Canadian Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror

Bridging the Solitudes

Edited by Amy J. Ransom · Dominick Grace

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Introduction: Bridging the Solitudes as a Critical Metaphor

Amy J. Ransom and Dominick Grace

Canada as a nation owes its roots to twin European colonizing powers, Great Britain and France. Unsurprisingly, Canadian literature generally addresses, with varying degrees of anxiety, these colonial roots, but more increasingly it also writes back to the empire, questioning imperial prerogatives, deconstructing foundational myths, and asserting the ongoing presence of aboriginal communities and the arrival of new ones. The subtitle of this collection deliberately echoes Hugh MacLennan's classic attempt to describe Canada's original conception as a nation formed by "two founding peoples." His novel *Two Solitudes* (1945) coined the now-familiar eponymous phrase to describe Canada as a nation divided between its French and English heritages. Such a divisive, binary conception is, of course, limited, first and foremost because it erases the priority of the Indigenous peoples already present on what became Canadian soil. Yet, the metaphor continues to inform much thinking about Canada as a nation, both in nonfiction and in fiction—and in fiction of

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the fantastic as much as in realist fiction. Much early Canadian sf is concerned with the Anglophone and Francophone cultures of Canada, and how they might develop in the future.

However, Canadian literature of the fantastic, perhaps even more so than work in the realist tradition, exposes the limitations of the solitudes concept so often applied uncritically to the Canadian experience. Canada is *not* two solitudes, internally. Another standard metaphor for Canada is the mosaic, reflecting Canada's official commitment to multiculturalism and representing the nation not as one thing or even two things (Québec and The Rest of Canada, or TROC, as MacLennan's paradigm often gets rephrased) but as a glittering array of different things that make up a whole by juxtaposing and contrasting very diverse cultures and perspectives. One of the most explicit invocations of this idea is Guy Gavriel Kay's *The Sarantine Mosaic* (1998), which features as protagonist a mosaicist, Crispin, in a book that speaks repeatedly of how mosaic works through a complex interplay of factors: "When you set a tessera by hand into a surface you *position* it. You angle it, turn it. You adjust it in relation to the piece beside it, and the one beside that and beyond it, towards or away from the light entering through windows or rising from below" (Kay 1998, 283). Though a static form made up of discrete pieces, mosaic transforms those individual pieces into "a dazzling myriad of contrasting colours for a woven texture" (181), "to partake, however slightly, of the qualities of movement that [God] gave his mortal children and the world" (281). From many small, uniform pieces grows a complex and variegated whole. And of course absent from MacLennan's construction but very much a reality is that Canada as a nation was settled not only by English- and French-speaking peoples but also by emigrants from other nations and cultures (e.g. the heavy Germanic presence in Ontario, Doukhobors in the West, the Chinese in every major urban center, Haitians in Montréal), all of whom came to a country in which Indigenous peoples already existed and who subsequently experienced profound displacement. Indigenous Canada is perhaps the most obviously overlooked aspect of Canada in the "two solitudes" model, Truth and Reconciliation efforts notwithstanding. Indigenous Futurism has become one way of dealing with the Indigenous experience but remains relatively new, both as an artistic phenomenon and as the subject of critical study (see Dillon 2012).

The power of the bridge metaphor has not, of course, gone unnoticed by Canadian writers of sf and f. Élisabeth Vonarburg, in particular,

constructs an entire cycle of novellas in which Voyageurs use a machine referred to as the Bridge to move from one universe to another, their adventures mirroring the very act of reading science fiction. With each Voyage they discover an alternative universe to explore and learn from, but, as Vonarburg writes: "Nul ne sait ce qu'on va découvrir de l'autre côté d'un Pont" (Vonarburg 2009, 338; No one knows what one will find on the other side of a Bridge). The essays in this collection analyze how works of Canadian science fiction, fantasy, and horror represent beams in a bridge attempting to bring together Canada's various solitudes, but sometimes their conclusions are unexpected. From revisioning the historical trauma of residential schools, to rewriting the story of contact onto distant planets in the distant future, to imagining the consequences of the very real problems that divide us, the texts analyzed by our contributors offer critical, frequently dystopian visions of Canada's future and past. These are largely in the interest of some utopian hope that these imaginary worlds and alternate histories might lead to real change for the better, but sometimes they reveal that crossing the bridge can be dangerous. For the most part, our contributors have chosen to analyze texts that, themselves, cross the many divides that separate Canadians from each other, but also from the rest of the world, applying critical frameworks to texts which, themselves, represent alternate universes for readers to explore, and from which they can develop new perspectives on the shared consensus we call the "real world."

For, as is daily more evident, the contemporary world is increasingly one in which the global rather than the national context is central to an understanding of self and place; the fantastic (especially sf, but other genres, as well) is ready-made for exploring in nonliteral terms the complex and problematic nature of intercultural engagement. The contemporary world is also one in which disturbing trends in current politics are working to build walls rather than bridges and therefore threaten the very idea of bridging cultural, political, and ideological differences. Hence, our focus is not on the antiquated notion of Canada as two (or more) solitudes, but rather on the more productive attitude toward nationhood and cultural engagement suggested by *bridging* the gaps (perceived or otherwise) between superficially separate groups, regions, and ideologies. At the same time, we and our contributors acknowledge ongoing resistance to a certain globalism fueled by neoliberal capitalist ideology. Thus, the insistence in many of the texts analyzed here on the need for difference to persist in a manner that also fosters the

harmonious coexistence of diverse groups, and even species, on a commonly held globe.

The Canadian fantastic, indeed, has been understood as itself forming a kind of bridge between different generic traditions. Early scholars of the Canadian fantastic such as John Robert Colombo sought to identify what was unique about the Canadian fantastic (see Colombo et al. 1979; Colombo 1995; Weiss 2005b). By contrast, David Ketterer (1992), in the first monograph study of the Canadian fantastic, worked to define the Canadian fantastic by locating it *between*—or perhaps as a hybrid of—the American and the British traditions. Although he does not invoke the bridge metaphor, he in effect implies it, and at the same time, he acknowledges the French presence on the Canadian fantastic landscape. The transnational biographies of many of Canada's best-known sf writers seem to confirm Ketterer's notion. A. E. van Vogt, for example, was born in Canada and wrote much of his work there but was published in the US, his Canadian identity elided by the economic factors that made US publication his only viable option and eventually by his emigration to the US. As a dual citizen, Robert J. Sawyer is literally both Canadian *and* American. William Gibson was born and raised in the US but has had his entire career as a writer in Canada and is—like Vonarburg—one of the major figures to have explicitly used bridging as a key concept in his work, the Bridge Trilogy. However, he links himself with the literary traditions of the American South when discussing his development as a writer. For instance, in a 1999 interview he speculated that his writing "probably had something to do with being southern […] my friend Jack Womack has this thesis that he and I write the way we do because we're southern" (Doctorow 1999), and he later told Noel Murray that his southern roots "contributed a lot to my worldview and the way I look at things as a writer" (Murray 2007; see also Womack 2000).

Transnationalism has also informed the development of science fiction in Québec (sfq) since its earliest days. Although the first Canadian sf narrative was Napoléon Aubin's "Un voyage à la lune" (1839), another speculative pioneer, Jules-Paul Tardivel, was a Franco-American born of French-Canadian stock in Massachusetts. The development of contemporary sfq in the late 1970s and early 1980s was largely due to the intervention of two French-born immigrants to Québec, Norbert Spehner and Élisabeth Vonarburg, and definitions of what should be considered "sfq" divided the milieu. The divisions between the province's rival specialized magazines, *Solaris* and *imagine…*, could be attributed, in part,

to disagreements about style and influence, with the former looking more to the US tradition of storytelling and the latter looking more to a European experimental slipstream (see Ransom 2011a). Conscious efforts at building bridges between the Franco-/Anglo-solitudes, however, have been part of the movement's agenda, as sfq writers like Élisabeth Vonarburg, Jean-Louis Trudel, and Yves Meynard attended Cons in the US and the Rest of Canada, published English translations of their works, and even composed in English (see Ransom 2011b, 2018).

While it may be true that many authors of Anglo-Canadian sf do occupy a medial space between American and British traditions, or blur the line between being Canadian and non-Canadian, there is far more to the Canadian fantastic than Ketterer's paradigm. In addition to the relatively long tradition of French-language science-fictional, utopian, and fantastic writing in Canada, more recent years have seen Canadian writers pushing out of the solitudes and bridging the numerous gaps between them. Among the most prominent Canadian fabulists emerging in recent years, to whom a significant body of critical scholarship has already been dedicated (hence their partial absence here), we find Nalo Hopkinson, Tomson Highway, Eden Robinson, Hiromi Goto, and Larissa Lai. Indeed, Hopkinson was on the cutting edge of the movement toward identifying a "postcolonial science fiction," editing the anthology *So Long Been Dreaming* (2004) with Uppinder Mehan. Before introducing the essays collected here, it might be useful to situate them within the broader context of scholarly writing on the Canadian fantastic.

The Development of Scholarly Writing on Canadian SF, Fantasy, and Horror Literatures

At first glance, it might appear that the study of Canadian literature of the fantastic as a distinct literary body and as a distinct category of scholarship has been a relatively recent development. When we contextualize its development in the late 1970s and early 1980s, however, we realize that it occurred not long after the rise of mainstream "CanLit" studies and in tandem with sustained academic interest in science fiction studies in the US and UK. Northrop Frye's influence on Anglo-Canadian literary criticism began to be felt as early as the 1940s and 1950s (Gorjup 2009, 3), but his 1971 study, *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination*, pointed the way toward theorizing the Canadian fantastic. Of course, it was Margaret Atwood's *Survival: A Thematic Guide*

to Canadian Literature (1972) that moved fantastic themes to the forefront of Canadian literary studies, paving the way for more distinctly "genre" approaches to it, including those of David Ketterer and John Robert Colombo later in the decade. Judith Merill, who was not only an acute critic herself but also a seminal figure in establishing the importance of sf collections for libraries, also made significant contributions early on. She founded the Spaced Out Library (now the Merril Collection and part of the Toronto Public Library), with a donation of her own collection of "over 5,000 SF books and magazines" (Ketterer 1992, 78), which has been expanded significantly in the subsequent decades and remains one of the most important library collections of literature of the fantastic. But Merril's criticism influenced the study of sf per se more than it did the study of the Canadian fantastic specifically (see Ritch Calvin's chapter in this volume). In Québec, not only had the premier Anglo-American scholarly journal *Science Fiction Studies*, founded in the US by R. D. Mullen in 1973, moved to Montréal in 1978, French-language academic criticism of the fantastic was also developing. As we shall see, border crossing and building bridges between the Anglo/Franco divide typifies Canadian scholarship on sf and the fantastic from its earliest development.

Pioneer scholar David Ketterer stakes a claim for the earliest attempt at a historical overview of Canadian literature of the fantastic in the late 1970s (1979, 99). First published in *Canadian Children's Literature* (Ketterer 1977, 78),[1] it was revised for John Robert Colombo's early (although not yet scholarly) volume, *Other Canadas: An Anthology of Science Fiction and Fantasy* (1979). Ketterer's "Canadian Science Fiction" lays the initial groundwork for tracing the history of Canadian sf, a topic to which he returned in an expanded and more detailed scholarly article for *Science Fiction Studies.* "A Historical Survey of Canadian Science Fiction" traces the genre's origins to a French-language text, Napoléon Aubin's 1839 "Un voyage à la lune" (Ketterer 1983, 87). Ketterer then argues that James De Mille's 1888 *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder* "comes close to inaugurating what might retrospectively be regarded as a Canadian tradition in SF" (Ketterer 1983, 87). Before the late 1970s, scholarly analyses of this and other early works of the Canadian fantastic tended to be included in mainstream literary studies. Nevertheless, efforts by figures such as Colombo and Ketterer to identify the Canadian fantastic as a distinct genre with its own conventions were only the beginning in establishing a critical

tradition. Colombo's first attempt to assign characteristic themes to the Canadian fantastic—the polar world, the national disaster scenario, the alienated outsider, and the prevalence of fantasy over science fiction (1979, 2–3)—was quickly challenged (e.g. Runté and Kulyk 1995, discussed below). But although a scholarly tradition devoted to enumerating Canadian works of the fantastic and theorizing their unique features began to emerge the late 1970s, no academic journal devoted to such literature was housed in Canada.

Just as Canadian authors of the fantastic generally published outside Canada's borders, so academic work on Canadian sf tended to appear in non-Canadian publications such as *Science Fiction Studies*, *Foundation*, or *Extrapolation*. Indeed, a major step in legitimating the study of the Canadian fantastic occurred via the publication of articles in *Science Fiction Studies*, including Ketterer's previously mentioned survey in 1983. In addition to histories published in two French-language specialized magazines (e.g. Champetier 2004; Janelle 1983; Sernine 1988), as early as 1980, sf's presence in Québec was documented in the pages of *Science Fiction Studies* (Vonarburg and Spehner 1980; Gouanvic 1980, 1988), now shepherded by Darko Suvin, then teaching at Montréal's McGill University. Internal debates over definitions of "sfq" appeared in that signal journal's pages before the end of the decade (Spehner and Gouanvic 1988).

Because academics were largely implicated in the development of the sf and fantasy/*fantastique* milieu in Québec, soon referred to as sffq or simply sfq, genre fiction developed hand in hand with critical, semi-scholarly, and scholarly discourses surrounding it.[2] Québec's first and longest running fanzine, *Solaris*, was founded by professor Norbert Spehner at a *cégep* (Québec's preuniversity two-year college system) in 1974. First titled *Requiem*, its initial links to horror are clear, and H. P. Lovecraft remains a touchstone influence in the French-speaking province (see Ransom 2015). In 1979, *Requiem* changed its name to *Solaris*, reflecting the growing significance of sf for its contributors and readers. Jean-Marc Gouanvic, then a professor at l'Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières and later at Montréal's prestigious Concordia University, cofounded its rival *imagine*…. From very early on, these magazines included articles that went beyond the book review, many of which reflect the scholarly discourses about sf that were simultaneously developing in the US and UK.

Drawing on a French scholarly tradition that had already legitimized the study of the nineteenth-century *conte fantastique* as practiced by

such canonical writers as Balzac, Mérimée, and Maupassant, Québécois academics Aurélien Boivin, Maurice Émond, and Michel Lord founded the Groupe de Recherche Interdisciplinaire sur les Littératures fantastiques dans l'imaginaire québécois (GRILFIQ) in 1985. They were responsible for the publication of an annotated, classificatory *Bibliographie analytique de la science-fiction et du fantastique québécois, 1960–1985* (1992), and they formally linked the study of the fantastic in Québec to that of the rising genre of science fiction. Their bibliographical efforts were seconded by Claude Janelle, and the various teams assembled to produce the *Année de la science-fiction et du fantastique québécois*, a bibliographical guidebook published (almost) yearly from 1984 to 2000. By the early 1990s, Boivin, Émond, and Lord, whose edited volume *Les ailleurs imaginaires: les rapports entre le fantastique et la science-fiction* (1993) represents a touchstone work including essays by French scholars like Roger Bozzetto and the Québécois utopian specialist Guy Bouchard, continued to foster the development of a scholarly discourse about sffq.

Though occasional critical and historical surveys followed the early work by Colombo and Ketterer, there was little in the way of sustained development in the study of the history of English-language literature of the fantastic, or theorizing of it, through the 1980s, barring occasional pieces such as Valerie Broege's "War with the United States in Canadian Literature and Visual Arts" (1986) or Sam Moskowitz's "Canada's Pioneer Science-Fantasy Magazine" (1990), which explores how Canadian policy in World War II briefly encouraged the domestic production of genre materials in the form of pulp magazines and comics (for a useful history of Canadian World War II comics, see Kocmarek 2014). A key subsequent development in the study of Canadian literature of the fantastic—in French and in English—emerged from the 1995 National Library of Canada exhibition *Out of This World: Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy*, curated by Allan Weiss and Hugh Spencer. This event generated not only an exhibit catalogue researched by Weiss and Spencer, but it also gestured toward identifying what is distinctive about the Canadian fantastic: "the question of national identity—long a Canadian preoccupation—has been a focus of Canadian fantastic fiction since its beginnings" (Weiss and Spencer 1995, 9). More significantly, it generated not only an edited collection of essays but also an ongoing series of conferences focusing on Canadian science fiction, fantasy, and horror.

Another outcome of the exhibit, the bilingual essay collection, *Visions d'autres mondes: La littérature fantastique et de science-fiction canadienne/Out of This World: Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature* (Paradis 1995), follows Ketterer's landmark monograph, *Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy* (1992), as an effort to define the parameters of the Canadian fantastic. Colombo's historical essay "400 Years of Fantastic Literature in Canada" provides an overview and reiterates some of his claims from *Other Canadas*, but essays from other contributors challenge Colombo's categories and offer alternative suggestions for what is significant in the Canadian fantastic. Picking up on Ketterer's consideration of van Vogt as Canadian primarily for geographical reasons, John Clute instead argues for van Vogt's paradigmatic Canadianness as residing in how "un-American" (Clute 1995, 25) his works are. Clute in effect makes an argument for the Canadian fantastic in terms of what it is not, as much as in terms of what it is:

> Canadian SF – in the hands of someone like Van Vogt – is certainly not much like American SF. It is not community based; it is not about the penetration of frontiers; it is not triumphalist about the nation state; it ignores the culture heroes who marshall the folk or who save the world; and it ignores the details of the science and technology which are used by culture heroes to weld the community together and arm it for conquest. (Clute 1995, 26)

He concludes that Canadian SF can "be defined as a genre which translates the fable of survival so central to the Canadian psyche into a fable of lonely transcendence" (Clute 1995, 26).

By contrast, Robert Runté and Christine Kulyk attempt to come up with positive defining features, explicitly challenging Colombo's earlier themes and arguing that only the theme of the alienated outsider continued to be viewed as valid. Twenty years later, Runté revisited these arguments, enumerating seven "Post-Colombian Themes" in the Canadian fantastic: "focus on the environment/man subordinate to nature;" "distrust of technology and progress;" "the alienated outsider/uninvolved observer;" "the average citizen as (bungling) protagonist/protagonist as 'nice guy;'" "ambiguous endings;" "tendency to more 'literary' SF;" and "less rigid genre boundaries" (Runté 2015, 21). While more detailed and specific than Colombo's categories, that the items on this list remain clearly contestable as distinctively Canadian preoccupations speaks to the

ongoing difficulty in bridging the gaps between the multiple and intersecting categories of the Canadian fantastic.

Arguably, the most concerted ongoing exercise in engaging critically with English-language Canadian fantastic was also born of the Out of This World exhibit. As part of that event, Jim Botte and Síân Reid organized a small academic conference on Canadian speculative literature. Under the leadership of Allan Weiss (who has organized most of its iterations since the first), it has evolved into the Academic Conference on Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy (ACCSFF), now held biennially and hosted at the Merril Collection. There have been fourteen of these conferences to date, with a fifteenth scheduled for 2019 ("The History of ACCSFF" 2018; Weiss 2015b). It has also generated four sets of proceedings, three of which are edited by Weiss: *Perspectives on the Canadian Fantastic* (1998), *Further Perspectives on the Canadian Fantastic* (2005a), and *The Canadian Fantastic in Focus: New Perspectives* (Weiss 2015a). In addition, *Foundation* 81 (2001), coedited by Nancy Johnston and Jennifer Burwell, serves as a proceedings volume for the 1999 conference, which they cochaired. Weiss's introduction to *The Canadian Fantastic in Focus* offers another useful attempt to identify what is unique about the Canadian fantastic (see Weiss 2015b). While occasional other conferences, such as the Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Symposium, held at the University of Ottawa in 2001 (see Leroux and La Bossière 2004) or "Science Fiction: The Interdisciplinary Genre," held in 2013 at McMaster University in Hamilton, to commemorate Robert J. Sawyer's donation of his papers to the university, have focused on the Canadian fantastic, ACCSFF has been the primary venue for scholars to present new work on the Canadian fantastic.

In Québec, the first annual Congrès Boréal was held in Chicoutimi in 1979; the brainchild of Élisabeth Vonarburg with Jean-Louis Trudel frequently at the organizational helm, Boréal is modeled on the Anglo-American phenomenon of the "con," bringing fans and writers together. Again, though, because of the number of academics implicated in the sffq milieu, discussion panels over the years have included academics like Richard Saint-Gelais, Amy J. Ransom, Sophie Beaulé, and others. Since the year 2000, however, organizers have included a "volet savant," a scholarly track organized on the model of the academic conference, inviting established scholars and graduate students alike to present their research on French-Canadian and Québécois sf and f. In the new millennium, a handful of doctoral dissertations (e.g. Taylor 2002; Serruys 2010), a growing

body of articles in scholarly journals (e.g. Baker 2001, 2004; Santoro 1997) and edited volumes (e.g. Leroux and LaBossière 2004), and the first monographs specifically on science fiction in Québec reveal the growing legitimacy of science fiction studies in Québec.

The year 2000 also marked the publication of two signal reference works. The first, a volume of the Dictionary of Literary Biography on *Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers* edited by Douglas Ivison in 2000, bridges the solitudes and establishes a Canadian canon with articles on thirty-eight writers, including Candas Jane Dorsey, Nalo Hopkinson, Guy Gavriel Kay, William Gibson, Élisabeth Vonarburg, Esther Rochon, and Daniel Sernine. The same year, Jean-Louis Trudel's contribution to another reference work, *French Science-Fiction, Fantasy, Horror, and Pulp Fiction* (Lofficier and Lofficier 2000), further codified the status of sfq. Later in that decade, the first book-length studies devoted uniquely to sfq,[3] Amy J. Ransom's *Science Fiction from Québec: A Postcolonial Study* (2009) and Sophie Beaulé's *Jean-Louis Trudel* (2009), revealed the genre's ability to sustain extended scrutiny. The publication of Nicholas Serruys's *Progrès, dérives et autres sens du véhicule dans la science-fiction québécoise contemporaine* (2017) in France marks Canadian sf's trans-Atlantic recognition as an object of scholarly endeavor, as does a recent special issue on Margaret Atwood of the French journal *Otrante* (Bergeron and Huftier 2018).

Setting aside the massive body of scholarship devoted to the work of Margaret Atwood, including several monographs and edited volumes focusing specifically on the utopian and apocalyptic aspects of her work (e.g. Banerjee 2014; Bouson 2010; Waltonen 2015), extended single-author studies of Anglo-Canadian sf writers remain rare. Apart from works on transnational phenom William Gibson, Canadian by adoption but not by birth or publication, Dominick Grace's *The Science Fiction of Phyllis Gotlieb: A Critical Reading* (2015) stands nearly alone. In contrast, several high quality edited volumes of essays on Canadian sf and f have begun to appear, often in combination with a broader geographical framework, such as the North American focus of editors Bret Grubisic, Gisèle Baxter, and Tara Lee's *Blast, Corrupt, Dismantle, Erase: Contemporary North American Dystopian Literature* (2014).

Whereas in Québec, academics have blurred the line between science fiction and the fantastic, in English-Canada there is something of a separate tradition in dealing with horror. As it links readily with the rather more respectable literary genre of the Gothic in Anglo-American

academe, there are more studies of the supernatural generally and Gothic specifically in Canadian literature than there are of the more overtly popular culture genres of sf and fantasy. Gothic tropes prevail in Canada's earliest fiction, including John Richardson's novel *Wacousta* (1832) and Philippe Aubert de Gaspé, fils's *L'influence d'un livre* (1837). Margot Northey claimed this territory in 1976, with *The Haunted Wilderness*, followed by Gaile McGregor's *The Wacousta Syndrome* (1985), unfortunately flawed by its reliance on an abridged text of the novel, and Michael Hurley's *The Borders of Nightmare: The Fiction of John Richardson* (1992). Studies of the "Canadian Gothic" have proliferated, including monographs and edited volumes by Justin Edwards (2005), Cynthia Sugars and Gerry Turcotte (2009), Marlene Goldman (2012), and Cynthia Sugars (2014), who traces the history of Gothic readings of Canadian literature in *Canadian Gothic: Literature, History and the Spectre of Self-Invention* (2014, 6–11). There are even single-author studies in this area, such as Tatiani G. Rapatzikou's gothic reading of William Gibson (2004), though Gibson's Canadianness is absent from her study.

Canadian horror films similarly have been linked to the Canadian preoccupations that inform the Gothic literary tradition. Gina Freitag and André Loiselle, for instance, note the numerous films that "explicitly evoke Frye's idea of the 'garrison mentality' by depicting the frightful experience of early European settlers in Canada, huddling in small isolated communities, threatened by the metaphorical lycanthropes that roamed the dark, uncharted forests of the far-flung colonies" (Freitag and Loiselle 2015, 5)—that is, the fear of the gap between self and other being bridged, with the annihilation of the self as the inevitable outcome. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, they identify David Cronenberg as the paradigmatic Canadian master of cinematic horror, seeing in his work a "surprisingly consistent reliance on the conventional tropes of Canadian horror," including "a deep-seated anxiety about rampant technological progress;" "a pathological fixation on emasculation;" "a paralyzing insecurity before creativity and innovation;" and "a ridiculous need to hide violence and perversion behind the veil of good conduct and respectability" (Freitag and Loiselle 2015, 5–6). Indeed, Cronenberg is the only major Canadian horror filmmaker to receive significant critical attention, as evidenced by the abundance of work devoted to his *oeuvre* (e.g. Handling 1983; Grant 2000; Beard 2001; Browning 2007; Beaty 2008; Wilson 2011; Riches 2012).

Horror remains a small portion of the popular fiction published today in Québec, and the province's French-language film industry has produced only a handful of bona fide horror films.[4] Nonetheless, scholarly discourses about what would become horror developed early in Québec because of the contemporary genre's development out of the Gothic novel and the *conte fantastique* (fantastic story, akin to Poe's tales of terror or Lovecraft's supernatural horror). In the 1980s, academics Aurélien Boivin, Maurice Émond, and Michel Lord pioneered in bringing to the surface Québec's fantastic tradition via critical anthologies, bibliographical work, essays, and monographs. Begun as his dissertation, Lord's *En quête du roman gothique québécois (1837–1860)* (1985) links Aubert de Gaspé, fils's *L'influence d'un livre* (1837) to the Gothic tradition. Boivin, a respected nineteenth-century specialist, edited the landmark anthology *Le conte fantastique québécois au XIXe siècle* (1987), as well as critical editions of the nationalist writers who transformed French-Canadian folk traditions into literary fantastic tales at the turn of that century, including Louis Fréchette, Honoré Beaugrand, and Pamphile LeMay. Furthermore, Émond edited an essay collection, *Les voies du fantastique québécois* (1990). As academics, they trained the next phase of critics; Lise Pelletier's *Le récit fantastique féminin* (1990) and Lise Morin's *La nouvelle fantastique québécoise de 1960 à 1985* (1996) turn the lens of fantastic theory onto a more recent generation of writers. Michel Lord's theoretical study of contemporary fantastic writing in Québec—which had evolved away from the Todorovian frameworks of the earlier *conte fantastique* and turned more toward the absurd and enigmatic à la Kafka—*La logique de l'impossible: Aspects du discours fantastique québécois* (1997) remains a touchstone work in the field.

As the essays in this volume by Patrick Bergeron, Sophie Beaulé, and Sylvie Bérard show, elements of the fantastic have infused Québec's literary fiction since the 1960s, a phenomenon that continues today. A growing body of scholarly literature exists, which sometimes approaches the work of significant writers like Jacques Ferron (Ross 1989), Michel Tremblay (Walsh Matthews 2012), and Gaétan Brulotte (Morin 1993), among others, through the lens of fantastic theory. Popular genre forms of the fantastic, including supernatural horror and the psychological horror novel, have also developed in Québec, most prominently in the fiction of Patrick Senécal, described as the "Québécois Stephen King" (Loiselle 2015, 26; Ransom 2009, 44); adaptations of his work to the big screen account for several of the province's small body of

French-language horror films. In addition, the late Joël Champetier, Stanley Péan, Claude Bolduc, Natacha Beaulieu, Éric Gauthier, and François Lévesque, among others, have produced highly effective short stories and novels using the tropes of fantastic horror, urban fantasy, and related genres. Whereas a growing body of scholarship addresses the work of media powerhouse Senécal (e.g. Loiselle 2015; Landais 2008, 2016), the scholarship on other popular horror writers remains scarce. As in English-language popular fiction, the boundary between crime fiction and horror fiction remains porous in Québec; Kellett's essay on Stanley Péan in the present volume shows this.

Regardless of such selective deep dives into the work of a particular creator, though, much work remains to be done. Apart from Atwood and Cronenberg, and despite the burgeoning scholarship on Canadian sf, fantasy, and horror, most authors of the Canadian fantastic have received little study. However, the gap between scholarship and the Canadian fantastic continues to be bridged, not only because more scholars are delving into the subject but also because more venues are opening up to such scholarship. As of this writing, the *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* has recently published an issue on Canadian comics (43.1, 2016), the *Dalhousie Review* has just published a special issue on comics (98.2, 2018), and another of the premier Canadian scholarly journals, *Canadian Literature*, is working on a special issue on "Decolonial (Re) Visions of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror." Our aim with this project is to encourage such forward momentum.

Part I, Prologue

The essays collected in this volume, then, examine an array of Canadian sf and f texts, explicitly addressing the metaphor of the bridge, exploring how these texts variously approach the problems of nationalism and post-nationalism, the human and the post-human, and/or gender's relationship to these. As Canada is a settler colony nation, colonialism and postcolonialism preoccupy much of Canadian literature, mainstream and genre alike. Our first contributor's essay serves as a prologue, introducing the theme of the colonial in early Canadian sf. Chapter 2, Allan Weiss's (York University) "Colonial Visions: The British Empire in Early Anglophone and Francophone Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy," provides an historical overview and engages the question of postcolonial theory's applicability to the Canadian context that helps to frame the essays that follow. In particular, he explores the roles that early

authors of Canadian sf imagined for the imperial powers that founded Canada in Canada's future, focusing on early colonialist sf in both the Anglophone and Francophone traditions in key early texts. Despite the apparent divide between English and French, Weiss demonstrates that there were bridges between English and French views of the colonial roots and potential postcolonial futures even in early Francophone and Anglophone texts that imagined colonial futures.

Part II, Bridging Borders: Transnationalism and Postcolonialism in Canadian Speculative Fiction

As a nation of nations, in its ideal self-conception, anyway, Canada imagines itself as a mosaic in which peoples from different cultural roots can build a tolerant multicultural society. Canadian literature of the fantastic is itself a congeries of diverse influences and practices. Indeed, its Canadianness is highly contingent. For instance, Phyllis Gotlieb, one of the seminal early Canadian sf authors, described herself as a Canadian poet and an American sf writer, wittily noting the general absence of space in Canada for genre writing (most of Gotlieb's genre work was originally published in American markets; see Grace 2015). Judith Merril, by contrast, was an American expatriate who was instrumental in legitimizing a Canadian literature of the fantastic, as an advocate of the genre generally and as the editor of the first volume of the ongoing *Tesseracts* series of anthologies of Canadian speculative literature. Chapters in this section view the Canadian fantastic from perspectives that foreground the transnational and global contexts of literature of the Canadian fantastic.

In Chapter 3, "Nevermind the Gap: Judith Merril Challenges the Status Quo," Ritch Calvin (SUNY—Stony Brook) explores the work of a key figure in the development of contemporary science fiction in North America as a whole. Judith Merril's life and work bridged several divides, as an American who moved to Canada, as a genre sf writer who championed closing the gap between "genre" and "literature," as a writer who used fiction to imagine postcolonial possibilities for humanity by imagining post-national futures, and as a woman who worked to bridge the gender gap in a traditionally masculinist genre by pioneering the treatment of the lives and concerns of women in sf. Focusing primarily on Merril's short fiction, but also referencing her critical work, this chapter explores in detail Calvin's central claim about Merril: "She saw herself as building a bridge."

"Two Solitudes, Two Cultures: Building and Burning Bridges in Peter Watts's Novels" by Michele Braun (Mount Royal University), Chapter 4, invokes Hugh MacLennan's myth of the two solitudes and C. P. Snow's 1959 Rede lecture, "The Two Cultures," as lenses through which to view the work of Peter Watts, which reimagines the solitudes in a postcolonial global context. This chapter surveys Watts's major works through 2015, investigating how characters build or destroy bridges in the context of twenty-first-century biotechnology and the corporations that own those technologies to determine how MacLennan's original treatise on the two solitudes can be understood seventy years later in the context of dissolving national boundaries. Watts's work recognizes the shift from the local to the global and updates the challenge of building bridges between two solitudes that span across the globe rather than across the landscape of the original Canada of 1867.

In Chapter 5, "The Affinity for Utopia: Erecting Walls and Building Bridges in Robert Charles Wilson's *The Affinities*," Graham J. Murphy (Seneca College), addresses the work of one of Canada's premier writers of sf on the international market, a Hugo Award-winning transnational writer with dual US-Canadian citizenship. Wilson's seventeenth novel, *The Affinities* (2015), is arguably his least and most "grounded" sf novel, set in a largely contemporary Toronto whose setting is familiar to anyone living in Canada's most populous city. It nonetheless exploits a key novum that extrapolates technological advances and their impact on the sociopolitical present: the emergence of "Affinities," social groups organized around genetic markers that provide their members with an almost immediate intimacy and sense of connection with otherwise perfect (non-)strangers. Murphy's essay examines both the utopian and dystopian potential of a social structure offered as an alternative to the contemporary nation-state, as well as Wilson's transnational approach to his protagonist's developing sense of identity within and without his "Affinity."

Patrick Bergeron (University of New Brunswick) closes the section with Chapter 6, "The Art of Not Dying: Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* and Catherine Mavrikakis's *Oscar De Profundis*," which takes a comparative approach to two postapocalyptic novels authored by transnational writers with strong Canadian ties but with reverse biographical trajectories. Both authors deploy the metaphor of the bridge in the postapocalyptic setting, featuring devastated worlds, in which most of the bridges allowing people to reach out to each other have

collapsed. But, their respective novels also focus on a handful of characters using memory and art to build new bridges. In *Oscar de Profundis*, Mavrikakis's eponymous hero is a world-famous singer who creates museums and mausoleums to the glory of endangered communities (particularly Francophone ones) threatened by engulfment in "global culture." Similarly, in *Station Eleven* Mandel presents a troupe of itinerant actors who roam the Great Lakes region to perform Shakespeare and music, thus acting to preserve a culture threatened with loss.

Part III, Building Bridges: Constructing Myths of the Canadian Nation

To define what is Canadian often devolves into a definition of what is *not* Canadian; being Canadian is often understood as an absence, rather than a presence: Canadians are *not* American, *not* European, and so on. What is identity, and what does it mean to have one? Many Canadian works of the fantastic are especially concerned with such questions. Identity as absence is key to Susan Johnston's (University of Regina) thesis in Chapter 7, "When Are We Ever at Home?: Exile and Nostalgia in the Work of Guy Gavriel Kay," which examines Kay's historical fantasy novels as sites of exploration for the construction of nationhood. Johnston argues that, for Kay, the history of nation building and identity building has been one of conquest and colonization, of departure and displacement, of homesteading and of rehoming. Kay creates myths of nationhood and nationalism, seeing the exile and expatriate figures who mark them as icons both of an idea of nation that is always being imagined even as it is always being lost. He does so in novels that reimagine world history in alternate versions of ancient and medieval Europe and Asia, estranging the familiar, rendering it *unheimlich*: both home and not home at once.

Indigenous Futurism and its deployment as a means of processing the collective traumas of the Indian Act and residential schools are the focus of two chapters in the volume, offering critical deconstructions of Canada's self-image as a nation. In Chapter 8, "Reconciliation, Resistance, and Biskaabiiyang: Re-Imagining Canadian Residential Schools in Indigenous Speculative Fictions," Judith Leggatt (Lakehead University) reads Gerry William's *The Back Ship* (1994), the first Indigenous science fiction novel published in Canada, as an allegory for the residential school experience.