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Interculturalism, Intermediality, and Intertextuality in Andrew Parkin's Another Rendez-Vous

Andrew Parkin's first book of poems, Dancers in a Web (1987) was followed by Yokohama Days, Kyoto Nights (1992), and the English/Cantonese Hong Kong Poems, with Laurence Wong (1997). His major collection, The Rendez-Vous: Poems of Multicultural Experience (2003)\(^1\) is a cross-cultural mosaic in five sections, "Britain," "Canada," "Australia," and "Europe Again," with poems on paintings, music, theatre, cinema, and places where the Anglo-Canadian poet has lived.\(^2\) Parkin, who grew up in Birmingham, England, during the Second World War and graduated from Cambridge, is former editor of the Canadian Journal of Irish Studies, adviser to the Chinese Canadian Writers' association, and president of the Paris Decorative and Fine Arts Society. Traveling regularly between Paris, Vancouver, and Hong Kong, he is a keen observer of the cross-fertilization of cultures, media, and lifestyles in multi-ethnic environments.\(^3\) The concept of "Rendez-Vous" involves intercultural as well as interpersonal encounters. Vancouver, sister city of Yokohama, sent Parkin on a poetry tour to Japan in 1990 and in his Introduction to Another Rendez-Vous\(^4\) he comments on intra- as well as intercultural changes in that society.\(^5\) His poem "Four Treasures" (Hong Kong 65), referring to "[the Chinese scholar's] traditional writing implements (brush, ink, stone, paper)," was posted on the British Columbia transit system for a year.

Language and society construct cultural identity and "it is in poetry," writes Parkin, "that I can discover the language needed to communicate across cultures" (RV, 17). He takes a vertical (historical) as well as global (geographical) view of cultures, recognizing that "[their] interplay […] through language and literature […] is also internal, a piece of cultural autobiography" (RV, 20). The creative individual can fine-tune his or her sensibility through selective responses to stimuli from a variety of cultures and media. Multicultural experience affords a wide range of sympathies and resources, so that Parkin can claim: "I am both myself and the others" (RV, 17). Intercultural cross-fertilization opens new dimensions of social and aesthetic experience. For Parkin, poetry links art, culture, and philosophy: "It is at once the

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1 Abbreviated in the following as RV.
2 For studies of Parkin's work, see Stewart 2011 and 2011a.
3 Parkin observes that "[i]ntercultural encounters' […] are now commonplace for many of us within our own countries and when we travel; we may even become intercultural in our daily living and eating as well as in our reading and appreciation of the arts of many foreign cultures" (2010, 40).
4 Abbreviated in the following as ARV.
5 "The confrontation of old and new is nowhere more apparent than in Japan, where traditional buildings and costumes and customs co-exist with a startling grasp of the newest technology" (ARV, 18).
music, painting, and sculpture of a specific language [and it] expresses simultaneously the emotional and intellectual life of humanity” (ibid.).

Another Rendez-Vous: Poems and Prose from the Cultural Crossroads followed the first Rendez-Vous in 2011. A comparison of the two introductions shows Parkin’s realization of the increasing complexity of multiculturalism and of the socio-political problems caused by cultural and religious difference and dissent. However, the “multicultural or international person” (ARV, 15) who is relatively free of conditioning and alive to new cultural experiences through travel or living abroad can adopt a more positive perspective. “As a contemporary writer living amid rapid cultural change, [Parkin] enjoy[s] cultural mix” (ARV, 17). As a poet, he can select and recombine cultural elements in mixtures that reveal otherwise untapped creative resources. “Diversity of cultures invites diversity of forms” (ARV, 18) and Parkin’s poems are intermedial as well as intercultural. His poetic innovations in Another Rendez-Vous “grew out of my own excitement with an old art [engraving] and a new one [cinema] both practised by Chinese artists” (ARV, 18). The reference is to two long pieces, “Gourds: A Suite of Eighteen Poems” and "Star of a Hundred Years," a "Scenariode" celebrating the career of Sir Run Run Shaw, Chinese film producer and philanthropist. The prose section of Another Rendez-Vous includes two short fictions, "Duel: Text as Jewel," a postmodernist intertextual fable, and "Love in London," a cross-cultural romance ranging from London to Gretna Green to Singapore. "Flash Points" consists of "small fictions, often prose-poems, a métissage [crossbreeding] of forms" (171). Chance encounters, momentary perceptions, and childhood memories recall the cultural hybridization of "Shards" in Parkin’s The Rendez-Vous – “splinters of memory” from which new syntheses can be formed. In both Rendez-Vous volumes, the poet constructs an intercultural and intermedial vision unified by cross-cutting, splicing, and montage.

In "Gourds," Parkin invents dramatic situations to fit mute figures decorating a collection of gourds in his Paris apartment. His creative premise is immersion in Chinese folklore and his Notes provide a rich background of legend and mythology. The silent language of graphic art inscribed on these mini-globes stimulates poetic imagination. As with the "leaf-fringed legend" of Keats’s Grecian Urn, these figures leave a viewer looking into a long-lost cultural world. The ekphrastic challenge of "cold pastoral" is that there is "not a soul to tell" (Keats) what the silent images signify. Frozen in enigmatic gestures, their immobility invites the poet to expand tableaux into narratives and ekphrastically translate old legends into new. Parkin collaborates with the unknown Chinese engraver: "I needed to listen to what he said about his silent craft and art." Instead of focusing on a statuesque Urn, he conjures poetic ideas from

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7 Elleström succinctly defines intermediality as "the phenomenon whereby the properties of all media partly intersect" (2010, 4). Petho observes that "intermediality" has emerged as one of the most challenging concepts in media theory [...] with no shortage of various taxonomies and definitions" (2011, 1). Rajewsky names a bewildering assortment, such as "multimedality, plurimediality, crossmediality, infra-mediality, media-convergence, media-integration, media-fusion, [and] hybridization" (2005, 44). Underlining the inter in intermediality, she stresses "[the] crossing of borders between media" (46). All three of Rajewsky’s major categories, medial transposition, media combination, and intermedial references (51-52) – especially the first two – apply to or overlap with Parkin's "Scenariode."
gourds that can be picked up and revolved in one's hand and mind. The engraver, who "drill[s], cut[s], burn[s] into the mystery of presen ces" (ARV, 29), outlines human emotions in symbolic gestures, from which the poet invents amatory or military situations. He gives utterance to "dream voices" within himself, as he translates Chinese pictures into English words. The poems that emerge are more than polished equivalents of original graphics: they express a subtle bond between artists that reaches across cultural boundaries to transmute the art of one culture into poetry in another.

As he contemplates the images incised on the gourds, Parkin enters "a symbolic world of dreams" (30, l. 1) and elaborates "the fragments of a tale" (30, l. 2). Incorporating the creative process within the finished work, he creates a dialogue between "the Engraver" and "the Poet" that crosses intermedial boundaries. The mute minimalism of the visual source -- "nothing but ink-black images" (29, l. 3) -- leaves the poet's imagination free: "these dry shells can lure and tempt me into words" (30, l. 4). Feeling his way through uncharted territory, he "seek[s] a course of stepping stones across a dividing stream" (30, l. 14), a route leading back from graphic lines on hollow surfaces to sources deeply embedded in Chinese culture -- "How deep are symbols in the blood and breath of folk?" (30, l. 9) -- and forward to fleshed-out versions in a foreign medium. The metaphor of "stepping stones" (30, l. 14) underlines the cross-cultural nature of his quest.

Knowing his legendary motifs "by heart," the engraver transposed "lines learned in the eye's lens, in sinew, muscle" (29, l. 6) into figures on hollow shells. The poet, in turn, struggles to activate still images that point to recurring cycles of human experience. There is a Taoistic enfolding of opposites in "Gourds": the "elegance and mystery" (30, l. 17) of graphic images invite correlative acts of verbal art. The "inner dark" of hollow gourds -- or of a dreaming head -- is "a space far greater than outer surfaces" (32, l. 17). The poet emulates the incisive art of engraving in lucid profiles of imagined passions. In Taoist philosophy, inside matches outside, as the sinuous line of a river "wends and winds / like some insistent question in our minds" (33, ll. 5-6). So the engraver "etches his uncertainties / across the virgin surface of a gourd" (33, ll. 11-12) and their very lack of reference stimulates gestation in the poet's mind. Gourds contain "seeds of rebirth" (32, l. 18) that give rise to poetic images and a single gourd "contain[s] seeds galore, each seed another dream" (38, l. 22). So the concise graphic unit germinates, multiplying creative possibilities as the poet "[turns] a gourd around like a question in the mind," (35, l. 17) setting ideas in motion.

Motifs of circularity run throughout "Gourds:" "All is noticed, all engraved, all unspoken, / and all unrolled around a gourd" (38, ll. 23-24). The visual medium naturally has more stringent limits of time and space than the verbal and the hidden hemispheres of the gourds invite speculation on invisible scenes. Their globular shape and germinative potential are fertile sources of metaphor. A "bottle gourd" (37, l. 22) conjures up "a big womb / with a smaller womb on top" (37, ll. 23-24) a dual image of generation, of one thing coming out of another. Spheres also symbolize the rotating cycle of seasons. An engraved image of lotus blossoms on still water is associated with the spiritual search for nirvana:

Below the great flowers afloat,
a curved stem holds a seed case
closed tight as a clam.
I move closer to the truth and I know why:  
I am closer now to those I love.  
This is the inner verse, scored with the mind's  
fine needles on the unseen membrane  
across the under-surface of this gourd of dreams. (41, ll. 24-31)

Passionate meditation on interlinked forms of art and nature evokes such unexpected realizations from the depths of the unconscious. A final phase of "Gourds" concerns the Eight Immortals, images of Fate characterized by symbolic objects, instruments, or weapons. "They are the imagination of the folk," the mythic dimension of Chinese culture.

In "Last Reel," in Dancers in a Web, Parkin makes film a metaphor for history and filmic montage pervades The Rendez-Vous as imagistic and structural technique. In "Star of a Hundred Years" (ARV, 53-64), he invents a hybridized sub-genre, the "Scenariode." Let us be clear about the problems and opportunities of such border crossings. Irina O. Rajewsky, in "Intermediality," spells out the logical limits of "convergence" or "hybridization:"

[T]he author of a text cannot, for example, 'truly' zoom, edit, dissolve images, or make use of the actual techniques and rules of the filmic system; by necessity he remains within his own verbal, i.e., textual, medium […] [A]n 'intermedial gap' – is revealed, one which a given text intentionally displays or conceals, but which […] can never be bridged in the figurative mode […] [A] given media product cannot use or genuinely reproduce elements or structures of a different medial system through its own media-specific means; it can only evoke or imitate them. […] And yet it is precisely this illusion that potentially solicits in the recipient of a literary text, say, a sense of filmic, painterly, or musical qualities, or – more generally speaking – a sense of a visual or acoustic presence. (2005, 55; my italics)

A poetic text cannot literally incorporate film, although it may simulate film techniques. Parkin's sub-titling "Star" a"Scenariode" is a largely metaphorical bridging of disparate media. Axel Englund notes that "[a] piece of verbal writing […] has the ability to meta-reflectively thematize its own medial status and make the metaphorical claim of belonging to another medium" (2010a, 76).10 But Parkin's Scenariode, framing film within the poetic structures of an Ode combined with staccato structures of a scenario, makes no such claim. It is a new literary form, not a migrant to or from another medium. By transposing formal aspects of cinematography into the verbal medium, it expands the medial range of poetry.11 Yet the Scenariode is an attempt at intermedial convergence rather than mere reference: one medium (poetry) borrows heavily from the forms, rhythms, and compositional processes of the other (cinematography) to set up an oscillating relation between them. The poetic mode is

9 Petho observes that "moving pictures can incorporate forms of all other media, and can initiate fusions and dialogues' between the distinct arts‘ (2011, 1).
10 Englund refers to "the Aristotelian definition of metaphor as 'giving the thing a name that belongs to something else,'" as in "'this piece of music is a poem' or 'this poem is a piece of music'" (2010, 73).
11 Rajewsky, "Intermediality," points out that "'[t]he given product constitutes itself […] in relation to the work, system, or subsystem to which it refers. […] [I]ntermediality designates a communicative-semiotic concept, but here it is by definition just one medium – the referencing medium (as opposed to the medium referred to) – that is materially present" (2005, 55).
internally transformed by semiotic analogy with the rhythms, techniques, and structures of moving pictures. In reading the Scenariode, we remain within the artfully modified, but also disrupted, forms of the Ode. The challenge Parkin poses for himself is to adapt the "language" of film to a poetic mode that conforms as closely as possible to methodologies of movie-making, while retaining a strongly meta-reflective image of the creative process in both media.

In Parkin's Scenariode, cinematic syntax, camera directions, and voice-overs combine with elements of the Pindaric Ode, such as its public and historical scope, choral and dramatic functions. The Ode's eight-line stanzas, with their structured turns and contrasts, are long enough for the poet "to present the images and scenes I wanted and "short enough to keep the poem moving at the necessary filmic pace" ("Preface," 51). This postmodernist form offers new opportunities for a poet who previously "used juxtapositions of comparison and contrast like montage in cinematography as a way of arranging and ordering [his] poems to make a web of interconnections" (RV, 22). Parkin adapts the Ode form with postmodernist brio, rhyming only first and last lines of stanzas to create ongoing echoes, while avoiding undue intricacy. This re-structuring gives flexibility within a poetic framework and melds with the staccato fragmentation of the scenario, noted for its jump-cuts, panoramic or zoom shots, close-ups, dissolves, selective editing, and montage. Parkin's script intersperses directions for actors and cameramen with solidly constructed stanzas. His Scenariode alternates scenes from Chinese history with soliloquies by producer, directors, cameramen, actors, and editors. Incongruous as the conjunction of historical and aesthetic, traditional and modern modes may seem, "the ode is a form that marries well with the cross-cutting and montage found in film" ("Preface," 51). The syncretism of verbal poetics with cinematic forms combines dramatic scenes with cultural reflections. Eisenstein argues that "the cinema [should] follow […] the methodology of language, which allows wholly new concepts of ideas to arise from the combination of two concrete denotations of two concrete objects" (1977, 60) – the method of montage. Directions for scene and sound exploit parallels between linguistic and filmic processes and would allow the Scenariode to be performed by several voices as a radio play.

The virtual movement of reading time is an integral part of the literary medium. Parkin ingeniously combines the triple-stanza construction of the Pindaric Ode (strophe – anti-strophe – epode) with the fragmented structure of the scenario, where cutting, splicing, and montage create ongoing rhythms. The disruption of a conventional genre in one medium by its encounter with incongruous techniques of a materially different medium, such as film, creates an illusion of intermediality that paradoxically highlights divergence along with convergence, throwing the expressive capacities of one medium into relief against another. All the arts today are deeply engaged with each other in processes of evolving, expanding, and claiming new territory. Film, which has had an intimate relation with the literary medium, as in Jean-Luc Godard's movies, has
become a model for proliferating interactions between media. In the current impulse towards border crossing – or at least ekphrastic or referential raids across borders – the literary medium gravitates towards film and film towards literature.

Parkin's Scenariode opens with the strophic sequence of the Pindaric Ode, encapsulating newsreel glimpses of modern Chinese history, while rapid verbal rhythms intensify contrasts, as visual images unreel before the reader's eye. The interaction of poetry and cinema enlivens both syntax and tropes; a photo session is captured in the glancing rhetorical figure of asyndeton: "a count, the smiles, the flash." Such economy of scripting makes for swift changes that throw themes and ideas into focus. Significant historical and cultural patterns emerge from cinematic processing. As in film, "[t]he minimum 'distortable' fragment of nature is the shot; ingenuity in its combinations is montage" (Eisenstein 1977, 5). A film editor soliloquizes: "I cut. I splice. Find tempo, contrasts, links. / I glue metaphors of life to each other" (57, ll. 3-4). Viewing rushes gives him a "cool reprise" unavailable to the theatre director, whose productions are more ephemeral. The film editor can select, reject, and recombine, sustaining momentum and streamlining the story. Film's radically metonymic structure attracts the poet, who ventriloquizes meta-reflectively through the producer: "I covet the camera's rapid eyes / And its long unwavering gaze" (59, ll. 13-14). The camera can encompass a span of history in the "jigsaw pieces" of action that fit together in a scenario. Random events take on meaning in a cinematic context: "All is flux becoming harmony" (59, l. 4). Scanning, selection, and condensation are metonymic keys; the grammar of visual representation in time enables the director "to make the then of history, / The perhaps of legend, the now of current living into film" (58, ll. 4-5). Demanding "a panoramic spectacle – / And calculated rapidity of change" (61, ll. 14-15), he transforms rough footage into meaning, "[cutting] from action to action" and shifting angles, so that "[I]esurably explorations become magical / or fantastic, or 'gritty realism'" (61, ll. 21-22).

Soliloquies express a character's innermost thoughts with maximum conciseness. So Sir Run Run, reviewing his career, reflects on the visual language of silent films:

Photography was my universal grammar;
I absorbed the vocabulary and rhythms
Of ravenous film, a syntax of modernity!
But silent speech! We needed words;
We used captions. Live music gave the mood. (56, ll.11-15)

The verbal images are more than metaphors; they reveal the linguistic basis of cinematography that Eisenstein insists on and also the use of music as emotional

14 Petho observes that "the theory of intermediality […] has brought into the spotlight the intricate interactions of different media manifest in the cinema" (2011, 1).
15 Asyndeton is "a form of verbal compression which consists of the omission of connecting words […] between clauses" (Baldick 1991, 18). This relates to the metonymic interrelation of shots in cinematography.
16 Jakobson observes that 'every since the productions of D.W. Griffith, the art of the cinema, with its highly developed capacity for changing the angle, perspective, and focus of 'shots', has broken with the tradition of the theatre and ranged an unprecedented variety of synecdochic 'close-ups' and metonymic 'set-ups' in general" (1974, 92). With Eisenstein, "these devices in turn were overlayed by a novel, metaphoric 'montage' with its 'lap dissolves' – the filmic similes" (ibid.).
accompaniment in the silent era. Experience gives the producer authority to speak for the medium he has mastered:

All unreels with the strangeness of a dream.
On screen’s different from on stage.
Drama and film, older and younger sister arts,
Both enact our human happiness or tears. (56, ll. 21-24)

Theatre confronts its audience with flesh-and-blood actors; celluloid drama unfolds with the hallucinating vividness of a dream.\textsuperscript{17} But emotional expression crosses borders between media. Avoiding value-judgments, the producer ponders the power of the screen that draws on techniques of stage acting, yet technologically outdoes theatre. Film actors’ soliloquies, presented in close-up, follow theatrical traditions yet probe new paradoxes of illusion and reality, authenticity and masking. While the producer "deal[s] in thought and action in motion, / Made visible" (58, ll. 3-4), the chameleon actor oscillates between performing selves without maintaining any fixed identity: as a creature of the medium he thrives on illusion. "Rapid eye movements of the camera” (61, l. 10) probe inner space, focusing on "a human face / On which the actor writes a history / Of psychological action in a few seconds” (61, ll. 11-13). This wordless language of emotion, revealed by the camera, draws directly on the unconscious.

Dramatized speakers in the Scenariode raise many issues of the film industry, as when Sir Run Run's three brothers engage in dialogue (c. 1950) over the throb of an aircraft engine, while taking a bird's eye view of disaster, development, and commercial opportunity. Parkin transposes verbal images into the equivalent of visual shots and montage in film. The cinematic medium is well equipped to document, record, and analyze events. So Chinese movies show a people their own past and present:

History's our book of changes.
I-Ching sprouts wings that beat slow
Across centuries or whirr so fast
We must adapt, constantly adapt. (62, ll. 12-15)

The rate of change accelerates to a hectic pace. Things happen unpredictably; history reconstructs and interprets. In film, rhythmic re-arrangement of historic episodes creates perception of meaning. Film reels in events and sets the wheels of reflection turning. Reality cannot be directly grasped on screen or in print, but artistic representations can stimulate awareness of socio-cultural and political issues.

In homage to a giant of the industry whose career spans three quarters of a century, Parkin's scenario employs diverse viewpoints and angles. A Hong Kong director sums up Sir Run Run's success: "such a man […] works new ground, / Will grow with a new art form, / Another kind of humanism / Born into ever-evolving technology" (62, ll. 1-4). The new "Renaissance" in Asia needs such a "[m]aster of marketing,” (62, l. 5) whose production and distribution combine popular art with industry. But an actress's soliloquy on the glamour of the medium subsumes methodology in mythology:

\textsuperscript{17} Rajewsky refers to "[an] intermedial experiment that draws […] precisely on the medial difference between film and theatre” (2010, 61).
The gods and goddesses of earth  
And flickering film experimented  
With creative light until one day  
They projected rainbow colour:  
Streaks of night's traffic, neon signs, flesh tones,  
Shining hair, cheong sam silks and brides'  
Brocades shedding splendour on the screens,  
Another history of film! We assisted at its birth. (62-63)

The images encapsulated between the rhyming first and last lines of this stanza are a synthesis of light-color-motion transcending temporal sequence in poetic expression. Craving entertainment after the disasters of 20th-century history, Chinese society benefits from Sir Run Run's success: the profits he reaps from an expanding industry are put to work in educational construction. The wisdom he demonstrates in life allows him to pass on opportunities to others and his genius rises phoenix-like in a new generation of students. In an interview, he philosophizes on what he has achieved and there is a purely filmic touch to the set direction: "HE POINTS TO A LAMP ON THE TABLE. IT LIGHTS" (ARV, 64). Symbolic magic or artful technology? In a final meditation, he looks through the lens of cinematic vision: "I watch the screen of my eyelids / From inside. I marvel at fluid colors and forms. / Out of darkness, the light – and life is won" (64, ll. 20-22).

In Parkin's ontological vision, the power of art to give form to flux creates new awareness of eye and mind. His metaphors connect the protagonist's experience and sense of identity with the movies he has produced. Film structure merges visual, aural, and verbal responses, moving rapidly across vast tracts of space and time or zeroing in on moments that encapsulate history. The Scenariode overlaps with film form in selecting, cutting, and recombining scenes, exploiting parallels between poetic vision and physical/visual/kinetic representation. Synthesizing fragmentary 'shots' in overall vision, Parkin marries cinematic 'language' and swift-changing camera angles to the poetic imagery of the Ode.

"Duel': Text as Jewel" is a Borgesian frame tale that operates on several levels of artifice and intertextuality.18 The "Editor's Preface" is an integral part of the plot with the "editor" as dramatized narrator or masked version of the author. His investigations of a ship's log in the Maritime Museum in Yokohama present puzzling data that resist logical connection. The reader is drawn into trying to join the dots and solve the conundrum, adding specious credibility to conflicting literary-historical data. The investigation concerns Pierre Loti's novel, Madame Chrysanthème (1897), set in the port of Yokohama, in which a French lieutenant makes a short-term marriage with a Japanese girl. Parkin's tactic, like that of the trompe l'oeil painter, is to describe non-existent manuscripts, stamps, or handwriting with maximum graphic detail so as to create verisimilitude and then manipulate the data in a plot that defies logic. His style is a skilful pastiche of scholarly detective work, as in Borges's "The Library of Babel."

18 Bal defines frame tales as "narrative texts in which at the second or third level a complete story is told" and adds that "any text is a patchwork of different strata, bearing traces of different [cultural] communities" (1987, 52; 66).
Focusing on authorship, characterization, and shifting intertextual relations,19 "Text as Jewel" mirrors other texts in its multi-faceted surfaces. Parkin's frame foregrounds fictionality, criss-crossing the borderline between illusion and reality so as to obliterate it. Meticulous clarity of statement only increases the enigma. The "facts" enumerated contradict each other, calling for careful selection and elimination. The editor/narrator tells us: "I had instantly recognized [the] loops and arabesques [of the handwriting] as being those of my friend and distinguished colleague, Michael Bullock, surrealist poet and traveller" (141).20 His teasing precision of style parodies Bullock's in a number of short fictions that walk a vertiginous tightrope between right-brain imagination and left-brain logic.21 One of three factual "NOTES" appended to the text gives a brief biography of Bullock (born 1918) and mentions his mysterious fiction, *The Story of Noire* (1987). Bullock is said to have confirmed that the "arabesques" are his, but to have denied authorship – not surprising as the date on the manuscript is 1923, when Bullock was five years old. Doubts about authorship stimulate curiosity as to how the manuscript came to be written. The Editor's suppositions, cast in logical terms, push coincidence beyond limits. The style of the Preface, like that of Poe or Conan Doyle, trails "clues" like red herrings before the reader. As the author's motive is simply to intrigue, the narrator playfully complicates his text. The interwoven, intertextual fabric of the tale confirms its literary and intercultural parameters.

In the framed "Duel," Chrysanthème, a doubly fictional character, seems about to give herself to the stranger, Bullock, in real life a passionate reader of Loti. Parkin creates a skilful pastiche of Loti's exotic style mixed with Bullock's surrealist fabulation, as the two vie for possession of the "Jewel." Bullock threatens to carry her off to India, scene of his youthful romance with Maya," and claims that she has a daughter, the *femme fatale* or erotic Shadow of his own *Story of Noire*. A fecund intertextuality gives birth to a new Text with a new Jewel at its centre – a "Text as Jewel" that erases distinctions between text and characters. The duel of authors takes place on two levels – erotic and literary – and Chrysanthème may be transformed at the stroke of a pen into Noire. Three characters, real and imagined, perform in a multilevel narrative whose centre of gravity shifts between the two author-characters, now caught in Parkin's textual web, and their Jewel/Anima. "All the world's a stage" as textuality subsumes reality.

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19 According to Foucault, "[t]he frontiers of a book are never clear-cut. […] [I]t is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network" (cited in Hutcheon 1988, 127).

20 Parkin, in "Home and Away in the World," refers enthusiastically to the two-language, intermedial and "transcultural" version of Bullock's *Moons and Mirrors*: "The calligraphy below the modern print [of the cover design] seems like moon beams or reflections of moonlight, just as translation itself is a reflected image of the original text. The beauty of the book as a physical object is peculiarly appropriate to its cross-cultural presence and to the imagined presence of the moon itself. […] The style is full of images and events, in a world where everything is alive and everything is capable of becoming something else" (44-45).


22 See *Randolph Cranstone and the Veil of Maya* (1986). Fifty years after his voyage to India, Bullock used an actual photograph of his youthful sweetheart Maya (named after the Hindu goddess of illusion) on the cover of his novella – thus deconstructing the binary of illusion and reality.
In the embedded tale, the duel with pistols takes place offstage and the shot presumably demolishing the precursor Loti (d. 1923) will let Bullock take over his mistress. Both writers exploit exotic scenes and embody the mysterious East in seductive female characters. Their rivalry expresses an affinity so close that Bullock threatens to capture Loti's Anima or source of creativity. The shot that eliminates one of the rivals leads to a surprising dénouement: "There was a flash of intense light. Madame Chrysanthème was captured on film. Perhaps this photograph would be used for the cover of Loti's memoirs or Bullock's next novel" (144). The camera "shot" suggests that the action takes place on a film set, as well as on deck and in the theatre of the reader's imagination. It symbolizes a flashback to 19th-century literary sources, as in filming Loti's *Mme. Chrysanthème* – or a flash-forward to Bullock's next novel. So "Madame Chrysanthème gazed through the doorway into the creaking, impenetrable darkness of both worlds, of both centuries […] without changing her expression" (ibid.). Her unblinking gaze suggests a timeless erotic source of inspiration; it suspends closure and invites a curious reader to invent the next reel or chapter. The Chrysanthème gene has undergone a series of mutations and may be reborn in film or fiction, as it was in Puccini's opera, *Madame Butterfly* (1904). "Jewel," the archetypal source of literary imagination, changes names and cultures, but continues to inspire creativity.

Like Loti's and Bullock's fictions, Parkin's ""Duel"" is a *writerly text*23 that leaves the reader to resolve its enigma. The *hypocrite lecteur* is invited to pursue the seductive Jewel at the heart of the text and the moment at which the embedded tale ends destroys only part of the illusion. Texts are woven out of texts and draw vitality from fictional characters, proliferating in readers' imaginations, to take on lives of their own. For Borges, "[a] book is not an isolated being: it is a relationship, an axis of innumerable relationships" (*Labyrinths*, 214). The mirroring of Loti's and Bullock's texts in Parkin's intertextual fable24 underlines the duality of "Duel," while providing a third dimension. A fictional reader even suggests that Madame Chrysanthème may have authored the text in which she has a starring role; but eschewing further theory the editor releases his "admittedly slender, albeit baffling" text into the free-floating waters of imagination.

In the prose-poems and sketches of "Flash Points," Parkin experiments with brief but lucid perceptions that reflect on each other without being held together in any preconceived design. The parabolic prose-poem "Light, Dark" apostrophizes the creative force in light and language that "sets the burning bush aflame" (177, l. 1). *Ex nihilo fit:* "Out of nothing but a slight vibration of air you send the word" (177, l. 3) – but that vibration may be the breath of creative consciousness. "Licorice and Jack Frost" (181-183) is a memoir of childhood and a winter visit to the Yorkshire moors, in which licorice is the medium of a boy's ritual sharing with his grandfather. Nos-

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23 Barthes asks: "Why is the writerly our value? Because the goal of literary work […] is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text [...] In this ideal text, the networks are many and interact, without any of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one […]" (1974, 4-5).

24 Postmodern fables of this kind "situate themselves […] in the 'world' of texts and intertexts" (Hutcheon 1988, 125).
Nostalgia for those days is linked with the survivalist adventure of digging a path with a child’s sand-spade through a snowdrift that blocks the front door. But the focal point is the miracle of Jack Frost freezing a dripping scullery tap to build up “a huge cavernous group of icicles […] whose icy fingers were reaching almost to the big stone sink below” (183). The sun suddenly lights up frost’s handiwork, so that “the icicles gleamed even more and seemed to be coloured” (183). This magical moment shines against the drab background of the kitchen sink, symbolizing the transfiguration of reality by imagination. The dazzling image of frost’s agency stands out against the dark backdrop of time and place as a moment that does not fade away, but imprints itself on memory as a clue to creative identity.

T.S. Eliot states that “[w]hen a poet’s mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience” (1951, 287). Parkin’s poetry, interacting with various artistic media and cultural traditions, expresses a wide-ranging poetic consciousness that gives new sense to this dictum. His re-animation of Chinese engravings in “Gourds” affords insights into the plight of women in a sexist society and of men going off to war with virtually no hope of ever returning. In harsh times, Chinese poets and artists kept alive the flame of the human spirit in its struggle for life, love, and survival. Imaginatively entering the world of folk legend inscribed on the gourds, Parkin connects a postmodern poetic sensibility with the expressive power of Chinese tradition. In “Star of a Hundred Years,” cinematic rhythms married to poetic structures illustrate how Chinese film-makers use their medium to engender, as well as entertain. Age-old images of human suffering, passion, and endurance, dramatized in costume films, give the historic profile of a society tempered by perennial civil wars and more recent tragic conflicts. The frame tale, “Duel: Text as Jewel” is poised on an eternally recurring love triangle given postmodern literary piquancy by a subtle layering of artifice and reality. Combining intercultural, intermedial, and intertextual approaches to multicultural experience, Parkin’s writerly texts offer “intricate connections, diversity of forms, and surprises” (“Introduction,” ARV, 18) that engage and stimulate a reader’s imagination.

Works Cited


25 Millions died by sword or starvation and their bodies were left to rot or feed the crows. Cf. Li Po, “War South of the Great Wall,” Selected Poems (1996, 58-59).
26 As Parkin observes in “Migrations,” “in the twentieth century, revolutions, civil war, and world wars created historical conditions for the Chinese that can only be termed nightmarish tragedy” (497). In “Harbourside II,” he commemorates “Ghosts […] thrown back into the waves of the dying sea / of the living” (Hong Kong 89), as the past “interleaves” with the present.


