

Molnár, Judit

**[Víg, Árpád. Kék mezőben fehér liliom: a francia-kanadai irodalom története]**

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nie mondiale, seul moyen pour obtenir une reconnaissance internationale. Anne-Andrée Denault (*L'évolution des rapports entre francophonies au Canada : les positions politiques du Québec – l'archipel francophone hors Québec*) s'est interrogée sur les positions du Québec à l'égard des francophones hors son territoire. Les deux principaux partis, les fédéralistes et les souverainistes se donnent des mandats différents, mais cette différence ne se traduit pas forcément en leur position vis à vis des communautés francophones à l'extérieur du Québec. Pierre Anctil (*L'américanité comme élément de la culture québécoise et canadienne-française*) a constaté qu'au cours des années soixante certains intellectuels se sont tournés vers l'Europe, tandis que l'on a vu surgir une tendance qui a ouvertement réclamé le droit de diverger en puisant du côté du grand en-

racinement nord-américain. Comment comprendre aujourd'hui cette façon de diverger dans la lecture de la réalité québécoise ou canadienne-française en devenir? C'est la question qui se pose actuellement.

Sébastien Socqué sous le titre *La crise de l'avenir de la société québécoise* a évoqué une problématique soulevée récemment par plusieurs historiens. Il s'agit des discussions et débats portant sur le meilleur passé à transmettre et à mettre en récit. La communication a présenté certains détails de cette controverse et a tenté de démontrer que, s'il est sans doute possible d'éviter l'essentialisation, la substantialisation ou la réification, il est inévitable de céder à une certaine téléologie quand on entreprend de s'investir dans la production d'un discours comme « l'histoire du Québec ».

## Árpád Vígh

### **Kék mezőben fehér liliom: A francia-kanadai irodalom története.**

**White Lilies in a Blue Field: The History of French-Canadian Literature.**

Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2007, 266 pages. ISBN 978 963 05 8509 5.

## Judit Molnár

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Árpád Vígh's literary history of French Canada certainly fills a gap on the scene of literary criticism in Hungary. Canadian studies have been pursued in this country for more than quarter of a century but no systematic literary history has been written so far. What is more, Vígh's book is not only a literary history, covering the period from early 16th century until today, but a kind of descriptive

and meditative account of the development of cultures and ideas in Québec. The literature produced in French Canada basically in Québec, with some references to Acadia, appears in front of the readers' eyes in a special way. What makes it special is the fact that the literary works discussed are embedded in a thorough investigation of the idiosyncracies that are particular about their social, lin-

guistic and political backgrounds. This helps to understand the individual works to a very large extent. Also, when needed biographical allusions are also made. The author's method deepens the knowledge of those who are already familiar with the topic and initiates those who are new to the field in a nicely balanced manner.

The introduction's, ("*terra incognita*"), different parts focus on Québec's geographical, socio-economic, historical features and last but not least on its linguistic characteristics. Québec French is different from "French French" in more than one way: in its grammar, in its vocabulary, in its pronunciation etc. Vigh's attempt to illustrate these differences by giving Hungarian "counterparts" is very successful indeed.

The book is divided in two major parts with sub-chapters in each of them. The literary pieces are primarily arranged in a chronological order. The first part concentrates on different genres, literary movements, and themes. Quotations from the writers' correspondence, and from contemporaneous literary journals enhance the outlining of the literary life of the time. Vigh points out the fact that the first works are not of Canada but about Canada. Among the examples he gives are, the *Relation originale du voyage de Jacques Cartier au Canada* (1534) or *Relations des jésuites au Canada* (1632-1673). He emphasizes the importance of oral traditions and the way their impact is still felt in certain works. When early literature is discussed the role of the Roman Catholic faith, the problem of identity, Québécois' close relation to nature, and their dependence on historic events are given special importance. The significance of the Rebellion in 1837/38 is a recurring issue that is dealt with. The writer calls our attention to the possible relations to the European literary and cultural scenes with a particular

emphasis on the Hungarian parallels, which is a special merit of this book.

The second part is oriented more towards individual authors. Vigh carefully uses cross-references constantly reminding the reader of important connections, relations between works. The multidisciplinary method he has chosen applies here, too. It is clearly evident when he talks about the literature of the *Quiet Revolution* in the 1960s. He analyses the reasons that caused the big change in that decade. He mentions the ultra-conservative party of Maurice Duplessis, indicating that changes were required by the Québécois themselves. Change did come with the 1967 World Expo, and the Olympic Games in 1976, both held in Montreal, the October Crisis in 1970, and the Charter of the French Language in 1977 which made French the official language of Québec. He also mentions the separatists' endeavours to secede from the rest of Canada as well as other progress until 2006 when the Canadian Parliament formally recognized the French-speaking people of Québec as a nation within Canada. This was the time when literary works started to appear in *joual*, a variety of Québec French – for example, Michael Tremblay's *Les belles-soeurs* (1968). Parts of the play are rendered into Hungarian very vividly so that we can get a taste of this kind of language. The 1960s liberated literature both in forms and themes. The significance of chansons (Félix Leclerc, Gilles Vigneault) is also demonstrated in translation. Vigh's special talent for translation shines through many of the bits and pieces that appear in his own words, be it poetry, fiction or drama.

Vigh says that today fiction including "neorealism" together with the avantgarde theater have gained importance. They introduce new themes: eroticism, lesbianism, the break-up of the family. Immigrant writers appear in



greater and greater numbers and they add to the plurality that characterizes today's Québec. They make Québec's literature "world literature". The French province has survived in an anglophone environment. It provides Hungarians in Central Europe with a model to be followed.

The last chapter talks about the way Québec has been viewed in Hungary and draws our attention to possible misunderstandings which the author hopes will be avoided in the future. This book undoubtedly serves as a great help in that direction.

The long bibliography that is arranged thematically is a very important part: sources on history, language, dictionaries, lexicons,

anthologies, literary histories and collections of literary studies are enumerated here. About one hundred authors are touched upon in the book and it ends with the pictures of twelve of them.

In his preface Alain-G. Ganon, sociologist at the Université de Montréal, ensures us that we shall benefit from the work. He is very right. Vigh's literary history is a very valuable contribution to literary scholarship owing to his deep knowledge of Québec and the way he transmits it in a very delightful manner. Thus it is not a dry piece of writing, on the contrary, a very enjoyable one. This is a book that is difficult to put aside and very to easy to come back to.

**Molnár, Judit, ed.**

**Different Perspectives on Canada from Inside and Outside:  
Multidisciplinary Approaches.**

Debrecen: DEENK Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadója, 2008, 262 pages. ISBN 978 963 473 111 5.

**Mária Palla**

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No sooner had summer arrived in Hungary with the academic year of 2007-2008 coming to its end than a new book on Canadian Studies appeared in university bookstores. One of the founders of the discipline in Hungary, Professor Judit Molnár, who introduced Canadian Studies in the English Department of Debrecen University (then Kossuth Lajos University) in the 1980s, has edited an intriguing volume bringing together essays on a variety of topics by internationally acclaimed authors from both Canada and Europe. Her collection

is a fine addition to the series of books printed in Hungary in the past few months, all written in Hungarian and dealing with Canadian literature such as Árpád Vigh's book on the history of French writing in Quebec, Katalin Kürtösi's translation of Sharon Pollock's *Blood Relations*, published in a bilingual edition and supplemented with her preface, her study of North-American metadrama, and a no less important collection of contemporary Canadian plays in Hungarian translation from French and English as well. *Different Perspectives on*