**E.D. Blodgett and Comparative Canadian Literature**

 Joseph Pivato, Athabasca University

In his first book of poems, *Take away the names*, which he published in 1975, E.D. Blodgett includes a wide variety of quotations from a number of languages: Latin, French, German, Provençal, Spanish, Greek, Italian, and Middle Dutch. This is the broad classical learning that he brought to his poetry and that introduced him to Canadian readers. This is also the learning that he brought to his scholarship in Canadian literature. In this essay I will examine Blodgett’s pioneering work in Comparative Canadian Literature as demonstrated in his two books: *Configuration: Essays on the Canadian Literatures* (1982) and *Five-Part Invention: A History of Literary History in Canada* (2003) plus a variety of essays.

With more than twenty books of poetry, Blodgett is also part of that ancient tradition of the poet-critic which begins with European authors like Dante, and continued with Sir Philip Sidney, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, T.S. Eliot and, in Canada, Louis Dudek and George Elliott Clarke (2012). The sensibility of the creative writer is another dimension which Blodgett brings to his scholarship. Over his career he also published poetry which he had translated into English and used his experience with different languages in his studies.

The first book review of *Take away the names* appeared in the academic journal, *Canadian Literature*, number 70 (1976), the same issue which contained Frank Davey’s critical essay, “Surviving the Paraphrase,” an attack on thematic criticism. Davey wrote, “It is a testimony to the limitations of Canadian literary criticism that thematic criticism should have become the dominant approach to English-Canadian literature. In its brief lifetime, Canadian criticism has acquired a history of being reluctant to focus on the literary work—to deal with matters of form, language, style, structure and consciousness as these arise from the work as a unique construct.”(5) This is the sad situation we find in 1976 with the new teachers and researches in Canadian Literature approaching the works in groups and reading them in terms of cultural and social influences and environmental determinants. The dominant critical books that espoused this environmental thematic approach in the 1970s were Northrop Frey’s *The Bush Garden* (1971), D.G. Jones’ *Butterfly on Rock* (1970), Margaret Atwood’s *Survival* (1972) and John Moss’ *Patterns of Isolation in English-Canadian Literature* (1974).

In a passage that has become famous, Northrop Frye described the dominant quality of the Canadian imagination with the term “a garrison mentality.” In his “Conclusion” to *The Literary History of Canada* (1965) Frye explains, “Small and isolated communities … their members have in the way of distinctively human values, and that are compelled to feel a great respect for the law and order that holds them together, yet confronted with a huge, unthinking, menacing, and formidable physical setting—such communities are bound to develop what we may provisionally call a garrison mentality.” (830) We can see how such a critical observation can be applied to several early works from Canadian literature, and influence our reading in these narrow environmental terms. In his 28-page essay Frye uses the term, ‘garrison mentality’ four times and implies that it applies to French-Canadian literature as well, though he makes only passing references to three works from Quebec: Hemon’s *Maria Chapdelaine*, Gabrielle Roy’s *Bonheur d’occasion* and *La poule d’eau.* (sic) There are few references to Indigenous people and none to Indigenous writing. Frye republished this 1965 essay in *The Bush Garden* (1971) without making any revisions or corrections.

The influence of Frye’s thesis about the garrison mentality in the Canadian imagination can be seen in the book, *Butterfly on Rock: A Study of Themes and Images in Canadian Literature* (1970) by D.G. Jones who takes Frye’s metaphor and applies it broadly across Canadian writing, even including some French works from Quebec.

In 1972 Margaret Atwood published *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, a book that applied Frye’s thesis about the garrison mentality and popularized it by reducing it to four victim postures. Atwood makes several references to Frye and Jones along with many other English language writers. Because of her popularity as a feminist writer, her *Survival,*  had an impact on the reading of Canadian literature for decades. University students who may never have heard of Northrop Frye on D.G. Jones often would have heard of Atwood and may even have read one of her novels.

Given that Atwood's survival thesis is based on an environmental reading of Canadian writing one might expect that she would give some attention to the writing of Indigenous authors. In chapter 4, "Early People: Indians and Eskimos as Symbols" Atwood's focus is on the depiction of Indigenous people by white writers. In accord with her thesis she portrays a negative view of the Indigenous person as victim, but a victim who does not speak for himself or herself. In an appendix at the end of this chapter there are five titles of "writing by Indians," a mere token gesture. There is no discussion or even mention of literary works by Indigenous writers such as the Mohawk poet, Emily Pauline Johnson (1861-1913), Cree writer, Edward Ahenakew (1885-1961), Ojibway writer, Basil Johnston, or Metis, writer, Maria Campbell.

An even more damning criticism of Atwood’s survival thesis is that she cannot include any work by Indigenous authors because their work would totally undermine her arguments about the negative views of nature. In her book, chapter 2 is entitled “Nature the Monster.” Indigenous authors and artists would never depict nature in these negative terms that suggest that human beings are constantly in conflict with nature and that it must be destroyed and conquered. In Indigenous culture and belief the natural environment must be protected and preserved for future generations. Humans are part of the fabric of nature and are responsible for taking care of it. Anansi Press in Toronto used Atwood’s celebrity status to promote her *Survival* book and reprinted it into 2012 unchanged.

This is the critical environment that E.D. Blodgett found in the early 1970s. It was unilingual, non-comparative, unaware of literary theory, and preoccupied with the agenda of creating a national literature for Canada. As we shall see below Blodgett took on the challenge of making the study of Canadian writing more bilingual and more inclusive of different ethnic minority authors and Indigenous writers.

**The Beginning of Comparative Canadian Literature**

In 1962 Ronald Sutherland, Head of the English program at the, then, new French Université de Sherbrooke, proposed a new degree program leading to a Master of Arts in Comparative Canadian Literature. There were negative reactions to this proposal. For many university professors in the 1960s there was no Canadian literature to examine. Most universities in Canada had no courses on this writing. How then can there be a graduate program in Comparative Canadian Literature? There was little credibility for this program outside Quebec.

Against such opposition and controversy the program eventually began and thrived, and by the 1970s was slowly influencing the study of Canadian writing in some other Canadian universities. In his 1971 book, *Second Image: Comparative Studies in Quebec/Canadian Literature*, Sutherland presented some of the results of his seminars with English and French graduate students at Sherbrooke. His essays dealt with such topics as race and ethnic identity, the Calvinist-Jansenist roots of Canadian morality, the depiction of children in English and French works, four kinds of separatism, and the translation of Canadian works. Sutherland followed a binary pattern of comparing an English with a French text: Grove with Ringuet, Martha Ostenso with Anne Hebert, and W.O. Mitchell with Gabrielle Roy.

In the 1970’s Sutherland gave many lectures across Canada promoting his comparative approach to Canadian writing. In 1977 he brought out his second book, *The New Hero: Essays in Comparative Quebec/Canadian Literature,* which elaborated and defended the ideas he had presented in his first book. His basic argument was that through parallel analyses of major French and English texts we find that anglophone and francophone literatures in Canada share many themes and structures. In this book Sutherland included essays on individualism and conformity in Canadian fiction, the heroic figure and war novels, nationalism and religion, and the canonization of Canadian literature. He also includes short essays on Frederick Philip Grove, André Langevin, Gerard Bessette, Yvon Deschamps and Robertson Davies. We can see that this bilingual approach is different from those of Frye or Atwood.

Many of Sutherland's topics are still discussed today in the critical analysis of Canadian works. I call this phenomenon The Sherbrooke School of Comparative Canadian Literature because of the widespread influence which this institution had, and still has.

**Sherbrooke School and Universities in Alberta**

The work of individual academics and students disseminated the Sherbrooke methology.

In 1967-68 Mary Hamilton (MA, Windsor) was teaching English at the University of Sherbrooke. In 1969 Mary Hamilton, and two graduate students, Francis Macri and Barbara Belyea, moved from Sherbrooke to the University of Alberta to pursue PhDs in Comparative Literature and brought their Sherbrooke ideas and approaches with them. Macri arrived in Edmonton with an M.A. in Comparative Canadian Literature, but the faculty did not know how to evaluate this new degree and so he was persuaded to do another M.A. in Comparative Literature at the University of Alberta. It became evident from this and other instances that these graduate students had to defend the value of the new program at Sherbrooke. They encouraged their Alberta professor, E.D. Blodgett, to go to Sherbrooke as a visiting professor for a term. There he learned more about the program. In addition, many of the academics from Sherbrooke, R. Sutherland, R. Giguère, A. Sirois, were invited to give lectures in Alberta.

Blodgett’s academic training was in medieval and renaissance literature, nevertheless he began his education in Canadian literature with the help of many writers such as Sheila Watson and her literary review, *White Pelican*. Blodgett’s first comparative Canadian essay was “Prisms and Arc: Structures in Hébert and Munro,” in *Figures in a Ground* (1978), a *Festchrift* in honour of Watson. In that essay Blodgett follows the Sherbrooke model by comparing works by a Francophone with an Anglophone author.

In 1979-80 Sutherland was a visiting professor at the University of Calgary which later hired Barbara Belyea and Estelle Dansereau, Ph.D graduates from the Comparative Literature Department at the University of Alberta. Thus, the comparative Canadian approach was also taken to Calgary and reflected in some literature courses there.

Mary Hamilton was hired at the new Athabasca University in 1975. She brought the Sherbrooke perspective to the new courses in Canadian Literature she developed. E.D. Blodgett acted as an advisor on the content of these courses. In 1982 Athabasca’s new course in Comparative Canadian Literature included Sutherland’s text, *Second Image*. Eventually these Comparative Literature courses also included texts produced by other critics working in this tradition. This course was developed by Joseph Pivato who later created two graduate courses in Comparative Canadian Literature for the MA program.

In the 1970s Comparative Literature programs were thedepartments that studied literary theory. English departments did not read theory, nor literature in translation. When Canadian literature began to be taught, discussed in graduate seminars and explored in Masters theses a component of theory was gradually introduced into the discourse. This expansion into theory is documented in a special issue of the *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* (1979) devoted to the practical and theoretical questions of the comparative study of Canadian and Quebec literatures. Francophone comparatists, Clément Moisan, Antoine Sirois and Richard Giguère explored various problems. Philip Stratford (Univerité de Montréal) and David Hayne (University of Toronto) considered the possibilities of expanding Comparative Canadian Literature by including comparative study with works from other parts of the world. Here we find Blodgett’s two essays on Canadian writing: the short commentary, “Canadian as Comparative Literature,” in which he argues in support of Frank Davey and against the limitations of thematic readings and for the study of Canadian literature in the comparative context of world literature and “Cold Pastorals,” in which he examines the pastoral form in a number of Canadian works, as we shall see below.

**Beyond Duality**

E.D. Blodgett took on the challenge of broadening comparative study beyond the two-nations model of the Sherbrooke School. In 1982 he published *Configuration: Essays on the Canadian Literatures*, a collection of studies which promoted the comparative study of Canadian writing by examining several theoretical topics. The opening chapter, “The Canadian Literatures as a Literary Problem,” raises many questions about the binary structures, the centrists point of view, the thematic approaches, the roles of translation, theory and practice. After reviewing Sutherland’s comparative study of Grove’s *Our Daily Bread* with Ringuet’s *Trente Arpents* he questions the results:

I would not deny, then, that the convergences occur between the two founding literatures of Canada, but the question that ought to be raised in every case is what these convergences signify. That they constitute, to use Sutherland’s metaphor, a “mainstream” of Canadian writing, is exactly, I think, the conclusion one ought no to reach. As I have already indicated, metaphors alone pose problems when used as emblems of identity, but this metaphor is especially problematic. It immediately suggests the St. Lawrence, the river and metaphor….It is also environmental and suggests the metaphor of “the melting pot” which is often used by students of U.S. history. It willfully overlooks a necessary condition of the cultural activities of Canadians, a people who are, as Camille La Bossière remarks. “so concerned with division.” (23)

 Comparative studies with international literatures is Blodgett’s model in the chapter, “Intertextual Designs in MacLennan’s *The Watch That Ends the Night*.” In this close reading his focus is on MacLennan’s knowledge of, and use of classical myths. He explores the Odyssean design of the novel, with references to Oedipus, Faust, Rilke,

Gluck’s opera, *Orfeo ed Euridice* and other writers. He ends the chapter by quoting from a letter he received from Hugh MacLennan with regard to his knowledge of German literature. Thus Blodgett follows the French school of comparative study by considering *rapports de fait.* (48)

The chapter, “Cold Pastorals” also uses international concepts of the pastoral form to critically analyze several Canadian works in English and French. Blodgett begins by comparing F.P. Grove’s *The Master of the Mill*  with Gabrielle Roy’s Manitoba novel,

*La Petite Poule d’eau* and makes references to the American author Thoreau. He then examines Georges Bugnet’s French novel, *Nipsya* about a Metis girl, Nipsya who must chose the man to marry from among three suitors: a Cree man, Mahigan, a Hudson’s Bay factor, Alec Stuart, and a Metis farmer, Vital Lajeunesse. In the context of the 1885 Riel Rebellion and defeat, Nipsya’s life choices have allegorical import for the future of the Canadian west. She choses Lajeunesse and the country life of a farmer. This places the couple in a middle ground between the idyllic lives of their fathers, as voyageurs, the lives of Indigenous people and new European settlers. It is a pastoral vision not innocent of suffering.

Continuing his examination of pastoral forms Blodgett considers a number of other Canadian works, such as *The Heart of the Ancient Wood,* but the comparison he focuses on is again between French and English texts: Antoine Gérin-Lajoie’s *Jean Rivard, le défricheur* and Robert Kroetsch’s *The Studhorse Man*. The 1862 French novel is one of the first examples of Quebec’s *romans du terroir* in support of farm life as the future of Quebec culture. The other better known works in this vein are *Maria Chapedelaine* and *Trente Arpents*. In his close reading of *Jean Rivard* he finds that the protagonist actually subverts the pastoral vision of rural fields and gardens with a dream of big cities as the eventual future of Quebec. He concludes that “one might call the novel an anti-Arcadina pastoral.” (167)

In his comparative reading of *The Studhorse Man* (1969) Blodgett finds that the picaresque hero, Hazard Lepage and the narrator Demeter Proudfoot undermine the ideals of the rural pastoral. Hazard’s quest to find a mare that will continue his stallion’s blood line is constantly diverted by other events and distractions so that in various scenes it becomes a parody of an heroic quest. There is no pretense here; it is clear that the world of Hazard and his horse is rapidly disappearing and is being replaced by the machine. In these examples of literary subversion the two novels written a century apart share parallel views on progress.

These Canadian novels become part of the international discussions about the nature of the pastoral form. Blodgett also evaluates the validity of Frye’s statement that pastoralism predominates in Canadian literature and his distinction between the sentimental pastoral myth and the imaginative. These observations from Frye’s “Conclusion” are from 1965 before the body of Canadian novels more than doubled. Blodgett concludes his chapter with a detailed reading of Leonard Cohen’s novel, *Beautiful Losers* (1966) as a quest-romance and pastoral. The narrator in search of Catherine Tekakwitha has an image of her as an Indigenous saint in an ideal landscape among birch trees along a river. But this idyllic vision is undermined by the strictures of Christianity and the technology of the white settlers. The inconclusive ending of the novel suggests that the pastoral myth is never finished.

The other chapter that is important for the later development of Comparative Canadian Literature is “Fictions of Ethnicity in Prairie Writing,” in which Blodgett debunks the notion that western Canadian writing is all of a kind and of one language, English. He begins by referring to Eli Mandel’s 1978 essay, “The Ethnic Voice in Canadian Writing,” and then reminds us of Georges Bugnet’s French novels in Alberta. He goes on to try to define the word ethnic in the Canadian context where everyone has an ethnic background, that is, a different linguistic or cultural background. Nevertheless the term ethnic has sometimes taken on the negative sense of otherness and an ethnic person with status as an object. For some writers the terms ethnic and immigrant are interchangeable. The majority of immigrants in Canada, outside Quebec, adopt English, but can still retain some aspects of their ethnic background.

The review of ethnicity in the writing of the prairies begins with a French text: Gabrielle Roy’s *Fragiles Lumières de la terre* (1978), a collection of journalistic pieces in which the author looks back on the settlement of Eastern Europeans in western Canada. These portraits of Ukrainians, Hutterites, Doukhobors, Mennonites, Jews and Czechs are positive as she treats them all as communities with different characteristics that sometimes remind Roy of French-Canadians. Roy’s own fiction on ethnicity is *La petite poule d’eau* (1950) which also moves in the direction of acculturation.

In making comparisons Blodgett also refers to Henry Kreisel’s short story, “The Broken Globe,” where the father is in conflict with his university-educated son, and Illya Kiriak’s novel *Sons of the Soil* both about Ukrainian settlers. Vera Lysenko’s novel, *Yellow Boots* deals with the conflict in a Ukrainian family between keeping their old traditions and adopting those of English Canadians. Here Blodgett compares the role of the rebellious daughter Lilli from *Yellow Boots* to the daughter Christine in Roy’s *La Route d’Altamont*.

In order to demonstrate that literature in western Canada also exists in languages other than English or French, Blodgett examines the German language novels of Ilse Schreiber which are set in German settlements in northern Saskatchewan during the depression. In the novel, ironically titled *Die Flucht ins Paradies* the daughter, Jelly escapes the family farm for work in Vancouver only to wander around Alberta and the interior of B.C. picking up stories of immigrant hardships. The second novel, *Der Gott der fremden Erde*  deals with another daughter, Henrike who comes to Canada to help her brother and eventually is reunited with her lost love, Siewert. Blodgett makes comparisons between these German novels and Rudy Wiebe’s Mennonite novels and Roy’s French Manitoba novels. In his conclusion Blodgett poses the question, “one might ask whether the dialectic I have described should be called ethnic?” (105) Referring back to Robert Kroetsch and Eli Mandel we can respond that these ethnic minority narratives are necessary to understand our national preoccupation with identity. In a sense we have no identity until someone tells our story. The fiction makes us real. The nation has different cultural identities and so we must listen to the ethnic voices coming from the mosaic. (Mandel 266, Kroetsch 65-68)

Blodgett’s *Configuration* had a significant influence on the study of Canadian writing in the 1980s and ‘90’s. Literary scholars, academics and students were encouraged to pay more attention to comparative studies that included not just Quebec literature, but works by other ethnic minority groups. The best example that I can cite to support this observation is the 1985 book, *Contrasts: Comparative Essays on Italian-Canadian Writing*  which begins the first chapter with a quotation from *Configuration* and refers to it several times as the example that is followed. (Pivato,18-19) This volume, *Contrasts* was to stimulate further studies into ethnic minority writing in Canada such as the essays collected in *Literary Pluralities* (1998) edited by Christl Verduyn, *Canadian Culture and Literature and a Taiwan Perspective* (1998) edited by Steven Totosy de Zepetnek and Yiu-nam Leung, *Scandalous Bodies: Diasporic Literature in English Canada* (2000) by Smaro Kamboureli, and *Asian Canadian Writing: Beyond Autoethnography* (2008) edited by Eleanor Ty and Christl Verduyn.

In later publications Blodgett continued to promote theory in Canadian literature. One example is his essay, "How Do You Say Gabrielle Roy?" (1983) in which he carefully argues for an awareness of literary translation in Canadian writing. He returns again to the direct promotions of the comparative study of Canadian writing with the essay, “Canadian Literature as Comparative Literature” (1988). In addition to French he enumerates the various qualities that make Canadian writing multicultural:

For English is the adopted language of the majority of European and Asian immigrants who have left on the language an imprint that English and American immigrants cannot. This is, of course, its ethnic character…. Still others have continued to write in their native languages—German, Icelandic, Italian, and Ukrainian, to name the dominant languages…. [and] the presence of native literature, both Inuit and Amerindian….(905)

In collaboration with Milan Dimic’ he established the Research Institute for Comparative Literature in 1988 which undertook the project, “Towards a History of the Literary Institution in Canada” and published a number of comparative volumes. E.D. Blodgett and A. G. Purdy co-edited two of the six books in the series: *Problems of Literary Reception / Problèmes de réception littéraire* (1988) and *Prefaces and Literary Manifestoes / Préfaces et manifestes littéraires* (1990). Volume four in the series, *Literatures of Lesser Diffusion* edited by Joseph Pivato focused on ethnic minority writing in Canada and included essays on Inuit and Indigenous authors.

Another book series demonstrates the influence of the Comparative Canadian Literature movement, if we can call it that. In Montreal Antonio D’Alfonso the director the Guernica Editions founded a monograph series in 2000 devoted to Canadian authors. In the past such series focused on the ten major authors from central Canada. The Guernica Writers Series, as it was called, included authors from across Canada, lesser-known regional writers and ethnic minority writers. By June, 2019 Guernica had published 50 volumes: 6 deal with Quebec authors, 3 with Indigenous writers, 15 deal with ethnic minority writers, of these 6 are visible minorities. Many of the essays in these volumes were comparative studies such as Blodgett’s “Originary Grammarians: Laure Conan and Sheila Watson,” which is included in *Sheila Watson: Essays on Her Works* edited by Joseph Pivato.

In his studies of poetry and the use of languages Blodgett began to investigate more closely ethnic minority writing. In “Ethnic Writing in Canada as Paratext,” (1990) he tried to define ethnic writing in terms of the author’s use of a particular language, but also the language of a cultural group and its relation to official languages. He returned to this problem in 1995 with “Towards an Ethnic Style,” in which he applied Henri Gobard’s four levels of language: the vernacular, the vehicular, the referential and the mythic to selected poems by Italian-Canadian writers. He uses the example of Fulvio Caccia from the book, *Contrasts* referred to above, and Deleuze and Guattari’s book on Kafka as a minority writer.

In 2002 E.D. Blodgett published *Five-Part Invention: A History of Literary History in Canada*, his major critical work on Canadian literature. In nine chapters devoted to different historical periods in English Canada and Quebec he examines the development of the literatures of Canada and of a cultural and national identity. The five-part invention in the title refers to Anglophone writing, Francophone writing, the publications by ethnic minority writers, Indigenous authors and Inuit authors. We must keep in mind that Indigenous literatures can be written in either one of the official languages or any one of the many Indigenous languages. In some ways this book is a continuation of the 1988 project, “Towards a History of the Literary Institution in Canada,” which I mention above.

In chapter seven, “The Question of Alterity: Histories of Their Own,” Blodgett discusses the nature of ethnic minority writing in Canada and considers some of the parallels with the work of Indigenous and Inuit writers. He refers back to the 1990 volume, *Literatures of Lesser Diffusion*, which used this neutral title to include these different literatures in the literary institution. He argues:

In a multicultural society, alterity, however, is central and goes much farther than the matter of diffusion. Nevertheless, such an expression has the virtue of permitting the inclusion of both ‘ethnic minority’ and native writing. Although their relation to the history of Canada is ontologically and politically assymetrical, they share concerns. For this reason, I have chosen to treat then together. (208)

Several histories of ethnic minority groups are examined: Ukrainian, Hungarian, German, and Jewish-Canadian authors. There is one history of Inuit literature, one of Indigenous literature and one “littérature amérindienne au Québec.” All three authors are of European decent and Blodgett discusses the question of cultural appropriation. All three histories are by women scholars. Blodgett explains:

The implication is clear, I think, that these women have been drawn toward peoples who have, in many ways, been denied histories of their own by the dominant cultures of Canada. Their theme is dispossession and ‘disappropriation,’ and their plots are designed to show how appropriation and agency are sought. They are, then, analogous, at least, to a history of women’s cultures in their effort to indicate difference, domination, stereotyping, and what Boudreau calls, ‘la difficulté d’être Amérindien’ under such circumstances. (238)

The detailed attention that Blodgett has paid to the literary works of Indigenous authors indicates to me the importance that he gave to these writers and also anticipated the flourishing that their writing and music was undergowing in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. A testament to this assertion of Indigenous voices is the volume, *Introduction to Indigenous Literary Criticism in Canada* (2015) edited by Heather Macfarlane and Armand Garnet Ruffo.

The question of ethnic minority writing in Canada has become more complex since Mandel used the term “ethnic voice” in his 1978 essay. Like other academic scholars I have become accustomed to using the term ethnic minority writing rather naively as a convenient description for a group of authors who deal with cultural and language differences, both their own and those of other residence of Canada. Outside the university environment the term ethnic can have negative connotations. As author Dionne Brand declared in one of her books, “No language is neutral.” In order to be sensitive to the concerns of others Christl Verduyn often uses the descriptor, “writers who self-identify as ethnic.” The questions of language choice and identity is critically examined by Nancy Huston in her *Nord Perdu* (1999).

As Blodgett makes clear in both *Configuration* and *Five-Part Invention* we cannot avoid the term ethnic. Rather we should explore all the possible meanings and connections to other literary questions. Ethnicity in Canada has many languages: the official languages of English and French, but also many heritage languages like Mandarin, Urdu, Spanish, Swahili and Arabic. While the majority of ethnic minority writers in Canada adopt one of the official languages, many still speak their heritage language and some continue to write in it. For example, Toronto author Maria Ardizzi publishes in Italian about life in Canada. She is in effect writing Canadian literature in Italian.

The languages of ethnic minority writing has also changed our perception of post-colonial literature. In the 1950s and ‘60s it was called Commonwealth literature and only writing in English was read or studied. When scholarship gradually changed to a post-colonial perspective, writing in other languages was also considered. There is still some debate about the nature of post-colonial literature. Is it limited to publications from former colonies writing back to the centres of colonial power? Does post-colonial theory also deal with the literature of migration? Blodgett’s detailed discussion about literary history in Canada, both the dominant position of English and the secondary status of French and the struggle of Indigenous languages, takes us in the right direction to deal with these controversial questions. He explores some of these questions in chapter eight, “Canada as Alterity: The View from Europe, 1895-1961.”

His *Five-Part Invention* deserves more detailed study than I am able to give it here. For example, chapter five, “Literary History as *Heilsgeschichte* 1973-1983” looks a this enterprise as “salvation history.” And the final chapter, “Afterthoughts, Models, Possibilities.” begins a whole series of arguments about the nature of Canadian society that take us beyond the literary questions of this book.

Both as a poet and a scholar E.D. Blodgett took on the challenge of making Canadian literature more linguistically and culturally diverse. He influenced the work of many scholars and academics in Canada and in Europe. In this brief review of his scholarship on Canadian authors I hope that I have demonstrated the significance of his success. In 2018 he published the essay, “Comparative Literature in Canada: A Case Study,” which was included in *Comparative Literature for the New Century* and became his last academic paper before he passed away in November of that year. (De Gaspari) As several references in this essay indicate, E.D. Blodgett was an inspiration for much of my critical work in Comparative Literature (Pivato, 1994).

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