



Scandalous Bodies: Diasporic Literature in English Canada (TransCanada)

Smaro Kamboureli

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Scandalous Bodies is an impassioned scholarly study both of literature by diasporic writers and of the contexts within which it is produced. It explores topics ranging from the Canadian government's multiculturalism policy to media representations of so-called minority groups, from the relationship between realist fiction and history to postmodern constructions of ethnicity, from the multicultural theory of the philosopher Charles Taylor to the cultural responsibilities of diasporic critics such as Kamboureli herself.

Smaro Kamboureli proposes no neat or comforting solutions to the problems she addresses. Rather than adhere to a single method of reading or make her argument follow a systematic approach, she lets the texts and the socio-cultural contexts she examines give shape to her reading. In fact, methodological issues, and the need to revisit them, become a leitmotif in the book. Theoretically rigorous and historically situated, this study also engages with close reading—not the kind that views a text as a sovereign world, but one that opens the text in order to reveal the method of its making. Her practice of what she calls negative pedagogy—a self-reflexive method of learning and unlearning, of decoding the means through which knowledge is produced—allows her to avoid the pitfalls of constructing a narrative of progress. Her critique of Canadian multiculturalism as a policy that advocates what she calls “sedative politics” and of the epistemologies of ethnicity that have shaped, for example, the first wave of ethnic anthologies in Canada are the backdrop against which she examines the various discourses that inform the diasporic experience in Canada.

Scandalous Bodies was first published in 2000 and received the Gabrielle Roy Prize for Canadian Criticism.

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