In the introduction of their 2005 anthology *Canadian Short Stories*, Russell Brown and Donna Bennett describe the importance of the genre both ‘to the development of English Canadian literature and to the way it is now perceived’ (5). The short story, which has its roots in oral and non-literary written forms, is no longer viewed ‘as a means to an end’; rather, a number of writers ‘have made it their principal form, resisting the allure of the novel’ (2, 6). The themes and stylistic traits that Brown and Bennett identified, that is, ‘[t]he significance of the landscape’, ‘[t]he sense of the past impinging on, even inhabiting the present’, ‘the small nuances of human interactions’ and ‘edgy humour’ (7), have figured, only more prominently, in contemporary writing since. On the heels of Alice Munro winning the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2013, Maria Löschnigg’s rich and erudite study, *The Contemporary Canadian Short Story in English: Continuity and Change*, is a timely intervention. Löschnigg ‘offers a cross-section of recent developments of this genre along narratological and thematic lines’ (2), employing close reading to reflect upon larger cultural shifts. The historical period on which Löschnigg focuses, from the mid-1980s to the present, enables her both to address a comparatively neglected area in previous considerations of the Canadian short story and to attend to the contribution to the genre by ethnocultural writers, many of whom became increasingly visible in the 1980s. Löschnigg examines the work of more than fifty writers, a hundred stories and nineteen short story cycles.

**REVIEWS**

*THE CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN SHORT STORY IN ENGLISH: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE, MARIA LÖSCHNIGG (2014)*

Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 381pp., ISBN: 9783868215267, p/bk, €42,50

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In the introduction of their 2005 anthology *Canadian Short Stories*, Russell Brown and Donna Bennett describe the importance of the genre both ‘to the development of English Canadian literature and to the way it is now perceived’ (5). The short story, which has its roots in oral and non-literary written forms, is no longer viewed ‘as a means to an end’; rather, a number of writers ‘have made it their principal form, resisting the allure of the novel’ (2, 6). The themes and stylistic traits that Brown and Bennett identified, that is, ‘[t]he significance of the landscape’, ‘[t]he sense of the past impinging on, even inhabiting the present’, ‘the small nuances of human interactions’ and ‘edgy humour’ (7), have figured, only more prominently, in contemporary writing since. On the heels of Alice Munro winning the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2013, Maria Löschnigg’s rich and erudite study, *The Contemporary Canadian Short Story in English: Continuity and Change*, is a timely intervention. Löschnigg ‘offers a cross-section of recent developments of this genre along narratological and thematic lines’ (2), employing close reading to reflect upon larger cultural shifts. The historical period on which Löschnigg focuses, from the mid-1980s to the present, enables her both to address a comparatively neglected area in previous considerations of the Canadian short story and to attend to the contribution to the genre by ethnocultural writers, many of whom became increasingly visible in the 1980s. Löschnigg examines the work of more than fifty writers, a hundred stories and nineteen short story cycles.
Individual chapters delve into Munro’s stories since the 1990s, her influence on other women writers, new regionalism, globalizing tendencies, aboriginal writers, experiments with genre and the short story cycle. Löschnigg is especially strong in her discussion of the short story cycle, the book’s longest chapter. She writes evocatively, for instance, of the synergies between race and gender, between the personal and the political stories, in Shyam Selvadurai’s *Funny Boy* (1994). In the first and more frequently anthologized story ‘Pigs Can’t Fly’, ‘Arije’s [sic] expulsion from the female world catapults him into the empty space between two worlds and foreshadows his state as an immigrant in Canada. It also mirrors the minority status of the Tamils in Sri Lanka, the boundaries of which are also closing in as the cycle proceeds’ (287). Parallels to Munro’s ‘Boys and Girls’, from her first book *Dance of the Happy Shades* (1968), beckon: if Munro’s story invokes the policing of gender boundaries and it leaves ambiguous whether or not the central protagonist and first-person narrator successfully escapes, then policing appears in ever more guises (i.e. gender, racial and political) in Selvadurai’s writing. This juxtaposition brings together and instantiates the dynamics of ‘continuity’ and ‘change’ that Löschnigg’s subtitle evinces. Liminality and crossings – literal and figurative – are an informing presence. David Bezmozgis’ *Natasha and Other Stories* (2004), for Löschnigg, overlays Mark Berman’s growth with his family’s immigration and their attendant negotiation between two different cultural contexts. Recent assessments, like Kasia Boddy’s (2010) and mine (Ue 2016; 2017), have also drawn connections between the stories and suburbanity.

Vincent Lam’s *Bloodletting & Miraculous Cures* (2006) would have been at home in this study, and it is doubly interesting to think of this excellent short-story cycle in relation to the styles and thematic interests of the three-member jury that awarded it the Giller Prize: Munro, Adrienne Clarkson and Michael Winter. Löschnigg gestures towards three avenues for future research: (1) the novella; (2) the relationship between text and illustration; and (3) the shifts in ethnic identity and critical approaches. Other directions might include developments in digital media and a rise in adaptations of short stories. Douglas Coupland and Kate Pullinger regularly write both for print and for digital platforms, marrying advances in technology with fiction. Stories have been adapted into films (e.g. Pedro Almodóvar’s *Julieta* (2016) from three stories in Munro’s *Runaway* (2004) and David Bezmozgis’ *Natasha* (2015) from the titular story in his collection (2004; see Figure 1)); into short films (e.g. Marlene Goldman’s and Philip McKee’s ‘Piano Lessons’ (2017) from Munro’s ‘In Sight of the Lake’ in *Dear Life* (2012)); into television series (e.g. *Bloodletting & Miraculous Cures* [2010] from Lam’s collection); and into plays (e.g. Robert Chafe’s *Afterimage* [2010] from Michael Crummey’s ‘After Image’ in *Flesh and Blood* [1998]). These projects have opened up new ways of exploring the form and content of short stories; initiated new audiences to different media; and spurred us to think more about their cross-pollination. Löschnigg sees *The Contemporary Canadian Short Story in English* as ‘a modest attempt to keep the critical discourse on short fiction in Canada as vital and as polyvocal as possible’ and as an invitation to ‘further critical discourse in this field’ (16). It is to be hoped that this study will encourage wider conversations – and practice – in this rich and exciting genre.
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REFERENCES

If there is one concept that stands out in this aptly titled collection of short stories, it is vulnerability, embodied in the image of the stranded jellyfish, helpless on the beach, transparent with all its tender parts on show.

It is vulnerability that threads Galloway’s characters together and once the reader begins to explore their stories, so many forms of vulnerability are presented that it is difficult to imagine how living creatures ever survive and continue to proliferate.

There is the vulnerability of innocence, poignant in Monica’s fear for her child in the eponymous opening story as he approaches his first day at school. It is a two-way trip though, this vulnerability, especially where love enters the picture. The love for a child, the need to protect is sharply defined in these stories. Monica opens herself to potential hurt to equip her son Calum to grow away from her, revealing a quiet heroism but hopefully a successful resolution for them both.

In ‘Distance’, Martha also fears for her child but her anxiety becomes irrational to the extent that her life is crippled. The reader sees the futility of her behaviour and the destruction it wreaks on her family and yet these are believable fears that resonate with our own concerns.

In ‘Almost 1948’, it is uncertainty that makes George Orwell vulnerable as his vision of the future is beset by fears about his illness and his ability to provide for his son as well as the looming wider horror of the atomic bomb and what it might bring. There is a hint of apocalypse here and a dread of the unknown that may be worse than the reality. These suggestions are revisited in the strange activity at Loch Ness in ‘Fittest’. In these two stories, weakness, in the first case through physical incapacity, in the second, the failure to interpret situations with accuracy, is a key point in the balance between survival and failure. Interpreting the environment is a factor Galloway returns to frequently in the collection, making much of using instinctive strategies,