# Introduction

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In her 1991 book *Splitting Images: Contemporary Canadian Ironies*, Linda Hutcheon discusses Geoff Miles's *Foreign Relations: Re-W/riting a Narrative in Parts* as a work that evokes, not the gaze, but the glance, the glance *askance*. Miles's work is a series of photographic images and texts dealing with the experience of (post-)colonization, Canada's in particular. The central image in the series, Hutcheon explains, "is a soaring view upwards of the Trans-America building in San Francisco—its formal and cultural associations probably equally divided between American-ness/modernity and phallic power/presence; a large Marlboro cigarette billboard adds a sign of consumer capitalism". The photograph to the left of Miles's central image "appears to represent a naked woman in a pose that suggests—perhaps by contiguity with that phallic building next to it—sensual abandon." Hutcheon points out, however, that Miles's juxtaposition of phallic power and prostrate woman is intensely ironic, for "this is no living, flesh-and-blood sensuous woman, but a stone statue, actually part of a bench at Mount Pleasant Cemetery in Toronto" (115). On the other side of the central Trans-America image "is a representation of two more stone figures, one male and one female, captured in a pose that suggests arrested motion" (115-16). In this image, Hutcheon notes, "death is still present—and not only because of the proximity of that

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cemetery bench: this is a photograph of part of the Toronto War Memorial for South Africa. Race and colonialism are covertly added to gender as implied concerns; war and death are overtly used with irony to 'frame' American capitalist power" (116).

As Hutcheon reads it, Miles's work sets up a looking that displaces modernity's colonizing gaze, even as, in the wink of a disjunction, it foregrounds the assumptions about race, gender, class, etc., in which the gaze implicates us. In the opening interview in this *Mosaic* issue, Mary Ann Caws talks about the "sideways glance" and about "looking, not straight, but looking *askance*" as involving a similar moment of disjunction, "as involving slippage," as she puts it, "because you are not confronting something directly but always from another angle." There is such slippage in the "surrealist look," which entails not "staring at somebody who is passive," as does "the classic male artist looking at the female model," but seeing "something else alongside, something you would not have expected." The disjunction, the slippage, "would then be between what you expect and what, by surprise, you find." And from the disjunction would come the "*unease*" that makes evocation of the askance glance so "resolutely political" (116, emph. Hutcheon's).

In part, the essays in this *Mosaic* issue are critical takes on "the gaze." As distinct from the glance, the gaze reduces looking to a single, disembodied, point of view, that of a detached and centralized (male) spectating subject. The voyeuristic gaze is what D.R. Koukal analyses in "Sartre/Réage" by way of tracing influences of the Sartrean "Look" in the novel *Story of O*. And the gaze is at issue in Tony Fabijancic's "The Prison in the Arcade: A Carceral Diagram of Consumer Space," where modern (nineteenth-century) consumer spaces, like prisons, are discussed as (pan-)optical designs. "The way sight was deployed within arcades was not different from the way it was deployed within prisons," Fabijancic writes. In both cases, the space was configured so as to conceal carceral intentions, "to subtly control bourgeois subjects by differently emphasizing what was meant by seeing and being seen, allowing for the subjective active power in the former, and eliminating the purely objectifying nature of the latter." In "American Literary Realism and the Problem of *Trompe L'Oeil* Painting," Anne Trubek examines the claim that the literary realist perspective is complicitous with this nineteenth-century consumer capitalist gaze. Her argument, which complicates the claim, is that literary realism attempts in narrative the same "paralogical" perspective that *trompe l'oeil* accomplishes in painting, a perspective that convolutes the division between inside and out.

Blurring the inside/outside distinction releases the hold of modernity's perceptualist and formalist bias: the point is made, in different ways, in this

issue. For instance, surrealism, Mary Ann Caws says, actively implicates the viewer in the artist's looking, so that the viewer, no longer locked into compliance with the gaze, now participates in the work, "has a chance to remake the way that the whole thing is constructed." For Caws, "It's an interactive sport, if you like, the surrealist look." On the participatory nature of looking—and listening—consider the discussion by Linda Hutcheon and Micheal Hutcheon, in the closing interview in this issue, of opera audiences as communities and of operas as having meaning within communities. One aspect of the "participatory" entails blurring the mind/body division, as the Hutcheons remind us in their comments on the physicality, the "bodiliness," of looking and listening and making sound. The audiocentrism that, along with the gaze, separates the world into subjects and objects, is, in important ways, confronted in opera, the Hutcheons suggest. So are issues of disability and the disabled body, issues taken up in a different context by Nicole Markotic in "Oral Methods: Pathologizing the Deaf 'Speaker.'" In Markotic's essay, the "slippage" examined is between a "visual" language, American Sign Language (ASL), and modernity's construction of "orality" as its ideal.

How image and text participate in each other is, for Mary Ann Caws, "one of the most difficult questions [she] can imagine." Caws suggests that *A Humument*, the work she discusses in "Tom Phillips: Treating and Translating," successfully merges the two, makes text into image, and so is a prime example of what W.J.T. Mitchell calls an *imagetext*. In "Translating from Language to Image in Bill Forsyth's *Housekeeping*," Erika Spohrer considers another successful merging of image and text: Forsyth's *Housekeeping*, a film that manages to translate into images the transient and fluid boundaries of Marilynne Robinson's prose. The merging is crucial, Spohrer contends, since Robinson's fluidity "works to decentre and subvert" the conventional masculine and mastering paradigm. In "*The Waste Land*, Liminoid Phenomena, and the Confluence of Dada," Shawn R. Tucker considers Dada, specifically the Dada text *The Waste Land*, as a preeminent instance of image-text confluence, and more. In its weaving together of multiple diverse works, *The Waste Land*, Tucker says, demonstrates the critical—de-centralizing and de-sacralizing—qualities that Victor Turner associates with "liminal" phenomena.

All looking involves viewing the past, and when this viewing is an oblique glance, we are looking for something other than self-presence and the privileging of now. In "Metaphors for Suffereing: Antjie Krog's *Country of My Skull,*" however, Méira Cook asks the difficult question of whether "postmodern" ideas of discontinuity and destabilized subjectivity are "inappropriate when applied to narratives representing the atrocities of a regime

whose cruelties have already been successfully denied by its perpetrators." Cook brings the question to Antjie Krog's text, *Country of My Skull*, which attempts to rewrite stories Krog witnessed as a journalist for the 1995-1998 Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings in South Africa. With reference to Krog's memoir, Cook asks: "Are the devices and feints of postmodernism appropriate to a discourse of witnessing in which to destabilize truth throws into question the testimonies of disenfranchised subjects whose only recourse to the law lies in their being believed in the first place?"

I invite you to enter this rich and challenging *Mosaic* issue. I am particularly pleased to present this issue's interviews with Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon and with Mary Ann Caws.

WORKS CITED

Hutcheon, Linda. *Splitting Images: Contemporary Canadian Ironies*. Toronto: Oxford UP. 1991.