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Ocean liners in Canadian literature

This article explores the idea of the ocean liner in the Canadian literary imagination, asking how it has transformed from a functional machine into a powerful symbol, and how it has become a focus for dreams and terrors. The research encompasses English-Canadian and French-Canadian novels and poems which represent the passenger experience on a liner. Beginning with narratives of emigration, the discussion moves on to travel writing in the context of empire and then to stories of shipwreck and of war, fictions of the voyage as rite of passage, evocations of the glamour of interwar liner travel, and finally to writing about holidays.

Cet article explore le motif du paquebot dans l'imaginaire littéraire canadien, en se demandant comment il s'est transformé d'une machine fonctionnelle en un symbole puissant, et comment il est devenu un objet de fantasme et d'inquiétude. La recherche englobe des romans et des poèmes canadiens-français et canadiens-anglais qui représentent l'expérience des passagers sur un paquebot. En commençant par les récits d'émigration, la discussion passe aux récits de voyage dans le contexte colonial du XIXe siècle, puis aux récits de naufrage et de guerre, aux fictions du voyage comme rite de passage, aux évocations du glamour des traversées en paquebot de l'entre-deux-guerres, et enfin aux écrits sur les vacances.

Keywords: ocean liner, travel, emigration, shipwreck, war

Mots clés: paquebot, culture du voyage, émigration, naufrage, guerre

the infinite poem begins, with its power
of a great ocean-liner greeting the waves
bound for the sea, its home.

So the waves of the sea (it all comes back to me
as when I first heard it),
the white snowcaps breaking,
the power of repetition

- Louis Dudek, *Atlantis* (1967)

And the voyage of every day was like the voyage of the day before ... as this majestic
black creature of a ship pulsed onward into the infinity about us ... yet each night
seems to have a separate chronicle as one reads backwards, a chronicle that vanishes
in the writing and is dumb in the telling.

- Sara Jeannette Duncan, *A Social Departure* (1890)

Reading backwards – from Dudek in 1967 to Duncan in 1890 – takes us in reverse through
the whole era of the ocean liner. The Montreal poet Louis Dudek was writing as the jet age
began. At this time steamship lines, trying to replace disappearing revenue streams from the
luxury and emigrant markets, were turning to the holiday trade. The speakers in Dudek's
long poems *Europe* (1954) and *Atlantis* (1967) are among many people 'Travelling tourist
class, to Europe / Out of American, Canadian cities' (1991: 77). Soon, these transatlantic

crossings would come to an end and the remaining liners would be scrapped or converted to cruise ships.¹ While Dudek witnessed the end of the ocean liner's heyday, Sara Jeannette Duncan saw its beginning. When she embarked on her round-the-world trip in 1888, ocean-going steamships had already been in service for several decades, but the experience of liner travel had recently been transformed. Steel hulls and high-pressure steam engines were introduced in the 1880s, enabling the construction of much larger, faster ships with increasingly luxurious passenger spaces.

One might imagine, then, that for Duncan the ocean liner would be an emblem of modernity and progress, while for Dudek it might be a site of nostalgia. Yet a comparison of their texts reveals no such contrast. Indeed, as we read backwards, we find continuity in the poetics of the ocean liner. The greatness of Dudek's ship is echoed in the majesty of Duncan's, and both evoke infinity. For both speakers, the hypnotising repetitiveness of the journey generates a repeated effort to remember, to record. Yet ultimately, the full meaning of the journey, and of the ship itself, is impossible to discover or to capture in words. 'Travel is the life-voyage in little', writes Dudek, 'a poem, a fiction, a structure of illusion! / And then you ask, "What does it mean?"' (1967: 223).

Ocean liners are objects of fascination for authors of many nationalities. The literature of the liner is bound up with global histories of empire, migration, conflict, commerce and tourism. The themes taken up by Canadian texts about ocean-going steamers are often very similar to those found in writing from other countries. But Canada's distinctive history of immigration, its patterns of participation in world affairs, and its particular geographical and cultural relationship to the oceans, have certainly influenced the way that stories of sea crossings are told in its literature. This article considers a range of English- and French-Canadian novels and poems which represent the passenger experience

on a modern liner. It offers the first sustained account of a very important motif in Canadian writing. Since it is a wide-ranging but relatively short study, it inevitably remains on the surface, yet it opens possibilities for deeper exploration in this watery territory in future. The purpose is to explore the idea of the ocean liner in the Canadian imagination, asking how it has transformed from a functional machine into a powerful symbol, and how it has become a focus for dreams and terrors.

The article examines several themes which come to the fore in different phases of the liner's history. Beginning with narratives of emigration, the discussion moves on to travel writing in the context of empire and then to stories of shipwreck and of war, fictions of the voyage as rite of passage, evocations of the glamour of interwar liner travel, and finally to writing about holidays. One thing which all the texts share is an atmosphere of retrospection. The majority are set in the past, yet even the texts which evoke their own contemporary moment (such as those by Duncan and Dudek) are written from the point of view of a traveller who has completed a voyage and now feels distant from the self who experienced it. A focus on the dimension of time is very salient across these pieces of writing, and the article will investigate the reasons for this as well as exploring its narrative effects.

Emigration

The immediate predecessors of ocean-going liners were the barques or large sailing vessels which brought several generations of emigrants to Canada before the age of steam. These early journeys haunt more modern narratives about ocean crossings, either through parallels (continued vulnerability to storm and catastrophe) or through contrasts, in terms of the

greater speed and comfort of the modern liner. There is a rich body of imaginative writing associated with emigration to Canada (see Hanson 2009), yet few nineteenth-century narratives provide detailed descriptions of the transatlantic crossing. Susanna Moodie's *Flora Lyndsay; or, Passages in an Eventful Life* (1854) is a rare exception. This semi-autobiographical novel set in 1832 tells of the Lyndsay family's anguished decision to emigrate, their repeatedly deferred departure and their arduous journey. As Tamara Wagner observes, the novel expresses 'reluctance through strategic narrative delay' (2016: 62). It ends by suspending the characters forever in the moment of arrival, so that emigration becomes not one stage in a life but an unending condition.

While contemporary fictional accounts of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century emigrant journeys are rare, historical fiction furnishes more examples.² Mazo de la Roche's *The Building of Jalna* (1943) is a prequel, telling of the arrival in Canada of the Whiteoak family who were first introduced to readers as long-established, prosperous settlers in the bestselling *Jalna* (1927). In *The Building of Jalna*, Adeline and Philip Whiteoak depart from Ireland in 1854. By this point, two decades after Moodie emigrated, steamer crossings had become available, but 'Philip had taken passage on a sailing vessel because he believed it would be quicker and cleaner than the steamship' (Roche 1955: 34). He is incorrect. After several days at sea, the ship is forced to turn back for repairs. Again, narrative delay structures the account of the emigrant journey. For Adeline, beginning the journey a second time, the recursive process of parting and departure, together with the foretaste she has had of the discomforts on board, cancel out the elation she felt at first.

Mazo de la Roche reprises several of Moodie's themes, notably the difficulty of travelling with an infant, but her more modern sensibility is evident in a fuller attempt to represent the marine environment. The shapes and colours of waves, the effects of wind, the

appearance of icebergs and the behaviour of gulls are observed in detail. Earlier texts tend to focus on the interior spaces of the ship and the travellers' inner experience, whereas de la Roche trains her gaze outwards, betraying the perspective of the twentieth-century leisure traveller even whilst detailing the suffering of her emigrant characters.³ At the instant of disembarkation Adeline suddenly recovers from debilitating weakness and feels 'really exhilarated and eager to see her new home' (p. 91). Here, the perspective of mid-century WASP culture asserts itself. While Moodie's Flora, clinging to her genteel English identity, dreads landing in Canada, the teleology of the 'Jalna' series requires that Adeline Whiteoak is transformed during her journey into a zealous new Canadian.

Later waves of migration produced fresh Canadian literary perspectives on the ocean crossing. For example, the poet Fulvio Caccia may be seen as emblematic of a mobile modern subject. Born in Italy in 1952, he grew up in Montréal and writes in French. After almost thirty years in Canada, he moved to Paris. The title of his 1983 collection *Irpinia* has two meanings. It refers to a southern Italian region which has experienced high emigration, and it is the name of the ocean liner on which Caccia left Italy for Canada. He writes in the postscript to a volume of his collected poetry:

En intitulant mon premier recueil *Irpinia*, j'avais voulu d'abord rendre compte de la condition immigrante et de sa transformation. ... En effet, le paquebot en rade du port de Naples où j'ai embarqué un jour de septembre, portait le même nom que la terre dont il allait contribuer à me détacher. Le lieu et la perte de lieu, l'immobile et le mobile coïncidaient.

Or cette conjonction recoupait – est-ce un hasard? – celle de la poésie

québécoise préoccupée alors à investir le pays. Je me retrouvais dans cette quête passionnée d'une terre, d'une intensité à nommer. (Caccia 1994: 191)

As in the earlier narratives of emigration, the ship comes to embody loss. Yet, although it is itself in Michel Foucault's terms a 'floating piece of space, a place without a place' (1986: 27), it nevertheless offers the promise of place. Embarking on the liner, the emigrant also embarks on a quest for 'une terre' – that is, depending on how we translate that term, a quest for earth, for land, even for a whole new world. In 'Irpinia', the title poem, there is a constant movement between longing for a new life – 'Le navire Irpinia est amarré à l'espoir' (Caccia 1994: 151) – and regret for the life left behind. At the moment of departure: 'La rive s'estompe / Une femme pleure doucement' (p. 152). 'Addio Addio' (good-bye), cry the emigrants to those on shore. 'Ci rivedremo' (we will meet again). The fragments of Italian contained within lines in the poet's adopted language of French express an ongoing connection to the community of origin.

Travel Writing and Empire

Emigrants from Europe formed the majority of passengers travelling by sea to Canada during the nineteenth century. In the 1850s francophone and anglophone Canadians started to travel regularly in the opposite direction, in quest of family members, cultural enrichment or professional opportunities (Kröller 1987: 2; Lacroix 2014: 19), and from the 1870s there was a significant 'growth of overseas tourist traffic' from Canada (Morgan 2008: 20).

Numerous records of transatlantic journeys survive in diaries and published travel writing.

A much smaller number of Canadians left records of journeys on the Pacific, South China Sea or Indian Ocean. Sara Jeannette Duncan was one of those few. Her trip was a

professional undertaking – she was a correspondent for the *Montreal Star*, and her regular dispatches to the paper later formed the basis of the commercially successful *A Social Departure*. Yet her narrative is imbued with a tourist sensibility. Her circular journey – contrasting with the one-way trip of the emigrant – presages the emergence of modern leisure culture with its excursions and cruises. In her writing, the liner stands not for loss but for gain: that is, for the acquisition of new experiences and sensations.

Addressing a presumed metropolitan audience, the narrator remarks that 'in the part of the world I come from you might ask three-quarters of the people you met what "P. and O." stands for, and get the answer, "Dear me! That sounds like a thing one ought to know"' (Duncan 1890: 190). Duncan transforms 'P. and O.' from a brand name into a mystical formula:

For an Eastern voyage on a Peninsular and Oriental ship is a vague dream that haunts the gay, hard little parlour where what we call 'sewing circles' meet to hear books of travel read aloud, in our substitute for villages in the New World. (p. 190)

A faintly contemptuous tone distances Duncan's narrator from this dismal colonial culture of self-improvement (the learning of things one ought to know, without the hope of experiencing them directly). Yet she recalls that as a girl she shared this sewing-circle dream of travel in the tropics. Her narrative authority derives from the fact that she has fulfilled it, and is a more experienced traveller than even the most adventurous of her readers:

You may have crossed the Atlantic in an upholstered palace, at all sorts of shifting angles, with three hundred other people, once or twice, and think, as we thought, that you know all there is to know about lay navigation, but you don't. You may even add to your experience, as we did, the great gray skies and tossing monotony of

two weeks on the Pacific, during which your affections learn to cluster about a ministering angel in a queue, and yet leave the true philosophy of voyaging unimagined. But Orthodocia and I, from Yokohama to London, sailed with intense joy and satisfaction upon seven of the ships of the P. and O., so I know whereof I speak. (pp. 190-1)

The 'philosophy of voyaging' articulated by Duncan is based on concepts of freedom and mobility which were enabled through the power relations of subalternity. The indentured labour of Asian crews (such as the Chinese steward wearing his hair in a queue) made possible the experience of leisure and luxury which liner passengers like Duncan enjoyed (see Balachandran).

She writes of 'the punkah-wallahs ... four or five handsome little Bengalis with the Indian sun in their liquid brown eyes, barefooted, dressed in a single straight white garment reaching half-way down their small mahogany legs' (Duncan 1890: 194). The workers are constructed as part of the exotic spectacle of the voyage, and even as an imperial trading commodity (like mahogany). Precisely similar representations occur in shipping companies' promotional material. Duncan does at least acknowledge the labour of seafarers, whereas many contemporary accounts rendered it invisible. Yet in her heavily orientalist narrative, observation of the crew's activity only adds piquancy to the narrator's experience of leisure and privilege:

After breakfast one finds the breeziest spot on deck, and reposes oneself on the long Chinese steamer-chair of the person whose card of possession is most obscurely tacked on. Perhaps there is a fire muster to enliven the morning, and one languidly

watches the Lascars taking prompt orders with splashing buckets, the officers getting the boats out, and the stewards trooping up with provision for the same. (p. 195)

The contrast between the languid, reclining posture of the passenger (whose only physical action is one of pilfering) and the vigorous effort of the multiracial crew makes the structural inequalities aboard the ocean liner abundantly clear.

While the crew must adhere to daily schedules and regulations, passengers can experience a release from the ordinary restrictions of chronology and geography into a realm of imagination:

the time-spaces began to melt into one another, and nobody knew and nobody cared ... how many knots they put up in the companion-way at eight bells as the ship's run, or how far we were from Singapore. It was a charmed voyage The very hold of the *Sutlej* was full of poetry in its more marketable shape of tea, and silk, and silver, and elephants' tusks, and preserved pineapples; and all the romance of the Orient was in the spicy smell that floated up from it. (p. 193)

The extractive logic of empire is evident on two levels. The shipping companies plunder India's natural resources for the benefit of wealthy European consumers. And the white passenger, with endless time on her hands because a group of imperial maritime subjects are doing all the work, can convert the ship's cargo into poetry – that is, into a book from which she will personally profit.⁴

Shipwreck

'The Canadian way of death is death by accident', comments Margaret Atwood in her irreverent 1972 book *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (2004: 199).

Shipwrecks are among the catastrophes that she discusses. Indeed, shipwrecks occur in numerous Canadian novels, such as Emma-Adele Bourgeois Lacerte's *Némoville* (1917), considered the earliest example of franco-ontarian science fiction, Yann Martel's *The Life of Pi* (2001) about a boy who survives the wreck of a Japanese freighter, or the children's book *That Fatal Night: The Titanic Diary of Dorothy Wilton* (2011) by Sarah Ellis. The *Titanic* has a particular connection with Canada. Its radioed requests for help were picked up at the Canadian Marconi Company's station at Cape Race, Newfoundland. Nearby St John's is the closest town to the wreck site. Atwood's own short story 'Wilderness Tips' (1991) appeared just a few years after the discovery of the wreck, at a time of heightened public fascination. It ends with a reference to 'a huge boat, a passenger liner – tilting, descending, with the lights still on, the music still playing, the people talking on and on, still not aware of the disaster that has already overcome them' (Atwood 1995: 222). But the most significant Canadian narratives of shipwreck are E.J. Pratt's long poems *The Roosevelt and the Antinoe* (1930) and *The Titanic* (1935).⁵ These are also Canada's most canonical texts about ocean liners.⁶

The poems are often treated as a pair, although the later one is much the best known, just as the 1912 *Titanic* disaster is far more famous than the dramatic rescue of the entire crew of the stricken British freighter SS *Antinoe* by the American liner SS *President Roosevelt* during a severe Atlantic storm in 1926. In an interview, Pratt compared the two poems: '*The Titanic* was a greater complex than the other because you had the heroic and the mean there. But in *The Roosevelt and the Antinoe* it was all heroic' (Gingell 1983: 49). In keeping with this more unified thematic, the earlier poem is told almost entirely from the perspective of the *Roosevelt's* crew. By contrast, *The Titanic's* more cinematic reportage shifts its point of view from crew to passengers, and then to people aboard the rescuing

Carpathia, and even to the iceberg itself. The poem doesn't give equal attention to all the different groups on board *Titanic*, though. The immigrants are only briefly described: 'seven hundred packed / in steerage' (Pratt 1989: 324). While Pratt casts several sections in dialogue, he gives a voice only to the officers and the passengers in higher classes, who call out in complacent tones: '*Roast Duckling! / Snipe! More Rhine! / Marconi made the sea as safe as land*' (p. 315).

Both poems exhibit a documentary impulse, seen in the detailed presentation of topics such as sea trials, mariners' contracts, provisioning, navigation, wireless signalling and lifeboat operation. This is combined with a mythic aspect, although the symbolism of the ocean liner is very different in the two texts. The *Roosevelt* – although itself in much danger from the storm – nevertheless appears as a bulwark, towering above the small freighter which is 'like a lone/ Sea-mallard with a broken wing' (Pratt 1989: 228). The rescue takes several days and requires immense courage and ingenuity. Finally, the *Roosevelt* carrying the shipwrecked British sailors arrives with 'the bearing of a Viking Queen' at Plymouth (p. 249). The ship takes on the aura of heroism with which Pratt also invests the American mariners. In the closing lines of *The Titanic*, on the other hand, 'the liner took / Her thousand fathoms journey to her grave' while the iceberg, 'Silent, composed, ringed by its icy broods' remains as a stark image of indifference (Pratt 1989: 338). The ship becomes symbolic of an unjustified faith in human ingenuity while the iceberg is 'still the master of the longitudes' (p. 338). In his research notes Pratt described the story of the *Titanic* as 'probably the greatest single illustration of the ironic in maritime history' (Gingell 1983: 95).

The Titanic has a remarkable immediacy and is effective in capturing unfolding on-board dramas. Yet its intertextuality, dramatic irony and references to omens (reminding us of our present time of reading, when we already know the end of the story) mean that

we are never wholly immersed – as it were – in the moment of 15 April 1912. In their article on the *Titanic's* literary archive, Peter Middleton and Tim Woods point out that Pratt's poetic rhetoric is always a 'reminder of a "here" where textuality is at work' (2001: 508). For instance, the poem considers the way passengers' expectations are influenced by prior inscriptions of liner travel:

No wave could sweep those upper decks – unthinkable!

No storm could hurt that hull – the papers said so.

The perfect ship at last – the first unsinkable,

Proved in advance – had not the folders read so? (Pratt 1989: 303)

Pratt engages directly with shipping companies' promotional material and with media reports. He thus demonstrated an early sense of the textuality of the *Titanic* disaster – that is, by 1935, it already had been so extensively represented and mediated that it could no longer be accessed, even by survivors, purely through practices of memory.

War

Shipwreck and war have a metaphorical as well as a literal relationship. Ships are far more likely to be wrecked in wartime, while writers and artists often use the *topos* of shipwreck to represent the calamity of war. During the two world wars, passenger liners were redeployed for military purposes and for the transport of refugees. After each war they returned troops home and carried war brides to North America. The resonances of liners in these periods are very different from those which held sway at other times. Yet these wartime meanings colour later narratives of peacetime travel; the two sets of associations cannot be entirely separated.

In Canadian literature and art about the First World War, ocean liners often feature in a harbour setting. These representations draw attention, in particular, to the importance of the port of Halifax, which handled millions of tons of supplies and provided a base for navy vessels. The painting *Olympic with Returned Soldiers* (1919) by Group of Seven artist Arthur Lismer shows the Halifax waterfront with the White Star Line's *RMS Olympic*, then serving as a troopship and painted in dazzle camouflage. The devastating Halifax Explosion of 1917, in which the cargo liner *SS Imo* collided with the munitions ship *Mont-Blanc*, found its most enduring representation in Hugh MacLennan's novel *Barometer Rising* (1941).

Among later Canadian historical fictions of the Great War is Mary Swan's novella *The Deep* (2000). It centres on identical twin sisters from Canada who volunteer for overseas service. Their father tries to protect them: 'Someone had told him that the crossing was more dangerous than anything we'd be close to in France' so he insists on buying 'lifesaving suits' (Swan 2003: 5). He is filled with foreboding as he watches his daughters trying them on: 'The heavy rubber, the ridiculous headgear, and all he could see was the two of them, bobbing alone in the vast gray waste of some ocean' (p. 35). Esther and Ruth, assuming that their father blames them for his wife's death since it was caused by their birth, never understand the depth of his love for them until the moment of the ship's departure:

We stood at the railing, looking down at the mass of people, and just as we spotted our father he took off his hat and waved it frantically in the air. We had never known him to do such a thing. We ... were struck by an astonishing thought. It was as if we were really seeing him. (pp. 17-18)

The same scene is later shown from the father's point of view: 'The ship waited, a big, hard lump of the inevitable. He waved like a madman, swept off his hat and waved that too, long

after the ship began to move away' (p. 33). As in so many literary narratives, the liner journey marks a moment of transition in the characters' lives. Yet in *The Deep* – unusually – the change does not relate to the traveller's self-discovery nor to someone met on board. Rather, the shift happens in a relationship with someone being left behind.

In war-torn France, in 'a world gone mad', the sisters long for the 'beautiful, gentle' kingdom of a mythical Sea King, speculating: 'Perhaps that's who we are, perhaps we are really the Sea King's beautiful daughters' (pp. 46-7). The trauma that Ruth and Esther experience in France is that of mental separation from one another, as a result of jealousy arising from their shared feeling for the same man. Most of the narrative is written in the second person but a sudden shift, as a few sentences are articulated by Ruth in the first person, produces a shock for the reader. On the ship returning to Canada the sisters feel: 'Without each other we are in pieces' (p. 70). The liner, elsewhere a symbol of freedom or adventure, now becomes a prison:

The ship moves off with a lurch, and we pace and pace. We are trapped now, there's a terrible pounding in our heads. The lighthouse sends its beam through the cabin, a darting streak of light, and we know at once what we have to do. (pp. 70-1)

The lighthouse, so often suggestive of mental illumination and rationality, here communicates a deadly message; Ruth and Esther jump over the rail to reach the underwater world of their shared fantasies.

The ocean liner with the most infamous war-related connection to Canada is the *St Louis*. In 1939, Hamburg America line arranged for this luxurious ship to take 937 Jewish passengers from Germany and France to Cuba, where they could wait until the quota numbers on their US visas were called. But as a result of Nazi propaganda, the Cuban

government refused entry to Havana. The *St Louis* was next barred from Miami. In Canada, a group of ministers and intellectuals wrote to urge the government to provide a safe haven. Among the writers who signed was Gwethalyn Graham, whose novel *Earth and High Heaven* (1944) would soon draw attention to the problem of anti-Semitism in Canada. The letter was unavailing and the *St Louis*, after being denied entry to Montreal, was forced to return to Europe. Some of its passengers found asylum but many others perished.

The journey of the *St Louis* has been extensively represented by authors and filmmakers, most of them from Cuba and the US. One Canadian example is Kathy Kacer's children's book, *To Hope and Back: The Journey of the St Louis* (2011). It is based on the testimony of two people who told her their experiences as young children aboard the ship. Kacer therefore categorises the book as historical non-fiction, although she acknowledges that she has 'embellished', noting: 'while the events chronicled here actually did happen, Lisa and Sol were not necessarily present to witness all of them' (2011: 197). The oral testimonies have evidently been extensively edited: the style is consistent across the book, and the children are endowed with an adult grasp of Jewish history. This book, then, combines memory work with pedagogy and fictionalised narrative.

It starts with a child's eye view of the ocean liner: 'This must be the biggest ship in the world. It looks longer than our block, and higher than ten houses piled on top of each other' (p. 3). Lisa's wealthy family is accommodated in an upper-deck cabin with 'thick and velvety' carpet and 'rich, embroidered bedspreads' (p. 27) which are turned down nightly by a steward. The liner's vertical social organisation becomes evident in the contrast with the quarters assigned to Sol's poorer family:

Our cabin is right at sea level, just as Papa said it would be. When I open the porthole, the water is just below the window. An ocean wave sprays up and soaks my face, and I laugh out loud. ... Our cabin is tiny, but ... what more do we need? (p. 51)

Sol enjoys the outward voyage far more than Lisa does, precisely because he is unused to comfort, service, leisure and plentiful food.

The mood soon changes. The scenes in which the passengers call from the deck to their relatives, who have rowed out from Havana harbour, are among the most powerful in the book. Soon, Lisa's anguished voice tells us: 'We are going back to Germany! I can hardly believe this is real. No country wants us. Cuba, America, even Canada has refused us' (p. 153). Any expectation of today's readers that Canada, with its well-known policies of multiculturalism, would have been a likely haven for Jewish refugees is proved wrong. Indeed, between 1933 and 1945 Canada admitted the fewest Jews of any Allied nation, and the *St Louis* has become an emblem of that shame.

I turn now to a text in which themes of war and persecution subtly colour a narrative set in the 1930s. *Hetty Dorval* (1947) was the first book by British Columbian author Ethel Wilson. The narrator, Frankie Burnaby, writing in 1946 when she is in her twenties, tells of her experiences growing up in Lytton, BC, including her first meeting with a woman named Hetty Dorval. In a pivotal scene at the text's mid-point, Frankie travels to Europe with her mother:

To be on the ocean, out of sight of land, on an actual sea voyage, and to be sixteen, was then very pleasant. One regards it now as through the wrong end of a telescope. ... On the first day of this voyage, when you are not yet initiated, you watch with

respect the passengers being born into this new world which will shortly detach itself from the land world and move off into oceanic space. (Wilson 2005: 62)

The shifting pronouns and tenses allow Wilson to overlay multiple temporalities. The first sentence is in the past tense but the second emphasises the remoteness of that past moment, referring to the narrating self as 'one' and using the nautical image of the telescope to visualise the narrative technique. Then the narrated self is addressed in the second person, as if she is a separate individual. This aligns the reader with that younger self, needing initiation into how things work on a ship.

Frankie soon develops a sense of herself as a confident traveller:

you are sixteen. You have joined a small mobile aristocracy. ... The lurch and plunge of the ship, the walloping slap of the ocean upon its side, and the buffeting winds are part of your delusion and your enjoyment. ... The dining saloon is the seventh heaven, and you who have all your life helped with the dinner dishes at home, now gorge yourself in a superior and affluent manner (it costs no more). (pp. 62-3)

The apparent distance between the worldly-wise narrator and the overexcited teenager is not only an effect of her accumulation of experience – it is also an effect of war. The onset of World War II has made the period of Frankie's youth seem to belong to another world – one in which sea voyages were associated with pleasure and not with escape, attack or peril.

Yet even during the crossing she makes at sixteen, there is an atmosphere of menace. The beautiful Hetty Dorval, whom Frankie has not seen for several years, is also on board. Under cover of darkness, Hetty approaches Frankie and her mother and whispers: 'I am marrying General Connot as soon as we land' (pp. 65-6). Her alliance with a older, military man offers her something crucial: "I want security", her voice trembled a little, "I want it

badly, and you can take it from me if you talk about me'" (p. 66). Frankie's mother ensures Hetty's safety: 'she was quick to see and quick to sympathise. Women, and board-ship, and gossip – and Hetty must have known that she was too conspicuous to escape' (p. 66). Yet eventually, Frankie and her mother place Hetty in a situation of great danger. After General Connot's death, Hetty considers marrying a man named Rick but Frankie prevents this. Hurrying through the London night to rescue Rick, as she sees it, Frankie mentally connects Hetty with the coming conflict and experiences a prevision of the city reduced to 'craters, rubble and death' (p. 97). Afterwards, Hetty turns to another man with a German (perhaps a Jewish) name, Jules Stern, and they leave for Vienna. The story concludes with these chilling lines: 'Six weeks later the German army occupied Vienna. There arose a wall of silence around the city, through which only faint confused sounds were sometimes heard' (p. 119).

The reason for Frankie's action is that her mother has destroyed her trust in Hetty by transmitting a piece of gossip. She has heard a story about a 'girl' who she believes was Hetty and who, in Shanghai, seduced the affections of a man from his wife. When the wife killed herself, 'the husband was distracted but the girl calmly left him and went away without any warning on one of the *Empress* boats with a rich oil man' (p. 92). That ship would likely have been Canadian Pacific's *Empress of Japan* (1930) which sailed between western Canada and Asia and was renamed *Empress of Scotland* after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. This subtle reference might further associate Hetty with conflict and death. More obviously, the reiterated image of a woman escaping on a liner with a wealthy man is enough to damn Hetty in Frankie's eyes.⁷

Rite of Passage

The voyage as transformative experience for an individual passenger, which is explored in *Hetty Dorval*, is likewise the focus of numerous other texts that were either written or set during the peak periods of leisure travel by liner – that is, the interwar decades and the 1950s (see Hammill 2020). Among the Canadian examples is Jovette-Alice Bernier's *La chair décevante* (1931), which scandalised readers and critics because of its daring representation of a woman's sensuality. In form the novel resembles a personal journal. At one point, the recently widowed protagonist, Didi Lantagne, embarks on a voyage to Europe, describing herself as 'une femme qui voyage pour ne pas mourir d'ennui' (Bernier 1931: 48). In his analysis of the novel's opening, Adrien Rannaud draws attention to Didi's repeated references to boredom, noting: 'Didi adopte ici une posture qu'elle conservera tout au long du roman, celle de l'attente'. Rannaud adds that this has advantages for the writing self: 'le personnage est plongé dans une inaction qui lui permet d'observer le monde' (2018: 101). Soon, though, Didi experiences the phenomenon of sea change, whereby the marine environment in combination with the motion of the ship and the on-board social atmosphere generates shifts in the passengers' behaviour and sense of self:

La vague fait des turquoises dans le lointain; mais ces lamentos du vent à travers les cordages ...

Je regarde à la proue s'enregistrer les distances. Le bercement est agréable, quand on enfonce un peu; tellement agréable que je ne dors pas si bien, la nuit, quand le vent tombe tout à fait et que la marée s'amortit: habitude.

La mer me fait déjà des caprices. (Bernier 1931: 52, ellipsis in original)

Part of the transformation is due to her attraction to a fellow passenger, Eugène Addy. Soon she realises: 'je voudrais maintenant voir durer cette traversée qui me fut un cauchemar en m'embarquant. Habitude ... habitude' (p. 58, ellipsis in original). Didi accustoms herself to her intimacy with Addy just as she had accustomed herself to the movement of the ship. Historian Paul Ashmore, analysing an archived passenger diary from 1930, reflects that:

Considering a form of mobility where being mobile is temporally and spatially stretched out ... allow[s] for a focus upon the processuality of the passenger, whereby the passenger is not understood as a pre-formed entity that then moves across space, but is actively formed and reformed in the process of passengering. (2013: 609)

In Bernier's novel, the human and non-human materialities of the shipboard environment combine to produce a change in Didi's outlook and, in turn, a change in her sense of self. Texts such as this articulate the development of a passenger's identity over the course of the voyage and beyond, tracing the impact of the sea voyage on later phases of the person's life.

A similar strategy is used in Michael Ondaatje's *The Cat's Table* (2011), set in 1954 aboard the SS *Oronsay*, an Orient Line ship on which an eleven-year-old named Michael makes the three-week journey from Colombo to Tilbury. In most of the texts I am discussing an ocean journey forms the opening of a narrative or an interlude in the story. Occasionally, a novel closes with the departure of a ship, as in Michelle Le Normand's *Le nom dans le bronze* (1933).⁸ In *The Cat's Table*, by contrast, the journey extends for the length of the book, although Michael interpolates scenes from his later life, showing how each was influenced by what happened on the *Oronsay*.

The name Michael invites us to read this text as semi-autobiographical, and Ondaatje did indeed leave Ceylon for England on the *Oronsay* in 1954. Yet the carefully crafted, often fantastical scenes and plot lines in *The Cat's Table*, together with its lyricism and pellucid dialogue, reveal its fictional nature. The main chapters are told in the first person, from the overarching point of view of the middle-aged Michael yet frequently immersing the reader in the perspective of his eleven-year-old self. The prefatory chapter, by contrast, refers to Michael as 'he', whilst using 'I' to emphasise the narrator's separation from this imperfectly remembered self:

I try to imagine who the boy on the ship was. Perhaps a sense of self is not even there in his nervous stillness in the narrow bunk, ... as if he has been smuggled away accidentally, with no knowledge of the act, into the future. (Ondaatje 2012: 5)

At this point, rather than possessing an individual identity, the boy seems to embody potential. He soon sees that the voyage and the ship afford possibilities for self-creation: 'On the *Oronsay* ... there was the chance to escape all order. And I reinvented myself in this seemingly imaginary world' (p. 17).

This new life is made possible by the remarkable characters seated along with Michael at the cat's table – 'the *least* privileged place' (p. 10) – for meals. Among them are two other boys and several adults, including Mr Nevil, a shipbreaker. He tells the boys 'how an ocean liner could be broken down into thousands of unrecognisable pieces' (p. 97), observing: 'it was painful to realise that nothing was permanent, not even an ocean liner' (p. 98). He describes helping dismantle 'the most beautiful ship ever built', the *Normandie*, and explains:

But somehow even *that* was beautiful ... because in a breaker's yard you discover anything can have a new life, be reborn as part of a car or railway carriage, or a shovel blade. You take that older life and you link it to a stranger. (pp. 98-9, ellipsis in original)

Mr Nevil's story is presented in counterpoint with that of Mr Daniels, a botanist who nurtures new life through his "garden' on the ship' (p. 58), a collection of medicinal plants from Borneo and Sumatra that he tends using sprinklers and artificial light. The boys identify Mr Daniels with Noah and, indeed, the apparent incompatibility of gardening with sea travel might suggest that the shipboard garden has a purely metaphorical meaning. Catherine Delmas observes that in *The Cat's Table* 'the ship is a diasporic trope, all the more so as it carries a garden deep in its hold' (2016: 22), and notes that 'geographies of displacement are illustrated by the metaphor of botany, *i.e.* the motif of uprootedness, transplantation for both people and plant species' (p. 19). But the transport of plants also has meaning on the literal level, and points to the intertwining of science with imperial commerce. We might think, for instance, of the trade in tea, coffee, and rubber, all commodity crops that were introduced to Ceylon when British planters arrived. Mr Daniels takes plants in the opposite direction, from his home country to the imperial centre, for commercial purposes. Horticulture and liner travel seem, after all, thoroughly compatible.

One of Mr Daniels' more dangerous plants is apparently used to drug Michael's cousin Emily as part of a complicated plot strand involving a murder and a suicide. Decades later, Michael visits Emily, now living on an island off western Canada, and they try to make sense of what happened:

Over the years, confusing fragments, lost corners of stories, have a clearer meaning when seen in a new light, a different place. I remembered how Mr Nevil spoke of separating the remnants from dismantled steamers in a breaker's yard to give them a new role and purpose. So I found myself no longer with Emily, on Bowen Island, but within those events in the past, trying to recall. (Ondaatje 2012: 350)

The meanings of the journey, gradually revealing themselves over a long period, are identified in this passage with the material fragments of an actual ship. The alluring Emily becomes the locus of meaning for Michael, and the inspiration for his writing career. On Bowen Island she says that in his books she has recognised places and events from their shared past. Michael observes: 'I was no longer at the Cat's Table. But for me Emily was still the unreachable face' (p. 353). The book then ends with a scene in which the *Oronsay* passengers disembark and Michael watches Emily disappear. This closing passage is suggestive of the ultimate impossibility of capturing the full significance of the journey through narrative.

Glamour

Stephen Gundle suggests that glamorous subjects are constructed through 'association with a range of qualities including ... beauty, sexuality, theatricality, wealth, dynamism, notoriety, movement, and leisure' (Gundle: 2008 6). All these qualities are evoked in shipping companies' promotional discourses, and some fictional accounts work to reinforce these received narratives of the mystique of the liner. One example is Bryn Turnbull's *The Woman Before Wallis* (2020) which reimagines the life of Thelma Morgan, lover of Edward, Prince of Wales and wife of the shipping magnate Lord Furness. The novel opens with the

timestamp: 'October 9, 1934. RMS *Empress of Britain*' (Turnbull 2020: 9). Thelma, having unwisely left Edward to the care of her friend Wallis Simpson, is returning to America to support her sister, Gloria Vanderbilt, in her custody battle. The case created a media sensation and Thelma is pursued by reporters as she boards. During the voyage, she is continually aware of other passengers speculating about her:

The first-class lounge was a large, opulent space with an illuminated stained-glass ceiling and overstuffed damask armchairs. A pianist, seated at a glossy Steinway, played music that muted the voices of the other passengers. Across the room, Thelma watched a trim woman in a tweed suit lean forward, raising her eyebrows as she whispered something to her dining companion. (p. 168)

In this novel, the liner is associated with gossip and publicity, with wealth and power. The function of the *Empress of Britain* is to set the tone of high society glamour.

Canadian Pacific's *Empress of Britain* is likewise the setting for the opening scenes of *Trop Tard* (1942) by Montreal author Adrienne Maillet. The prologue is narrated by an authorial persona who represents Maillet. During her return voyage from a European holiday, the narrator comes to know and admire a fellow French-Canadian, the intelligent and exceptionally beautiful Suzanne Nevers: 'J'allais jusqu'à la destiner au rôle d'héroïne d'un de mes romans' (Maillet 1942: 11). The narrator doesn't reveal that she is a writer, but on the last day at sea, Suzanne discovers a book in the ship's library with her new friend's name on the spine. The title, *Peuvent-Elles Garder Un Secret?*, is actually the title of Maillet's first novel. This metafictional reference draws attention to the process of writing and the textuality of the represented world; at the same time, it lends an impression of authenticity

to the narrative which follows. Suzanne eventually gives the narrator her diary for the period 1928 to 1939, and the diary forms the main part of the novel.

On the ship, Suzanne is repeatedly seen writing in her journal. This is not the only way in which the liner becomes a site for creativity. The narrator is inspired by the marine environment, absorbed in 'la contemplation de la mer, qui m'a toujours fascinée' (p. 9) and getting up at dawn to see the early light on the water. She initially looks forward to 'quelques jours de bienfaisante paresse, sans me soucier de rien ni de personne' (p. 5). But she is unable to relax since her professional instincts come into play and she spends much time overhearing conversations, observing her fellow passengers and planning a novel. Most of the onboard scenes take place among the deckchairs; the configuration of the liner's social space enables chance meetings, and it is these which generate creativity. The focus is on the romance of female friendship, not on heterosexual romance: Suzanne is unresponsive to the men who pursue her, although their commentary – such as 'je viens de découvrir la plus ravissante femme du monde' (p. 6) – is important in investing Suzanne with glamorous desirability.

Maillet and Turnbull use *The Empress of Britain* to establish an ambience of romance and glamour, but the ship does not take on any further meanings as their narratives unfold. Other writers invoke the supposed glamour of the ocean liner only to dispel it. In Margaret Atwood's *The Blind Assassin* (2000), the elderly narrator, Iris, recalls her upbringing and marriage during the interwar decades. Iris takes her first sea journey during her honeymoon, on Cunard's RMS *Berengaria*: 'So this is the ocean, I thought. It did not seem as profound as it should be' (Atwood 2000: 246). She cannot embody the glamour that she feels is expected of her: 'I felt rumpled and grubby, and of minor interest' (p. 245). A longer section of the novel concerns a crossing on Cunard's celebrated RMS *Queen Mary*. Atwood

includes an excerpt from the Toronto society magazine *Mayfair* about the *Queen Mary's* maiden voyage in 1936. *Mayfair's* editor J. Herbert Hodgins, enthuses: 'I have searched for the proper adjective. She has been called marvellous, thrilling, magnificent, regal, stately, majestic and superb'. But, he concludes: 'the *Queen Mary* is impossible of description: she must be seen and "felt", and her unique shipboard life participated in' (Hodgins 1936: 26). All great liners attracted such hype but the *Queen Mary* was the object of particular excitement because of the long delays in her construction and the ultimate hope that she would restore Britain's maritime prestige. In his reference to the unrepresentability of the ship, Hodgins echoes many other writers on the great liners. Yet his gesture seems less an acknowledgement of the complexity of the liner's meanings and more an assertion of his own privileged position as one of the envied passengers on the maiden voyage.

Atwood sends four of her characters on the trip. Iris's wealthy industrialist husband, Richard, insists: 'He says we can't miss it', Iris reports to her lover, Alex. 'He says it's the event of the century'. Alex comments:

The century's only a third finished. And even so, I'd have thought that little spot was reserved for the Great War. Champagne by moonlight can hardly compete with millions dead in the trenches. Or how about the influenza epidemic. (Atwood 2000: 345)

Alex's commentary on privilege is also a commentary on historical narrative and the impossibility of knowing, as an event unfolds, what its later significance will be. After all, the maiden voyage of the *Titanic* was anticipated in almost exactly the same terms as that of the *Queen Mary*. Iris offers a counterpoint to Hodgins' hyperbole:

The *Queen* was the largest and most luxurious ocean liner ever built, or that's what was written in all the brochures. It was an epoch-making event, said Richard. ... The public couldn't get enough of the *Queen Mary*. It was described and photographed within an inch of its life, and decorated that way too, with strip lighting and plastic laminates and fluted columns and maple burr – costly veneers everywhere. (p. 377)

Certainly, the ship was highly popular with the travelling public. Yet there was intense debate about its styling. Cunard did not embrace modern design in the way that the French Line had done with the *Normandie*, launched in 1932. The art critic Clive Bell was among those who disliked the *Queen Mary's* eclectic interiors, writing contemptuously of 'the persons who have disfigured this beautiful ship with their titterings in paint, wood, glass, plaster and metal' (Bell 1936: 660). Did Iris, as a young woman, really share this subversive view, or does her commentary derive from the more knowing perspective of later life?

Richard's disappointment is not with the ship but with his own status on it: he 'couldn't get the dinner reservations he wanted at the Verandah Grill, he wasn't meeting the people he'd wanted to meet' (Atwood 2000: 377-8). The social and spatial organisation of the liner sorts passengers and restricts the kinds of encounters that they can have. The passenger might not be able to embody the onboard self they have imagined in advance on the basis of glamorising publicity materials. Iris comments on 'the looting that went on, all over the ship, on the day we sailed into port' (p. 379), describing how passengers took everything with the ship's monogram on, from silverware to towels:

These people needed something to remember themselves by. An odd thing, souvenir-hunting: *now* becomes *then* even while it is still now. You don't really

believe you're there, and so you nick the proof, or something you mistake for it.

I myself made off with an ashtray. (p. 379)

The preoccupations of all the texts I have been discussing seem to crystallise in these lines. The travelling self and the narrating self apparently become separated even during the duration of the voyage, as one watches the other and prepares a story. The desire for physical souvenirs points, once again, to the impossibility of comprehending the full grandeur (or occasionally, horror) of an ocean liner journey while it is in progress, and the equal impossibility of fully recreating the experience in textual form after the journey is completed.

Holiday

The post-war decades were the last years of the ocean-going liners. They were being converted so as to accommodate more passengers and fares were now much lower. In his poems *Europe*, about a transatlantic trip in the early 1950s, and *Atlantis*, based on a similar vacation taken around a decade later, Louis Dudek narrates the liner in the context of mass tourism. The archive files for *Atlantis* contain annotated maps and brochures which show that Dudek followed standard itineraries and joined several organised tours.⁹ Yet both poems are critical – even contemptuous – of the tourist vision and of the poet's fellow passengers. Take the opening of *Europe*:

Cleaving out through the clean St. Lawrence,
cellophane sweeps crisp with contemporaneity,
the shores receding . . .
going out to sea . . .

Bridge

parties in the lounge,

and tourist chatter:

Time's newest, flimsiest, cheapest crinkles

unwrapping Vacation Tours (Dudek 1991: 21, ellipses in original)

The liner has not yet attained the greatness that Dudek endows it with in the lines quoted from *Atlantis* at the start of this article. Even the river seems to lack meaning, even though the St Lawrence has been invested with so much significance in previous Canadian – and especially Quebecois – texts.¹⁰ Dudek's cellophane comparison at first seems to evoke the allure which this product possessed when it was first produced in the 1920s. Yet Dudek's verse literally swings on the 'bridge', a word with a double meaning in this context, and in the following lines, cellophane becomes flimsy and cheap, denoting a form of travel which crinkles up centuries of European culture into a rapidly consumable package. Indeed, the mass production of plastics during the war changed the semiotics of cellophane: as Judith Brown notes, 'what once appeared new, glamorous, and a link to the modern design world, was now cheap, disposable, and a sign of impoverishment' (2009: 168).

Dudek's speaker satirically invokes the traditional motif of the journey as passage from innocence to experience:

Having boarded the ship as an innocent

I had not realized that an ocean crossing

is one of our fucking institutions ...
who's making who tonight, that's the question,
we are all caught in the damned human maelstrom,
forgetting the ocean, the thing doesn't matter
except as a place to feel ourselves adrift in (1991: 44)

The speaker has a split identity: firstly, as passenger, sharing with the others a tendency to focus only on the self, and secondly, as poet, able to see that the ocean does matter. The discovery of its power is the primary revelation which the speaker experiences: 'I had not known the sea would be this splendid' (p. 32). Of the 98 short poems that make up *Europe*, as many as 33 are set on the outward and return voyages. On the way back, the passengers include some Italians and Greeks, 'emigrants, the raw matter / of democracy' (p. 144). Dudek reflects that the returning North Americans might share the emigrants' surprised response to their destination, which has become 'Somehow a bigger place than we left it: / a country with certain resources' (p. 145). Europe is now 'behind us' and the tourists are already discarding their temporarily leisured identities because 'we have work to do' (p. 145).

In *Atlantis*, published thirteen years later, Dudek was preoccupied with the idea of the 'infinite poem'. As Graham Jensen observes, the later poem 'would continue to wrestle with many of the formal and thematic issues that the first had merely introduced' (2012: 49). Ocean rhythms are once again dominant; Brian Trehearne writes of the 'poetics of accumulation' in *Atlantis*, discussing this in relation to the way that Dudek's successive poetic projects are presented as continuations, and the way that both *Europe* and *Atlantis* seem to proceed via 'a haphazard gathering up of fragments' (1999: 244).

Accumulation is the basis of tourist practice: the collection of impressions, experiences and souvenirs. Ultimately Dudek's tourists long to assemble new selves:

I will tell you what it is with the society of ship-folk

They make the effort to mix, out of baser elements,

the cheap coin of their private lives,

a new reality, but cannot (1967: 5)

The poet figure, however, succeeds in accumulating enough images and insights to compose a poem. In *Atlantis*, on the return journey, the poet is writing in a cabin:

Only in the reflection of portholes

Gulls

flash across mirror, a dumb sequence.

The sea as an *escritoire*. (1967: 145)

Both *Europe* and *Atlantis* demonstrate the potential of the ocean liner as an inspiring subject for art, even while subjecting it to critique. So too do the other texts I have examined in this article.

In these texts, the liner is an object of fascination, attachment or terror. It transforms from a machine into a metaphor – and yet it also remains a machine, a physical artefact. Poets insist on paying attention to the actual sea rather than what it has been made to stand for – 'There is the sea. It is real' writes Dudek in the last line of *Atlantis* (1967: 151). Likewise, they attend to the material reality of the ocean liner as well as its symbolic resonance as ark, refuge, prison or stage. Deckchairs, portholes, libraries and pianos indicate the affordances of the liner as social and cultural space. The ship becomes a place, yet it also represents loss

of place in many Canadian narratives of emigration and diaspora. The liner can also be a space of transformation, of learning or of creativity. The temporality of Canadian ocean liner narratives is most often recursive in structure. Narrators revisit their shipboard experiences at different points in their lives, tracing the effects of these journeys on their later identities. Voyages restart, return unexpectedly to their origin points, or are repeated. Some protagonists long to be in a permanent state of mobility: 'Existence becomes identified, in a trip round the world, with the P. and O.' writes Sara Jeanette Duncan. 'Life condenses itself ever after into a desire to go again' (1890: 302).

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Notes

¹ Ocean liners and purpose-built cruise ships are very different in design. The liner has extensive storage capacity and a deep draft to withstand rough seas. Its accommodation is maximised using space below waterline and divided into classes to cater for emigrants (or budget tourists) and the luxury market. The cruise ship has a shallower draft for entry into smaller ports and its accommodation is usually one-class with windows in all cabins. See Finamore and Wood 2018.

² See for instance Alice Munro's story 'The View From Castle Rock' (2005), set in 1818, and Sarah Ellis's *Prairie as Wide as the Sea: The Immigrant Diary of Ivy Weatherall* (2001) which opens with a 1926 steamer crossing. Ellis's children's novel is part of Scholastic Canada's 'Dear Canada' series; other titles cover Victorian emigrant voyages.

³ In de la Roche's *Finch's Fortune* (1931), Adeline's sons and grandson travel by liner to visit family in Europe. There is a brief description of the journey.

⁴ Duncan wrote again about a liner journey in the story 'A Mother in India' from *The Pool in the Desert* (1903).

⁵ Pratt also wrote some short poems about ocean-going steamships: for instance, 'Loss of the Steamship Florizel' (1923).

⁶ Pratt's poems are therefore the only texts covered in this article which have been extensively discussed by critics in terms of their representation of liners. There is also a small body of scholarship discussing Ondaatje's presentation of the liner. With the remaining texts, only passing reference is made by critics to their depiction of liners. For reasons of space, I do not cite all this material; instead I prioritise reference to the maximum number of primary texts.

⁷ I have not yet identified any extended representations of liners in Quebecois war writing, but for a short account of a liner returning to Canada from France at the outbreak of war, see Routier 1940: 156.

⁸ In the closing scene the protagonist, having broken with her Anglophone lover because of her commitment to French Canada, leaves on a trip to France. Rannaud, comparing the novel with others which represent a ship's departure, observes: "Le Normand déplace ici le point de vue. Ses personnages ne se situent pas sur le bateau: ils restent sur le quai, spectateurs de la villégiature" (2018: 242). "Le départ d'un navire", he adds, "constitue le spectacle d'une soirée d'été et centralise toutes les sociabilités d'une petite ville" (p. 242). The novel reflects, at the start and end, on the pleasures of travel and how far they depend on the presence of a romantic partner. On scenes of departure by boat from Quebec, see also Lacroix 2014: 23-8.

⁹ Library and Archives Canada, LMS-0167 1990-07, Box 33, File 2 (*Atlantis* draft and Naples memorabilia folder B).

¹⁰ Broadly speaking, the St Lawrence has a particular prominence in Quebec's literature because of the geographical organisation of the province around the river. Scenes featuring shipping tend to be riparian rather than oceanic. This produces a marked contrast with writing from Canada's maritime provinces or from British Columbia.

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