



# The Intricate Nature of the Cross-Town Journey in Rawi Hage's *Cockroach*<sup>1</sup>

La nature compliquée du voyage à travers la ville  
dans *Cockroach* de Rawi Hage

Judit Molnár

## Abstract

My intention is to explore the unnamed protagonist's search in Rawi Hage's *Cockroach* for cultural acceptability in North America as he positions himself in a psychic trip in Montreal's underground world. The Montreal that is "infested with newcomers" is seen through the existential exploration of the immigrant's life as he tries to situate himself in liminal spaces, be they geographic, linguistic, cultural, religious or sexual. In the novel, the spaces under and above the ground support or defy each other in their own idiosyncratic ways, with hope, survival and an ambiguous kind of displacement existing side by side. I focus on how the story unfolds through different places and maneuvers in a cryptic space of displacement. The narrative shifts between multilayered cinematic scenes suggesting the existence of a metropolis (Montreal) that is transformed into an alien example of a topography filled with phantasmagorical elements. My aim is to disclose the novel's spatial and spacious dimensions, trusting that it can add to the understanding of the literary immigrant's imaginary text.

**Keywords:** the Canadian novel, Rawi Hage, space, Montreal

## Résumé

Dans la présente contribution, nous nous proposons d'étudier la quête de son acceptabilité culturelle en Amérique du Nord par le protagoniste anonyme de *Cockroach* par Rawi Hage, qui se positionne dans un voyage psychique à travers le monde souterrain de Montréal. Le Montréal qui est « envahi de nouveaux-venus » est vu à travers l'exploration existentielle de la vie d'immigré, cet immigré essayant de se situer dans des espaces à caractère liminal, qu'ils soient géographiques, linguistiques, culturels, religieux ou sexuels. Dans le roman, les espaces en-dessous et au-dessus du sol se soutiennent ou se défient mutuellement, à leurs manières idiosyncrasiques, où coexistent l'espoir, la survie et une sorte de déplacement ambigu. Nous montrerons comment l'histoire se déroule à travers différents lieux et

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manœuvres dans un espace cryptique de déplacement. La narration oscille entre des scènes cinématographiques ayant des couches multiples, ce qui suggère l'existence d'une métropole (Montréal) qui est transformée en un exemple de topographie aliénée, remplie d'éléments fantasmagoriques. Il s'agit ici de dévoiler les dimensions spatiales et spacieuses du roman, dans l'espoir que cela peut contribuer à une compréhension plus profonde du texte imaginaire de l'immigré littéraire.

**Mots-clés :** le roman canadien, Rawi Hage, l'espace, Montréal

By way of introduction, I would like to place Rawi Hage on the literary map of Québec within Canada. He is of Lebanese origin, was born in Beirut in 1964 and grew up in Lebanon and Cyprus. He moved to New York City in 1984 and later to Montreal, in 1991. He has become known as a writer, a photographer, a visual artist. His first novel, *De Niro's Game* (2006), won the lucrative International Impact Dublin Literary Award, the award that is given annually to the best English-language book published anywhere in the world. His work has been translated into 20 languages. Though he writes in English, he is trilingual, equally at home in Arabic, French and English, and multivocality is present in his fiction as well. His work falls into the overlapping categories of immigrant literature, ethnic literature, minority literature, multicultural literature and emergent literature. As one of the allophone writers in Québec – that is as neither “English” nor “French” – he belongs to what Linda Leith calls the “Anglo Literary Revival” in Canada’s French-speaking province. More specifically, the term refers to the renaissance of English-language writing in Quebec that started roughly in the 1990s and that has been part and parcel of literature produced in Quebec ever since then.

Hage has certainly introduced a new and unique voice to the English-language writing scene in Montreal, in more than one ways. If the reader expects to find the familiar alluring cityscape, he or she will certainly be disappointed with the novel *Cockroach* (2008). Matthew Fox notes, “*Cockroach* depicts a Montreal unfamiliar to most Montrealers and a Canada unfamiliar to most Canadians” (“A Man”). The portrait of the city is indeed in accordance with what Hage says – “Just because a city has some culture and looks nice, doesn’t mean it hasn’t got an undercurrent of violence. Montreal is a large military industrial complex. Under all that beauty there is something very ugly” (Tabar “existential”). We see the city through the eyes of a character that is from an unnamed Middle East country. Through him, “The bustling metropolis [is transformed] into an alien topography of menial jobs, mysterious accents, insect infestations and class hostilities” (Redekop “Stranger”). The dark perception fathoms the grievous situation of the narrator and that of his fellow immigrants, mainly from



Iran, in the bitterly cold winter to be endured by each and every soul exposed to it. The narrator, the exotic foreigner, is contemptuous of the world around him. He sees himself in the following way: “The exotic has to be modified here – not too authentic, not too spicy not too smelly, just enough of it to remind others of a fantasy elsewhere” (20). When he is not meeting his court-mandated female psychiatrist he spends his life in the subterranean world of the metropolis. Even during the therapy sessions in which his disturbing past, his violent childhood, including the death of his sister, for which he feels partially responsible, is revealed, this deranged man is further confused by the claustrophobic atmosphere of the small office in a public health clinic: “Maybe all these formalities, these thick clothes, this claustrophobic office, these [i.e. the therapist’s] ever-closed thighs and pulled-back hair are making me reluctant to open my innermost thoughts” (97).

His bleak history in an unidentified war-torn country involving domestic violence and his inability to protect his sister is partly disclosed in the form of transgressive monologues which recur as flashbacks rather than in dialogues for and by “a well-meaning but wildly naïve counselor who is a stand-in for the Anglo-Canadian establishment that champions diversity but has little real understanding of or interest in difference” (Dawson 153). With his dark and degraded past, he is not able to gain a foothold in the unwelcoming society of Québec. He is one of the many underdogs without a sense of belonging; at best he can only be part of the outlandish netherworld of refugees. However, he feels basically dislocated among them, too. Being a social outcast, his sphere of life is rather limited. He is “an immigrant living in an expatriate-heavy Montreal neighbourhood” (Whitlock “Down and out”) and he has to find the means for a possible survival. Not long after his arrival he learns from a Jehovah’s Witness lady that “Only the cockroaches shall survive to rule the earth” (7). Though he is still young and fit, this anti-hero can only strive for mere survival. One cannot help being reminded of the continued relevance of Margaret Atwood’s *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972), prescient in its observation that “We are all immigrants to this place [...], in the parts unknown to us we move in fear, exiles and invaders” (62). Her comment resonates with that of Arnold Itwaru: “Enter the immigrant embodied in dreams and fears, torn between yesterday and tomorrow, walking the terrain of a new culture. For this person the need to understand what he or she has left behind and what is experienced here is crucial to survival” (13).

The recent immigrant who is the focus of the novel meanders, after his failed suicide attempt in a park on Mont Royal, through the unsettling world of the dispossessed and the despairing. As James Lasdun sees it, “Crisis is certainly the defining condition for the narrator of *Cockroach*” (“Half man”). Naturally, this unhappy man has a desire for a space in which he can cope with his special human condition. Hage tells us about



him: “[the narrator] seeks an identity, a space, and a life at the border of physical and psychological death” (qtd. in Sakr “interview”). His social status separates him from the privileged elite (both francophone and anglophone) that he severely criticizes. Smaro Kamboureli observes that “he expresses absolutely no longing to belong either to a Lebanese community or to Montreal, let alone Canada” (145). He frequents the downtown emigré cafés on Blv. St-Laurent. As Sherry Simon notes, “[...] *Cockroach* replays an old story – giving St. Laurent an important role as a street of immigrants – of cheap bars and poets holding forth, and desperate newcomers trying to steal from one another” (n.p.). Simon subsequently emphasizes “the continued power of the myth of the St Laurent as a liminal space of contradictions” and as a “zone of marginality” (n.p.). The protagonist is always on the road and rarely stays in his own apartment that he describes as a “shithole of a rundown place” (17) in a “crumbling building” (7). His paranoid sense of existence, summed up in the novel’s title image of a cockroach, unites the war traumas he has left behind with the immigrant’s unofficial war in the streets.

I had that strange feeling of being chased. So I ran as if I was being hunted by giants who could pick me up and ponder me, then drop me and make blood splatter like roadkill, like an insect splashing on a car windshield. I zig-zagged, frantic, scanning the sky for any shadow of a giant’s shoes rolled-up newspapers that would suddenly land on my head like a collapsed roof, like ten layers of sky falling to earth. I sucked in the coldest winds, the cruelest air, and jumped like a storm in front of car tires cutting the wet asphalt, the red light, the brick houses, the curling Montreal stairs [...]. (230)

This is what Simon describes as “the unsituatedness of the immigrant [...] [in a city that] is divided against those who have no entitlement” (n.p.). The narrator, always on the edge of a troubled and miserable existence, keeps running away from places that limit his freedom and threaten his state of living. The welfare office is no consolation of any kind; it only burdens him with remorse: “Well, yes, yes indeed, I should be grateful for what this nation is giving me. I take more than I give, indeed it is true” (65).

In his solitary and hopeless contemplations he tries to orient himself. “Where am I?” he asks, “And what am I doing here? How did I end up trapped in a constantly shivering carcass, walking in a frozen city with wet cotton falling on me all the time?” (9) Decades earlier Northrop Frye reminded us, “Canadian sensibility [...] is less perplexed by the question ‘Who am I?’ than by some such riddle as ‘Where is here?’” (222). Hage’s protagonist, though not a Canadian by passport, is puzzled by both questions. In his distressing predicament he turns to his fancy. Hage asserts, “when my characters are in some kind of trauma, psychosis, or disillusion they try to escape. [...] And the way they escape is through fantasy. In a way, it’s another kind of madness,



of course” (qtd. in East “the ground up”). Both in fearful reality and in his bewildering fantasy the protagonist converses with cockroaches; he hates and admires them, and he even turns temporarily into one of this species. According to Jesse Hutchison “the novel offers the concept of the liminal space between human and cockroach as a space of possibility for the immigrant” (n.p.) More often than not the narrator willingly looks for their companionship: “There were no cockroaches to be seen today. The brutal temperature must have driven them down south to the boiler room, looking for warmth and comfort” (75). “What are these insects in my kitchen up to at this hour? I wondered. I walked to the kitchen but no one was there” (195). He implies that he and the cockroaches stand on the same ground, be it above or under street level.

The titular metaphor, the *cockroach*, vigorously portrays the main character over the course of the narrative. The insect motif certainly brings Kafka to mind. However, Hage does not ascribe any credit to him: “He’s not an influence at all. In my view Kafka doesn’t and can’t have a monopoly on acts of metamorphosis” (qtd. in East “the ground up”). Hage claims: “The fact that I chose this image of a cockroach is simply because they’re the closest thing to the ground” (qtd. in East “the ground up”). Besides Kafka, Hage has been compared to many other writers including: Burroughs, Camus, Céline, Dostoevsky, Fanon, Genet, Houellebecq, Rimbaud and Sartre (Lasdun “Half man,” Beattie “Cockroach”). He admits that he wears the combined influences of Tolstoy, Chekhov, Dostoevsky and Turgenev on his sleeve (Wagner “A tough”). Moreover, he has been described as a surrealist, postmodern, magic realist, and existential writer. The dilemma confronting the possible conditions for a particular kind of existence is indeed at the heart of the novel. In the very beginning it is clearly stated: “The question of existence consumed me” (4). The destitute young man has to place himself in the world surrounding him; he has a frenzied and instinctive desire for lodging in a stabling space. Hage’s genuine interest in spatiality is evident. He tells us, “I [...] tend to situate myself in the space I am describing, or imagining. There is a close proximity, a need for an almost physical presence that I notice while I am writing” (Hammoudi “Interview”). Strangely enough the comforting space the protagonist finds is provided for him through his provisional metamorphoses into a cockroach in his fantasy. This peculiar hybrid psychic space suggests potential foresight for the misanthropic man to escape from the immeasurable void he experienced earlier. He says:

There is existence and there is the void; you are either a one or a zero. Once I was curious about the void. If I had died on that tree branch in the park, I would have experienced the other option. Although [...] experiencing it would have meant that I could see and feel, and that would have thrown me back into existence, which would eliminate the notion of the void. The void cannot be experienced. The void should mean perishing absolutely without any consciousness of it. It is either a perpetual existence or nothingness, my friend. (122)



The choice between the blank void and the “cockroach existence” is a rather intriguing one. We would tend to think that turning into a cockroach of all insects implies a state of being that is repulsive and is not to experiment with. In this case, however, this imaginary state consoles the protagonist by opening up domestic-social possibilities that seem to be plausible for refugees underground. According to Kryzsytof Majer:

In opposition to the sterile world of order and hygiene, Hage constructs the idea of the underworld. It is imagined as an underground space [...] where immigrants hide, like insects, seeking the safety and warmth which the institutions and citizens refuse to provide. Consequently, the novel operates on a series of ingenious reversals. In the phantasmagoric, icebound Montreal, verticality, brightness and existence on the ground all indicate a certain death-in-life. Conversely, life-giving forces are to be found in the warm, waste-nourished underworld, whose dark reaches hum with agile, horizontal creatures, continually threatening to rise to the surface. At the moment, however, the surface is deadly, lifeless: public pay phones are ‘vertical, transparent coffins.’ (n.p.)

At the same time, however, it is also true that the character’s in-betweenness is manifest in a constant shift between “the conforming exotic immigrant” and the “non-conformist cockroach” (Hutchison n.p.). He never fully commits himself “to the world of the cockroach or the world of the human” (“Hutchison n.p.”); he says, “I was split between two planes and aware of two existences, and they were both mine. I belong to two spaces” (119). As Kamboureli remarks, “His double condition encapsulates his profound sense of abjection and the disjunctive tension he experiences throughout the narrative [...]” (142). We also have to bear in mind that he had a close relation with and even a strong affinity for cockroaches already in his childhood when he liked to play underground. Later on “The underground, at once hiding place and refuge, a space that stands for disempowerment but also for revolt and general upheaval, is the ambivalent ground the protagonist occupies” (Kamboureli 145). In his adulthood he becomes “the master of the underground,” which is a space he often escapes to. He is the master of escape: “I reminded myself that I can escape anything. I am a master of escape (unlike those trapped and recurring pink Buddhists)” (23). He does not want to escape the albino cockroach that he meets on more than one occasion. In one of his hallucinations, he has a long dialogue with him/her. The equivocal and long conversation evolving between the narrator and his imagined other self visualized in the “gigantic” cockroach is of seminal importance as it helps to elucidate the daring ambitions of the cockroaches swirling in the novel. Their power is stressed; in the future they will be the “ruling race” (201), we are informed in this phantasmagoric scene. The narrator is told:



You are one of us. You are part cockroach. But the worst part of is that you are also human. Look at you how you strive to be worshipped by women, like those jealous, vain gods. Now go, and be human, but remember you are always welcome. You know how to find us. Just keep your eyes on what is going on down in the underground. (203)

Here the protagonist's human self is under hostile scrutiny and is mercilessly criticized. He becomes educated by the insects surrounding him in his apartment, and he is even stimulated by them so much so that in his phantasmagorias he turns into one of them.

To cross the line under the bald man's gaze would require an even more experienced *cockroach than myself*. And what if I managed to pick up the phone? What would I say? Under the circumstances. Shohreh would never understand or detect my *ultrasonic insect sounds*. I could rub my feet for hours, send loud signals and *wave my whiskers*, she would still never understand. (265)

He benefits from his recurring dreamlike states of being; in his fluctuating consciousness he is being taught by the roaches. During his periodic hallucinations he feels closer to his cockroach self than to his human self. It is basically at times like these that he feels "deep disgust" for "humanity," for the "moneyed elite" (Ben "the ground"). Hutchison accentuates the primary importance of "the liminal space between human and cockroach as a space of possibility for the immigrant" ("Immigrant").

The text suggests that the possibilities are realized in the psychic space that the narrator penetrates on his various psychotic trips in the course of which he gets to know and befriends his "cockroachian" self. This troubled man sees more clearly during his hallucinogenic flights than he does on his clear-minded quests. In his mental confusion often verging on the edge of madness he sees more comprehensively than otherwise. Hage assumes:

Maybe we all flip between reality and madness [...] I kind of alternate between the two when I write, and sometimes weave them both in at the same. Even the act of writing is madness in a way. Think about it: to write literature you have to create things from nowhere and truly believe them – and make other people believe them. I acknowledge and cherish that. (qtd. in East "the ground")

The borderline between madness and sanity in the narrator's case is rather thin. He thinks, "All one has to do is substitute one sensation for another. Changes. Life is all about changes" (277). Change for him is also a process of "becoming." As Hutchison asserts "the narrator is forever embracing a process of becoming" (n.p.). Yes, indeed,



but the question remains: becoming what? I assume that more often than not he has a peculiar urge to grow into a cockroach in order to develop his own multifaceted self; after all the roaches are the creatures that will be able to exhaust all the possibilities they envisage. Atwaru's observations about immigrant experience can be applied here for revealing the intricate nature of this kind of situational awareness.

There is a becoming here, a willed as well as an unwilled transformation, a movement towards a possible consciousness which will emerge within the contexts of continuing redefinitions in a milieu of changing meanings, the fusions and confusions [...] of an unfamiliar and evolving culture. (13)

In this hallucinatory story it is the "evolving" culture of the cockroaches that will transform the life of the Montreal underworld by moving upwards from an existence close to the underground and gradually taking over the place of the settled, the affluent, the comfortable, in more ways than one.

Oddly enough, the protagonist's racing thoughts become more connected when his senses are distorted. His existential anxiety prevails much less when his mind is unsound, when he wanders about in his phantasmagorical illusions. His irritability is increased when his mind is sound. This bug-man is inspired not by what the city can offer but by what the ambitious cockroaches may offer instead. He enjoys his roach self; he crawls like these insects and, like them, invades people's houses in order to investigate their fridges so that he can feed himself. However, as Kamboureli notes, "This verb [crawl], that punctuates the text with disturbing frequency, speaks to his willful transformation but also dehumanization, his desire to crawl in the underground but also his vision 'that a grand change is coming, a fatal one that is brewing from underneath the earth'" (117) (145). His petty thefts include stealing lipstick, slippers, letters, etc. On occasions when he is transformed into his imaginary vermin self his intention is to explore other people's inner lives rather than to enjoy their fabulous wealth. Hage notes, "The cockroach is a survivor, not very welcome, resilient and a creature that penetrates people's homes very easily" (qtd. in Wagner "A tough"). He meticulously scrutinizes pieces of furniture hoping that he will find objects that will disclose the past, the secretive thoughts and, maybe the intentions of people he knows vaguely or not at all. His break-ins are described in minute detail.

His drawers held a bunch of knick-knacks, objects he must have kept from his Paris stay – a Paris subway man, a few postcards he had received from an old acquaintance, a woman [...]. This must have been the professor's *grand amour*. Then I found a wealth of correspondence. A treasure! I stole some of his letters [...]. In the professor's closet I found an old green



suitcase [...] I opened it in no time. The locks almost rusty, sprang upward like eyes opening in a bad dream. Inside papers, and envelopes were organized in bundles [...]. (150-1)

These lines bring to mind Gaston Bachelard, who relates that “drawers and chests” and other “hiding places” become spaces where “human beings, great dreamers of locks, keep or hide their secrets (74). The narrator rummages through strange houses, and this is what he, in his converted form, is mainly interested in. He considers cockroaches joyously industrious and he is convinced that “only [these] insects will survive. They shall inherit the earth [...]” (53). By extension he imagines that those people who are in exile at present will be free and they will govern. This powerful awareness of a hitherto unheard future frightens and comforts him at the same time.

What also soothes are the frequent and meditated visions that are in sharp contrast with the “unflinching urban reality” (East “the ground”) of the demiworld of Montreal. T.F. Rigelhof describes him as someone “with a large imagination” (“Fiction Howls”). This “damaged individual” (Powell “Insect”) resembles a poet when he flees into the realm of words. The text is shot through with poetic delineations.

Late at night in this city, the snow is pasted just above the street like a crunchy white crust that breaks and cracks under your feet. There is a sound to the cold, a constant quiet, a subtle permanent buzzing. It is not the vibration of the long-shadowed fluorescent city lights tracking the trajectory of falling snow, nor is it the wind, nor the people. It is something that comes from underground and then stays at the surface. (127)

Describing his style, Hage admits that he is indebted to Arabic poetry: “The way I write is very intuitive. It is sometimes visceral, emotional. [...] I suspect a lot of that comes from Arabic poetry” (qtd. in East “the ground”).

In Ben East’s view, the author’s real achievement in *Cockroach* is that “he may be torn between poetry and prose but it’s mirrored in his narrator’s battles with being human or primitive in order to survive” (“the ground”). The narrator, who has grown in strength, is making efforts to leave behind his socially dysfunctional life and directs his endeavours to an end that would make him benefit from his “cockroachian” experiences. Powell notes, “He [the narrator] certainly behaves like a cockroach [...]” (“Insects”). There are instances when he explicitly identifies himself as a cockroach, for example: “I was the insect beneath them” (89), or: “Look at my wings straight and hard, look at the shine of their brown colour, look at my long whiskers and my thin face, look at all my beauty” (284). As mentioned earlier, of the many cockroaches he meets, the one he converses with at length is an albino (basically white) and it grows to the size of the narrator. There are many convincing similarities between the narrator



and a cockroach. Powell also notices, “Hage is too successful in making the narrator akin to a cockroach [...] (“Insect”). The anonymous protagonist’s pseudonym may as well be the hardly-subtle “Cockroach,” which challenges Hutchison’s assumption that “The refusal to fully accept either identity [cockroach or human] is reinforced by the namelessness that marks both the narrator and his country [...] (“n.p). She confirms the following observation by Adam Carter: “Namelessness may be indeed a space of freedom and plurality, a generative place” (n.p.). In my view the narrator gained the space of freedom that finally triggers him to act through strengthening his cockroach character. I agree with Taheri that “Hage’s anti-hero [...] builds the cockroach aspect of his persona willingly and as a key element of a mechanism of self-defense in a hostile world” (“Forgetting”). What is more, he does so in a very persuasive way. Hage’s creature is a compelling one and, as Norton observes, “It takes idiosyncratic courage to turn a man into a cockroach after Kafka” (“On Cockroach”). But Hage does not disappoint the reader despite the fact that the last pages turn into a kind of “revenge narrative” (Beattie “Cockroach”) similar to a thriller in a sudden and unexpected way. However, it is here that the narrator can apply the “mechanisms” he was introduced to by the albino cockroach:

Yes, we are ugly, but we always know where we are going.

We have a project.

An evil, oppressive one, if I may add. I shouted.

A change. A project to change this world, the creature corrected me, and waved his whiskers.

And to subordinate and kill all those who do not conform all those who do not conform to your project. (202)

Raging in anger, the protagonist defends his Iranian lover, Shohreh, when he shoots her former jailer, who tortured and raped her many times. Earlier, however, he was unable to save the life of his sister, who suffered from her extremely brutal husband. Despite the somewhat ambiguous ending the narrator undoubtedly accepts the cockroachian components that are fully integrated into his new state of consciousness. As Geoff Pevere sees it, “The cockroach does not survive because it struggles and resist, but because it surrenders to circumstances and thrives in whatever filth is available. It obeys the drain” (“The cockroach”). The last lines in the novel suggest a smooth transition in a fluid space:

I dropped the gun and walked back to the kitchen. I looked at the water that gathered and rushed towards the drain.

Then I crawled and swam above the water, and when I saw a leaf carried along by the stream



of soap and water as if it were a gondola in Venice, I climbed onto it and shook like a dancing gypsy, and I steered it with my glittering wings towards the underground. (305)

Carrie Dawson notes that in the end the narrator “turns towards his underground home with a sense of new possibility” (154). Indeed, in the final transformation the unique psychic space that continues in the underground is considerably enriched by the decisive victory achieved above ground; with the knowledge the narrator gained from the cockroaches he has managed to save a human being’s life. Being fully aware that he is awaited, he descends and returns back to them for further advice and enlightenment.

Rawi Hage’s novel is a disturbing piece of fiction that focuses upon the intricate nature of the immigrant experience of deterritorialization. The protagonist’s cross-town journey in Montreal is both vertical and horizontal; neither dimension suffices for him. The main character, a social outcast, envisions himself as a giant cockroach, which allows him to experience realities that otherwise would be impossible for him. His constant shift between real and dreamlike states of consciousness – in his case a bizarre combination – results in a kind of mental confusion. Nevertheless, through his self-willed altered state of consciousness he familiarizes himself with the cockroaches’ aggressive energy, which turns out to be to his advantage. Upon his visits to the underground, where he is immersed in the extreme reality of a troubling psychic landscape, he goes through a critical transition. His anxiety and disorientation is somewhat lessened and the experience of exile is relieved to some extent. Yet his imagined metamorphosis is certainly not a guarantee that he will not continue to live on the periphery of society. Hage’s imagery, in short, conjures up phantasmagorical elements that constitute the precarious state of immigrant existence.

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**JUDIT MOLNÁR**, a professor of English at the University of Debrecen, Hungary, introduced Canadian Studies to that university. Her main research areas are multicultural literatures in Canada, including English-language writing in Quebec. The author of very many articles on Canadian literature, she has also edited a book that focuses on Canada from a multidisciplinary perspective.

**Address:** Judit Molnár, North American Department, University of Debrecen, P.O. Box 73, 4010 Debrecen, Hungary. / < e-mail: [judit.molnar@arts.unideb.hu](mailto:judit.molnar@arts.unideb.hu) >

