

path of the ICW's inner workings. There is no doubt at all, however, that McGeachy served the Council well, that she managed to steer a cautious middle course during the years of the Cold War and that she also co-opted for the ICW many of the ideas of the burgeoning feminist movement without adhering to its confrontational methods.

In 1973 she moved to Princeton, New Jersey, and there she lived until her death at 90. She had become an enthusiastic Anglican and in Princeton she was, typically, a leading member and a lay reader in the Episcopal (Anglican) All Saints church. Her spiritual life became increasingly important to her. In 1986 she was made a Dame of the Order of St. John, a somewhat mysterious honour, but she took great satisfaction in its ceremony and her title: Dame Mary A.C. Schuller-McGeachy, OSJ.

McGeachy was an exceptionally talented Canadian woman who blazed many a trail for those of us who follow. Kinnear's biography is an authoritative and a fitting memorial.

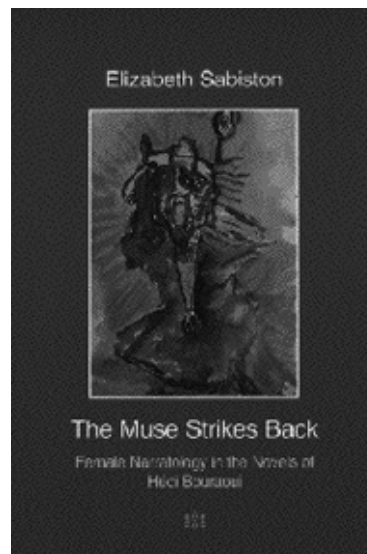
Clara Thomas was one of the two first women to be hired by York. A retired Professor Emeritus, She has been with York since 1961. This year York did her the honour of naming the libraries' Archives and Special Collections the Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University.

THE MUSE STRIKES BACK: FEMALE NARRATOLOGY IN THE NOVELS OF HÉDI BOURAOUÏ

Elizabeth Sabiston
Sudbury: Human Sciences Monograph Series, 2005

REVIEWED BY ANN GAGNÉ

In *The Muse Strikes Back: Female*



Narratology in the Novels of Hédi Bouraoui, Elizabeth Sabiston undertakes a gendered analysis of the relation between narration, authorship, and character in one of world's most renowned Maghrebian authors. Bouraoui's work has "a humanistic commitment, to openness, tolerance between genders, genres, cultures, young and old" and it is Sabiston's openness to the "plurality of criticisms" which makes the study unique. The central concept behind Sabiston's book is the muse, and how the muse in Bouraoui critiques socialized gender definitions, which is reminiscent of Simone de Beauvoir. Each of the six chapters is devoted to one of Bouraoui's texts, moving chronologically by date of publication. Similarly, each of the chapters focuses on the role of the muse in relation to the narration of each text, and how they come together to create Bouraoui's transcultural vision.

Elizabeth Sabiston's following of the "Ariadne's thread" in Bouraoui's work starts with *Bangkok Blues*. The female muse in *Bangkok Blues* is Koi, a Beatrice figure who breaks free of a submissive Oriental stereotype. Koi manages, according to Sabiston, to erase both national and gender boundaries, within the "femme-cité" (woman city) of Bouraoui's *Bangkok*. The same can be said of *Zitouna in Retour à Thyna* where the epic hero is rewritten as epic heroine.

Hédi Bouraoui's use of doubling and alter egos in his work is brought to the forefront by Sabiston's analysis, especially in relation to *La Pharaone*, a novel published in 1998. The touchstone of Bouraoui's texts and life work is the multicultural, and Sabiston sees this as going even further by creating narrations, narrators and muses that abolish "time and space, and above all [become] androgynous." Chapter five, entitled "La Composée: Or, The Muse Strikes Back," analyzes what happens when Bouraoui's muse turns the tables and becomes an artist in her own right, writing her own story through the epistolary. Not only does this type of narration evoke novelistic conventions of the eighteenth century, but it also evokes the female artist Scheherazade. Elizabeth Sabiston reinforces the importance of language to the retelling of a muse's story; it roots her experience in language, justifying her experience.

The sixth and final chapter focuses on Bouraoui's most recent work *La Femme d'entre les lignes* published in 2002. Sabiston remarks that after the publication of this work most critics went in search of the "man behind the woman between the lines," but Elizabeth Sabiston is not like other critics. She focuses on the twinning that occurs in Bouraoui's work and the importance of the metamorphosis of Lisa into Palimpsest. Sabiston manages to tie all of the narratological aspects of Bouraoui's work into one underlying theme: the muse gains power over the text by assuming the role of the artist and thus ends up writing her own story. She wants to "draw a clear line of demarcation between creator and protagonist/artist, a line crossed by many critics," and she succeeds in doing so by emphasizing that Bouraoui as writer of these works is capable of distancing himself from his own work to allow the protagonist, in these cases female protagonists, to write their own story, to be their own muse, to strike back at the confines of stereotype, gender and genre.

The Muse Strikes Back does not confine Hédi Bouraoui's narratives, rather Elizabeth Sabiston allows these narratives to reclaim their open endings where the role of the female muse crosses genders and cultures and breaks free of stereotypes. Instead of trying to find the man or the author behind the text, Sabiston emphasizes the unique position the narrator/muse has in Bouraoui's work, being subject and object simultaneously. *The Muse Strikes Back* is a great introduction to the complexity of Hédi Bouraoui's work and for those who are unfamiliar with Maghreb literature in general. It is a must read for those interested in the narratology of gender along cross-cultural lines, and a welcome addition to the study of Maghreb literatures.

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WHAT CASANOVA TOLD ME

Susan Swan
Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2004

REVIEWED BY ANN (RUSTY) SHTEIR

This is a delightful novel about transformation by travel and by history. Susan Swan tells a story with a double plot-line in which the present parallels the past. Luce Adams, a 28-year old Toronto-based archivist, travels to Venice to deliver family documents to a library. She travels via Athens on to Crete, and her journey ends in Istanbul. In 1797, her American

Puritan ancestor Asked For Adams (whose mother who had dearly wanted a female child) had also traveled on a family matter to Venice in the company of her father and stolid fiancé. Circumstances bring her into acquaintance with Jacobo Casanova, legendary late eighteenth-century Venetian traveler, writer and memoirist of his own adventures, and they go off to Athens and Constantinople and into a new life together.

Swan crafts the geographical mirroring of the travels of Luce and Asked For Adams so that the overlaps between the women are inevitable and satisfying. Both women cover the same ground and encounter the same smells and foods, take in the same warmth, and with the same effects on spirit and body. Sexuality is part of the story of early twenty-first-century Luce, pale, timid, and very soft-spoken, and late eighteenth-century Asked For, a sturdy and large-bodied woman who was raised on the Roman Sticks and thought herself plain.

The agent of transformation in both cases is the iconic lover Jacobo Casanova, aging in years, but not in his hunger for bodily connection and zest for life. The journal of Asked For Adams details her encounters with Casanova and the surprise of their powerful attraction to one another. Casanova passionately believed in female intelligence and women's rights to seek sexual enjoyment and mutual sexual pleasure. Susan Swan's depiction of Casanova recuperates the aging lover from charges that he was a selfish and patriarchal predator on women. Based in his writings and multi-volume memoirs, her account is empathetic and humanizing.

"What Casanova Told Me" is the title of Asked For Adams's own journal, and writing and reading are central features of plot development in the novel. Under Susan Swan's deft tutelage, we watch Luce reading her ancestor's story across a series of documents: journal entries, letters to her from Casanova,

and then a manuscript in Arabic that details how Asked For Adams's life unfolded. A highlight of the novel is Casanova's "Ten Primary Principles of Travel," a document whose inspirational tone extends across the centuries to readers and travelers now. Three examples must suffice here:

- 1) Do not set out in a spirit of acquisition, but go forth in the utmost humility, experiencing the same fervour you feel when choosing a lover, knowing a world of possibilities awaits you.
- 2) Write down what it is you desire and tear your wish into a dozen pieces. Then fling the scraps into a large body of water. (Any ocean will do.)
- 3) What you desire always awaits you if you are brave enough to recognize it.

Women's Studies audiences will enjoy how Susan Swan integrates the contemporary goddess movement into the plotline of *What Casanova Told Me*. Luce's mother Kitty was a celebrated and peripatetic scholar who had published widely in the area of Neolithic religion. Letters take us into Luce's relationship with her and also with her mother's lover, Lee Pronski, another goddess scholar and devotee of the Venus of Willendorf. Susan Swan is adept at light social satire, and the world of goddess religion and ritual practices provides some bemused moments. However, Swan also understands the convictions of the goddess movement and is versed in the scholarship that has developed in recent years. Key moments take place around a sacred stone and in a sacred cave. A sign of Luce's own transformations over the course of the novel is that Luce herself, skeptical about her mother's beliefs, and uncomfortable with her mother's acolytes, comes to accept some of what this all represents. Learning a new sense of possibility, Luce travels