

Söderlind, Sylvia. *Novel Territory: The Metamorphosis of Fiction in Canada and Quebec, 1965-1975*. Thesis (PhD [Comparative Literature]), University of Toronto. Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI, 1986. (Publication No. NL31464)

Abstract

The thesis outlines a critical methodology suited to the study of literatures growing out of colonial situations, which is then applied to the two major literatures in Canada. Central to the discussion is the idea of the *litterature mineure*, a term used to define a minor literature written in the language of a majority and characterized by “non-territorial” features. The concept of territoriality measures, on the one hand, the homogeneity of a culture and, on the other, the perceived closeness between word and thing, or between text and reference. On a semiotic level, the term defines the relationship between signifier and signified within the sign. The less mediation there is between the two, the more territorial the text. A heuristic spectrum of territoriality is posited, on which a text can be placed, according to the type of signifying structures predominant in it.

The decade between 1965 and 1975 was crucial to the development of the two Canadian literatures. While the theme of cultural colonization and linguistic alienation was common to both, it was expressed in radically different ways. The objective of the textual analyses constituting the main body of the thesis is to identify and explain the formal dissimilarities from the point of view of territoriality. Four novels that partake of the dominant thematic and ideological discourse are discussed: Huber Aquin’s *Trou de memoire* (1968) is juxtaposed with Dave Godfrey’s *The New Ancestors* (1970), and Andre Langevin’s *L’Elan d’Amerique* (1972) is compared to Robert Kroetsch’s *Gone Indian* (1973). The analyses indicate a movement toward territorial, or conjunctive, structures, in the Quebec novels, as opposed to a preference for non-territorial, or disjunctive, strategies, in the Canadian texts. Where the former move toward myth and metaphor, the latter move in the direction of metamorphosis and the rupture between text and reference, between form and content, and between signifier and signified. The Canadian novels thus exhibit more of the features of the *litterature mineure*.