
Competing notions of nationalism, pluralism, and identity represent key questions confronting those who would like to posit a simple definition of what it means to be Canadian. As Erin Manning points out in *Ephemeral Territories*, these questions have often been framed in terms of a French/English divide, an understandable tendency given the political, linguistic, and cultural tensions underwriting Canadian history, but one that does not fully speak to the larger issue of being constantly displaced. Displacement, exile, and loss frame Manning’s analysis of identity as depicted in a variety of Canadian media, including artwork by Robert Racine, Anne Michaels’ award-winning novel *Fugitive Pieces*, and films by Atom Egoyan, Clement Virgo, Srinivas Krishna, and Robert Lepage.

In embarking on her study of home and belonging, Manning borrows inspiration for her title from a passage in Saint-Exupéry’s *Le Petit Prince* in which the little prince is informed that ephemeral objects, which are soon bound to disappear, are not suitable objects for inquiry or transcription. Manning, who considers this attitude representative of current academic attitudes toward the ephemeral, opens her own discussion on this subject by drawing on a theoretical framework informed by concepts such as ontopology, deterritorialization, and errant politics. In ontopology, Jacques Derrida fuses notions of being and place, notions that Manning uses in her discussion of the way our attempts at simple existence inevitably require us to engage with, and often pay homage to, the idea of nationalism despite an awareness of its problematic aspects. Our ability to feel at home in any nation, including Canada, often rests upon a sense of assurance that interlopers will be kept away from our borders. Complicating this tenuous security, however, is what Manning considers a state of permanent homelessness, or awareness of not belonging, that is quintessentially Canadian. In her analysis of some of the films mentioned above, Manning examines various states of homelessness, many of which are tied to questions of ethnicity and class, but all of which foreground a struggle to attain power in its different forms and to construct a sense of identity.

Referring to Robert Sack and Arjun Appadurai in her discussion of deterritorialization, Manning suggests that our relationship to the space we inhabit is never unproblematic, but is instead the result of power relations, usually unequal ones. Deterritorialization does not explode these relations but is one step in the process of accepting that home and security are, in many ways, figments of an imagination anchored in the idea of nationalism and statehood. In analyzing texts created by Canadians, Manning states that she is not hewing to such traditional notions of the nation-state, but instead discussing cross-cultural motifs in each work that speak of, and to, a world transformed by shifting cultures and borders. In *Fugitive Pieces*, as the title implies, a sense of statelessness haunts the main characters despite their travels and despite their stated assessment of Canada as a place of refuge. In Charles Binamé’s *Eldorado*, both the wealthy and the homeless experience inexpressible yearning for all that a house is supposed to represent, and yet their understanding of rules, regulations, and citizenship represents a stumbling block in what should be a mutually accommodating relationship. The chapters in which Manning dissects texts such as these are the most engaging ones in the book, skilfully combining elements of the theoretical discussion that frames the book with concrete and poignant examples of homelessness and insecurity found in all kinds of Canadian media and among a variety of social groups. While Manning does not downplay the sense of marginalization experienced by visible minorities, the poor, or the homeless, she is also careful to point out that the wealthy and the privileged can also fall victim to an unfulfilled need for inclusion.
Manning opens this book by noting that her own personal experience of homelessness and competing nationalities stems from her English-French background and being a person who makes her home jointly in Ottawa and Montréal. Yet she is well aware that the issue of identity in Canada extends to questions far beyond that of the two solitudes. To address the entire scope of these questions is an impossible task in one book, and Manning wisely does not attempt this. Instead she focuses on very specific manifestations of homelessness in the media she has selected, while consistently relating the messages found therein to her themes of space and identity. It is in such readings, she argues, that she can consider herself engaged in ethical acts of subversion and of rearticulating politics.

This specificity allows Manning to meet the goals of an ambitious project, providing a thorough discussion of works that, in some ways, are widely disparate but, in her view, closely related in their treatment of a subject that matters to all Canadians, whether they know it or not. Manning draws together different strands of thought regarding spatial theory, the nation-state, and race in her analysis of the media she has selected, offering a book that does not merely retread existing literature on identity and belonging in Canada. Rather, *Ephemeral Territories* marks an important contribution to the field of Canadian communication in two regards: one is its discussion of nation and home as political concepts in a country continuously grappling with the implications therein, and the other is its in-depth and careful analysis of Canadian media, which sometimes run the risk of being overlooked when weighed against the far more widespread—if not necessarily more important—-influence of United States media. *Ephemeral Territories* is a worthwhile read for anyone interested in an innovative discussion of borders, marginalization, and homelessness in twenty-first-century Canada.

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