
It may sound effusive, but it’s true: almost every scholar of Canadian television I have met in the last decade counts Mary Jane Miller as one of their mentors in at least some capacity. And what they all remark upon is a certain generosity of spirit that is not always easy to find in academia: a willingness to share experiences and works (not to mention that most elusive of all tools of the trade for television scholars: tapes of otherwise impossible to find Canadian TV series). It is this generosity of spirit that permeates her newest book, Outside Looking In. I wanted to say her newest and best/most important book, but, in fact, it is impossible to rank Miller’s work in such a fashion. Her three books on Canadian television—Turn Up the Contrast: CBC Television Drama since 1952 (1987), Rewind and Search: Makers and Decision Makers of Canadian Television Drama (1996), and Outside Looking In—form a key trinity in this area of scholarship, particularly for those who study television text. Outside Looking In is much like Miller’s previous books: broad and deep in scope, meticulously researched, and very accessible.

Miller’s new book traces the imprint through which Canadian First Nations peoples have been represented in Canadian television. She begins in the 1950s and moves right up into the 1990s and devotes 162 pages to the television series North of 60, a book unto itself. There is no question that Outside Looking In is a major contribution to the literature on Canadian television and offers access to an often inaccessible and forgotten (in that relegated-to-the-back-of-the-attic kind of way) area in which First Nations peoples have been narrated into the popular mythologies of the nation. Miller opens her book by bringing up the question that might be on everyone’s mind in the most upfront way: “White people should not tell First Nations stories” (p. 3). She addresses this criticism in her introductory chapter, noting that televisual representations of First Nations peoples have, until very recently, been made almost exclusively...
by non-First Nations producers for non-First Nations audiences. Yvette Nolan, in her review of the book, responds to this by asserting that Miller “is not telling First Nations stories; rather, she is telling on those who have told First Nations stories, or worse, told their own stories and gussied them up to look like what they believe an Indian looks like” (p. 26).

Miller’s book begins in the complex, interdisciplinary spaces of television studies at the intersection of identity studies in the Canadian context. Her work maps a lengthy history of First Nations representation, beginning with pageantry in 1920s Ontario and the history of children’s fiction and then moving into studies of particular television texts. While Radisson, Hawkeye, Hudson's Bay, R.C.M.P., Adventures in Rainbow County, Matt and Jenny, and Spirit Bay may not be familiar, series with titles like The Forrest Rangers, The Campbells, The Rez, and certainly The Beachcombers and North of 60 will likely be evocative for many readers. Miller brings these series, both familiar and unknown, to life through her rich descriptions of the texts and her detailed accounts of production drawn from a wide variety of sources. She also makes excellent use of Internet sources, which, as she repeatedly points out, prove to be a treasure trove for scholars of series that have all but disappeared. By including fan discussions and descriptions, Miller also touches on the importance of audiences in the cultural memory of television text.

Recently, Charlotte Brundson described her own experience researching the 1978 BBC series, Law and Order. At the time she initiated her project, this involved “hours in the basement of the BFI on a Steenbeck” (2009, p. 29), the careful taking of notes, and “reconstruction” of text for viewers who would never be able to, well, view the text. But during that time, the BBC decided to release the series on DVD. Suddenly, Brundson found her project transformed. It is the former project, “trying to give a sense of something forever absent to the reader” (p. 29), that describes the artistry that is both the pain and triumph of Miller’s latest book. For, unlike Brundson’s Law and Order, a series that “moves out of the publicly funded national archive onto the shop shelves” (p. 29), Miller is often describing texts that have not even merited inclusion in the national archive, texts that she has often been forced to piece together from rough fragments: the television scholar as detective. I mention this at some length because it is impossible to talk about the importance of Miller’s work without acknowledging the nearly impossible conditions under which scholars of Canadian television labour. These conditions are even more difficult for those studying the history of Canadian television, another area of scholarship in which Miller has been an active participant.

I agree with Nolan’s concluding remarks about this book. She comments that the book

... is also, accidentally, a lovesong to and lament for the CBC, which has consciously, actively participated in the making visible of the First People of this land, and no longer has the resources to make that kind of difference in what and how Canadians see” (2008, p. 27).

The period that closes the book also, however, inaugurates a new moment in which First Nations peoples are increasingly involved in producing and starring in televisions
series such as *Cashing In, Hank William's First Nation, Moccasin Flats, Moose TV*, and renegadepress.com. In a nation with historically few outlets for archiving and syndicating television, Miller's new book is, and will continue to be, a crucial resource for scholars who want to study Canadian television, and particularly First Nations representation in television, in years to come.

**References**


Michele Byers, Saint Mary's University