

thus stands as an example of his rhetoric exceeding his needs. His theoretical introduction is nevertheless condensed, as is his conclusion, where he argues for the usefulness of comparatist perspectives, and attacks some of the more egregious rubbish perpetrated in the name of postcolonial studies. Rhetoric notwithstanding, Serrano actually is not denouncing everything ever labeled postcolonial, but is adding to the body of useful work that has followed the critiques he indicts.

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MAILHOT, LAURENT. *Plaisirs de la prose*. Montréal: P de l'U de Montréal, 2005. ISBN 2-7606-19877. Pp. 299. \$24.95 Can.

Mailhot has a particular affection for brief texts—observations, letters, diaries, memoirs, sketches—that offer insight into the banalities of daily life. He appreciates prose that avoids exaggeration, bombast, and technical language, preferring readability, wit, and irony. He offers here fresh readings of eight Québécois writers who embody some or all of these qualities.

Mailhot first focuses on Saint-Denys Garneau's *Journal*, which contains undated essays, meditations, sketches, fiction, and even poetry. He keenly analyzes Garneau's complicated relation to nature, particularly the role of trees in Garneau's writing (providing some interesting links with his contemporary, the painter Jean-Paul Lemieux). Of particular interest to Mailhot is Garneau's highly original essay, "Le Mauvais Pauvre va parmi vous," which he reads as a philosophical meditation, a prophetic examination of conscience, and an ethical and aesthetic parable.

In discussing Gabrielle Roy, Mailhot concentrates on the short narratives she strings together to form a novelistic sequence, establishing unique continuities in a kind of intergeneric play. He effectively captures the latent thematics of her fiction, such as the crucial role of hills in modulating temporality. His reading of Roy includes important considerations of structure (the play of prolepses and analepses) and subtle analyses of Roy's style—the best I have seen. Roy's contemporary, Claire Martin, whose narratives of life in a tyrannical household were among the key works of the *révolution tranquille*, receives a sensitive, empathetic reading from Mailhot. His discussion of Martin's presentation of her father is filled with insight into both the writer and the father. That discussion allows him to probe Martin's early fascination with words, her love of literature, and the neoclassical and theatrical qualities of her writing.

What interests Mailhot in Gilles Marcotte is his series of intriguing books that defy generic classification. Here, the critic adeptly captures Marcotte's voice in collections such as *L'Amateur de musique*, a compilation of short pieces on music whose highly personal nature and autobiographical fragments move the text in the direction of *prose intime*, additionally weaving music and literature to create original perspectives and links. Included in the discussion are *Ecrire à Montréal*, a polyphonic text that reflects both on how one writes on Montreal and on how the city has informed literary texts, and *Le Lecteur de poèmes*, a fresh reading of contemporary poets. A separate chapter deals with similar features in Gilles Archambault, the author of very brief texts such as maxims, observations, prose poems, fables, and portraits.

The longest chapter discusses Pierre Morency, the author of texts dealing with vegetation and animals, who has the expertise of a naturalist coupled with the

ability to write in a way that is not only comprehensible but also pleasurable, and whom Mailhot does not hesitate to place among the ranks of Buffon, Audubon, and Rousseau. He carefully reveals Morency's considerable stylistic qualities as he demonstrates the author's ability to translate this refined sense perception into prose. Mailhot's final chapter treats the work of two anthropologists, Bernard Arcand and Serge Bouchard, who write jointly of the mythology of contemporary life with grace, wit, and irony, staying clear of their professional idiolect in favor of briefly presented insights over lengthy disquisitions. Their aim is not truth or beauty or even science, but rather lucidity about the phenomenology of the ordinary.

It should be noted, finally, that Mailhot is himself a superb writer, a graceful stylist who enriches his prose with a rich allusiveness that draws on his impressive broad cultural knowledge.

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BUSBY, KEITH, BERNARD GUIOT, and LOGAN WHALEN, eds. *"De sens rassis": Essays in Honor of Rupert T. Pickens*. Faux Titre 259. New York: Rodopi, 2005. ISBN 90-420-1755-4. Pp. xiv + 753. \$214.00.

Keith Busby, Bernard Guiot, and Logan Whalen offer the scholarly community a volume worthy of Pickens's illustrious career. This compendium of critical reflections covers a wide array of topics, which is only fitting, given Pickens's many scholarly interests over the years. In their introductory encomium, "*Par ce que c'est luy...Rupert Tarpley Pickens III*," Raymond and Virginia La Charité offer a touching retrospective of Pickens's life and career, complete with a bibliography that testifies to his distinguished scholarly *vita*.

Given Pickens's interventions in numerous and varied scholarly debates, the editors perhaps gave up hope of organizing the volume by topic or category, preferring to order the contributions alphabetically by author's name. Although understandable, in the opinion of this reviewer, such a decision sacrificed an opportunity to give readers a better idea of the areas in which Pickens made major strides: Occitan studies, especially the troubadours; Arthurian literature, especially Chrétien de Troyes; and Marie de France. The remainder of the review will survey the contributions to these three fields contained in the *festschrift*.

Pickens's 1986 edition of Jaufré Rudel's songs marked a milestone in the field of Occitan studies, so readers will naturally expect contributions on the troubadours, their culture, and their legacy. F. R. P. Akehurst offers a lively essay on adultery in Gascony, and, in so doing, surveys not only troubadour poems, but also *vidas*, customary laws, and manuscript illuminations. William Calin takes readers into the Baroque period to consider the poetic corpus of Michel Tronc (1562/63–1596). In her ongoing efforts to distinguish medieval Occitan culture from the more well-known culture of the north, Wendy Pfeffer examines references to wine in literary and historical documents in medieval Occitania. Elizabeth Poe makes a case for reassigning attribution of "*Estat aurai de chanter*" (PC 194, 7) from Gui d'Uisel to Peire de Maensac. Finally, Samuel Rosenberg suggests that editors should consider Vatican lat. 3208, a troubadour songbook, the base manuscript for Mathieu le Juif's "*Par grant franchise me covient chanter*" (RS782, L175–1), despite its preservation in French sources.

Readers will find studies of Chrétien de Troyes and Arthurian literature.