradition that has survived to the present.

In the decades following the 1970s, however, critics, artists, and writers have repeatedly questioned such a model of national identity, still fragile and in need of articulation, by reading the nation from alternative perspectives such as multiculturalism, environmentalism, (neo)regionalism, feminism, or postcolonialism. These contributors suggest that the artistic and cultural flowering Canada is experiencing at the beginning of the twenty-first century is, to a great extent, based on the dismantlement of the images constructed to represent the nation only forty years ago. Through their readings of representative primary texts, their contextual analysis, and their selected methodological tools, the authors offer a tapestry of alternative approaches to that process of dismantlement. Together, they read as an unruly Penelopiad, their unravelling readings self-consciously interrogating Canada’s (lack of) ghosts.

Eva Darias-Beautell is associate professor of American and Canadian literatures at the University of La Laguna (Spain). She has been Visiting Scholar at the Universities of Toronto, Ottawa, and British Columbia. She is the author of several books, notably *Graphies and Grafts: (Con)Texts and (Inter)Texts in the Fictions of Four Canadian Women Writers* (2001), chosen as one of the “30 most notable books in Canadian Studies” by the International Council for Canadian Studies.

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