

New Versions of Roguery

Van Herk, Aritha; Polić, Vanja

Source / Izvornik: **Text Matters, 2019, 9 - 21**

Journal article, Published version

Rad u časopisu, Objavljena verzija rada (izdavačev PDF)

<https://doi.org/10.18778/2083-2931.09.01>

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:131:719361>

Rights / Prava: [Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International/Imenovanje-Nekomercijalno-Bez prerada 4.0 međunarodna](#)

Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2024-06-29**



Sveučilište u Zagrebu
Filozofski fakultet
University of Zagreb
Faculty of Humanities
and Social Sciences

Repository / Repozitorij:

[ODRAZ - open repository of the University of Zagreb
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences](#)



Aritha van Herk

University of Calgary

Vanja Polić

University of Zagreb

New Versions of Roguery

This number of *Text Matters* features papers which explore the changing nature of roguery in literature and film. While the figure of the rogue has earned much literary attention in the past, its present moment is ambiguous, uneasy, even as we live in an age of flagrantly outrageous rogues, so overt that perhaps roguery as a study or a subject is *outré* because the world is a collection of rogues, and the behavior of rogues is now dramatically public rather than a matter of covert and shameful conduct. Despite this development, rogues still compel attention, curiosity and stories. Note the glut of documentaries, films and books on thieves and criminals, our fascination with those who refuse to follow the rules. And that continuing interest serves as a useful critical measurement and kinesics.

Is the figure of the rogue then a historical figure, a cultural construct, a blame magnet or an object of moral suasion? Has it morphed into the trickster, the holy fool, the picaro or the magician? Who is now accorded rogue status, in literature and film? Although rogue literature's 16th- and 17th-century origins are not to be dismissed, the current socio-political circumstances inflecting our evaluation of character have brought to light a new geography of miscreant, a new mapping of what scoundrel-saint can signal. For surely the deception of innocents, the cant of common speech, and the celebration of everyday life and its disappointments and entrapments is at a pinnacle, elevating what was previously dissentient to a commonplace.

Early discussions of the figure of the rogue and rogue literature concern themselves with the murkier aspects of the underworld, the criminal or seamier milieu of those who break rules or participate in unlawful acts,

thus delineating a genre concerned with the underworld, criminal and quasi-criminal activity. Thieves, tramps, beggars and vagabonds were asked to perform as these scapegoats and morality figures, even as the incipient joy associated with their presence could hardly be camouflaged. Rogues straddled the gap between reprehensible characters and characters arousing secret admiration—even delight—at their unruly misrule. Oh, to break the rules and to revel in the outcome of that incited chaos, to be admired for generative confusion and to sin sufficiently seriously to make repentance worthwhile.

This is, then, an appropriate moment to examine the configuration of the reinvigorated rogue, and whether rogue depictions now take reprobate action for granted or seek to place them within the scale of contemporary measurement. Who are the new rogues? Are they humanists in a technocratic culture? Are they disclosure *débouchés* or information spies? Are they modern-day Robin Hoods? Are they transitory artists who seek to effect revelation through concealment? And how do these new rogues operate? Do they work through illusion, through sleight of hand, trickery, or through manipulated intelligence, the awful reach of surveillance or social media? What is their aim? Personal, social, cultural gain? How do they become rascals? Through accident or deliberation? Are their actions transformative, recuperative, or simply narcissistic and damaging? In a culture and at a time when materialism and politics enforce conformity, how do rogues embody disinterested thinking, and push past the boundaries of obedience and containment? Or simply refuse those demarcations and flout all compasses?

Texts that play with such variants are both instructive and subversive, and surely remark new norms, enhanced rebellions, genetic re-appraisals. This issue includes papers investigating different aspects of roguery in literature and film; they move beyond character studies or intentional stereotypes; they explore narrative interlopers, and personae who bend the rules creatively or who know the rules but who slalom between the gaps; and they include texts that themselves articulate recalcitrance.

Interest in this sub-genre has clearly broadened from the shallow definition of characters refusing to adhere to norms. In the realm of representation, exploration and deployment, markers of bad behavior like theft, graft, alcoholism, drug addiction, promiscuity or illness now seem only too common; but the papers included here offer a complex discussion of representations of knavery, how the space of disobedience, the temptation of agency, and the textual performance of unruliness is dynamically engineered. What becomes evident is that these various exemplars disrupt dominant systems by applying liminality, a crossing of categories. In that way, they most defy discursive boundaries, and

negotiate the differences marked by regulatory frameworks. Some do so recuperatively, while others signify tactical dissention.

In “A Wild Roguery: Bruce Chatwin’s *The Songlines* Reconsidered” Christine Nicholls analyzes Chatwin’s rogue appropriation of the concept of songlines, and how his misconstrual of Australian Aboriginal culture has so dominated global apprehensions and readings of that culture. The intellectual thief, in this case Chatwin, cares very little for the context of his research, and whether or not his methodology respects the subject; his performance of research and writing is about self-advancement, self-aggrandizement. *The Songlines* is an example of the “instant expert” as bounder, his “borrowing” semi-acknowledged, but his misrepresentation aided and abetted by the publishing industry and the readerly world, who hesitate to censor or to name this cultural theft as such. The tendency of such neo-colonial rogues to sanction and to anoint their own ideas as of high intellectual order, often by calling on a religious connection, further seals the theft. Such essentialism points to the extent to which “missionary” writers are attracted to Indigenous stories, seeking both to appropriate them, and to seal them with their own interpretive beliefs. Chatwin’s finding material in his colonial privilege, then valorizing his version of symbolic journey is pure hoax. Nicholls’s argument about how such a confidence trick wrongly argues for remote and unforgiving landscapes as purifying the spirit is compelling. The white colonist in this case is indelibly interested in *self*-discovery, accompanied by a lack of self-reflexivity. Narrative occupation then becomes a matter of reprobate disguise. The peripatetic scoundrel-traveler, foot-loose and compelled by nomadism as a celebration of white male freedom, is unwilling to face either his own demons, his obsessions, or his entitlement and privilege. By consulting only white anthropologists (not necessarily reliable sources) who study Aborigines, this rogue’s lazy travesty of interpretation models a sense of entitlement where “walking” in another’s shoes is recreational, rather than a necessity of survival.

The competitive motivation of the intellectual rogue contributes to a combative defensiveness about their theft: such “recorders” are keen to locate themselves as experts, and in overriding all other voices, commit a profound peculation, appropriation of voice a persistent shadow backgrounding their picaresque wanderlust. Their cultural theft then anoints them as experts, gives them celebrity, while contaminating the Indigenous culture they represent with their Eurocentric notion of nomad. The most fascinating aspect of this paper is its contention that rogues attribute their wanderlust to others, a version of negative Pandora’s box, which calls out the very definition of the cutpurse.

That the picara or the *Räuberin* is less frequently deployed than her male counterpoint is a peripheral and yet important factor demonstrated by these

papers. Women are seldom accorded the nudge/wink approval of roguish behavior, certainly cannot easily become vagabonds and footloose scamps, and rather than miscreants are generally deemed bitches or monsters. The opprobrium leveled at female mountebanks is far more severe, far less forgiving than that accorded men. While the same behavior in a man would cause amusement, in a woman the level of disapproval is heightened, and the punishment incommensurate with the crime. Veronika Schuchter's analysis in "Of Grim Witches and Showy Lady-Devils: Wealthy Women in Literature and Film" offers a generative reading of how wealth enables rogue women to manipulate others to their advantage. She addresses the odd category of how few women are included in indexes of rich "characters," and she discusses how representations of wealthy women in literature and film are overwhelmingly negative, a reflection of the social expectation that women are not supposed to have economic power, and suggesting too that women do not want to be known as being rich, a symptom of privilege. The erasure of women and people of colour from the realms of affluence speaks to the potential of money as rogue possession. In general, Schuchter indicates, women characters only gain wealth by their connection to or relationship with men; they are mere "estate keepers." That passive wealth becomes, then, a matter of how they are portrayed: wealth ties women to a lack of attractiveness, making them witch-like and irrational. In short, a rich woman is textually "rogued," and any woman who falls outside of the norm of dependent and unpowerful woman is deemed rogue. If being poor is a virtue, and women are made "unwomanly" by their occupation of power, in the dichotomy between normative and "deviant" characters, these women then take on a subversive role.

The paper discusses the extent to which Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations*, Cruella de Vil and the wicked stepmother of Cinderella provenance (many different versions), all remark the rich woman as deviant, cruel and malevolent, women without empathy who exhibit no maternal tenderness. As enablers of those who would be rogue, readers and film viewers alike are skeptical toward women characters who control money. Further, social reliance on beauty as a measurement of goodness inflects these representations; the female rogue is depicted as unattractive, if not disheveled and ungroomed. Miss Havisham's aging body is a testament to her attempt to immobilize time, while the "wicked stepmother" is seldom attractive, and Cruella is depicted as witch-like, disturbing if striking. The decaying finery of Miss Havisham's wedding attire, a parody of the marriage day as the "happiest" day of a woman's life, further undoes the stereotype; as does her refusal to be self-sacrificing, resistant to the notion that her wealth should measure her "kindness of spirit." The unruly women in these examples have no compunction about frightening those they encounter,

little compunction about “pleasing” others with their appearance, and are uncaring that their positioning as “self-made” women is “unnatural.” Their punishment is surely the opprobrium they encounter, that they must be humiliated, burned (not quite at the stake) or abandoned. Still, despite the offense of escaping the stereotype, they relish their failure. If the reward for good behavior is marriage, and rogue spinsters are unfit for marriage, then the argument would suggest that the path most satisfying is that of an anti-heroine. Most interesting of all is the desire of each woman not necessarily to be richer, but to be the author of her own story. Cruella de Vil’s drinking black ink effectively represents this character as rogue writer; and women who enjoy unusual tastes (peppering their fruit salad!) may not be rewarded for difference, but nevertheless make a compelling argument for the pleasure of being vixens.

Beautifully aligned with Schuchter’s analysis is Michelle D. Wise’s discussion of cinematic rogue women, using as primary example Charlize Theron’s depiction of serial killer Aileen Wuornos in the film *Monster*. The discussion of Theron “going ugly” to show her ability to depict a criminal woman underscores the extent to which beauty and its desire to please the male gaze enacts a limiting role, becomes a normative prison. By contrast, fetishizing the unattractive woman ultimately becomes (for Theron) transformatively positive—at least in terms of the movie’s success and the praise she garnered for the “difficult” role.

Such pervasive cultural assumptions have laid the groundwork for what is considered “deviant” or rogue. In order to reflect our valuation of them in physical terms, the expectation is that rogues found guilty will be abject. Once again, the determination of unattractiveness as a measure of deviance records how we punish and discipline difference, determined that it not interrupt our ideas of what should be positive. The paper discusses how the film’s focus on Wuornos’s appearance is particularly important, especially because we read her as “inhuman,” thus accounting for her crimes by virtue of her “ugliness,” which is attached to her role as serial killer. The measure of the rogue and the parameter of outward appearance means that she cannot escape her inner unpleasantness. The “deviance” of the lesbian relationship and the “excessive demands of queer love” mean that sexual orientation too measures this “outsiderhood.” Refusal to participate in a heteronormative world makes the outsider even more outsiders, and emphasizes the extent to which conformity is valued. Most of all, Wuornos becomes a ready example of how society measures what is monstrous, and then judges the very monstrous it has created.

Clearly, the sanctuary of tranquil domestic space is not available to the rogue. Precarity becomes the situation the contemporary rogue must endure, as opposed to the safety of a “controlled domestic space,”

its class structure, patriarchal hierarchy and law-abiding demands. This paper beautifully articulates the extent to which the American fascination with criminal behavior as not so much deviant as a means of determining expected roles. If “the female body of the prostitute [is] a reservoir of contagion and infection,” then they can certainly be expected to perform insubordination. While none of us are immune to the charms of the rogue, none of us can escape the heterosexist and patriarchal structures that have been imprinted upon our reading. The logical question for rogue analysis then becomes: who is beyond redemption? Or is that state of eternal condemnation essential to all depictions of the new roguery? Ultimately the attraction of the rogue and representations of the same rogue show the extent to which we should be perplexed by their actions, which leaves us unable to draw simple conclusions or morals.

It is a short distance from the notion of appearance as monstrous to the presence of the machine as an instrument of rebellion. Kornelia Boczkowska’s “The Outlaw Machine, the Monstrous Outsider and Motorcycle Fetishists: Challenging Rebellion, Mobility and Masculinity in Kenneth Anger’s *Scorpio Rising* and Steven Spielberg’s *Duel*” asks the important question of whether it is possible, in a modernist mechanized world (these films are from 1963 and 1971 respectively), to act out road rogue. If Rocinante is the companion to Don Quixote’s travels, then as the “outlaw machines” of the present age’s automobility, these films about motorcycles merge “the road movie’s traditional discourse with auteurism and modernism.” Road movies have always integrated rebellion and movement; the open highway is a space enabling marginality and disobedience, even if the road itself is a version of direction. The subcultures that Boczkowska addresses in this essay embody nomadism, transgression and liberation, both films juxtaposing violence and eroticism through their encounters with hostile landscapes and people. The tie to quest and outlaw movies, which valorizes the lone hero trope, is indisputable. Still, fantasies of escape and liberation demonstrating the masculinist quest motif are ripe for rogue inflection, the liberation linked to mobility and irresponsibility. These films sympathetically depict the adventures of a group of outsiders and outlaws who end up being destroyed by repressive social forces; they emphasize marginality and estrangement, with destruction and punishment (usually death) as the outcome, the endpoint. But morally, “a text cannot hold its meaning steady when a viewer invests it with desire”—in these movies the power machine becomes “tribal totem,” and bike parts stand in for what the body cannot do. The indisputably American fetishism of machines, chrome and steel, violence and speed signals the mythological aspirations of the motorcyclist, the elusive, dead movie star (James Dean), and even an uneasy association with fetishized Nazism.

In these filmic examples, we come to understand the extent to which we as audience expect the rogue world to provide us (as voyeurs) with thrills, answering our fascination with inchoate yearning. While it is certainly difficult to be a rogue in suburbia, our happy embrace of aghast paranoia at the threat of these “rebels” surely guarantees their profitability through our tantalized interest. The mechanical mistress and the outlaw nomad reflect both perpetual angst and allure. As with all rogue refusals, the motorcycle movie refuses to obey traffic laws and although these films do not equate with the thrill aroused by car-chase movies, they do deploy perpetual motion as restive desire. Transgression, then, is where we can find it, and in this uber-safe world, we seek the vicarious tension of trespass in the strangest places.

This oddly contradictory human desire, to experience roguishness while evading being wholly limited by its frameworks, is explored by Jason Blake in “Roguish Self-Fashioning and Questing in Aleksandar Hemon’s ‘Everything.’” The self-fashioning rogue wants to participate in what he perceives as conceptual freedom, sexual contact and wild experience. He casts himself as a poet in order to join the fraternity of scoundrels, although that merely measures his naiveté and his unsophisticated reliance on the convenience of lies. This incipient or apprentice rogue seeks models for roguishness; he desires the ideal of that behavior despite the obvious difficulty of such a sketchy life. His apprentice aspiration is often enabled by a journey away from the safety of home, a journey that presents itself as an escape route. In Hemon’s story, the journey becomes one of return, a careful re-visitation of guilt and recrimination in tandem with a narrator’s attempt to portray himself as roguish even while he locates himself firmly within his family and his culture. The escape-rogue then is a gestural device and character, the social outsider as an unsustainable construct.

Travelling serves for this inventor as ideal rogue activity; he is one of several passengers together on the way to a hazy destination, although the quotidian task he is charged with (buying a chest freezer) is both ironic and finite. His travel companions, model rogues who use storytelling as a competition, bragging as bludgeon, have shared the same incarcerations, the same accusations, the same escapes, but also the same limitations. His encounter with their special vocabulary, their criminal experience, their braggadocio about all the places where they are not wanted, where they have been refused entry, where they have no room to ply their trade, does not educate him, but tempts him even further into cherishing his self-deception. He fools himself even as his experience proves his fantasy untenable. Acting as an emissary of his family’s survival, their daily life revolving around getting and storing food, ensuring that they have enough, interrupts his dreams of romantic escapades. But no rogue can escape history, and hovering over

Hemon's story is what is conjured by the very name of the city of Sarajevo: the war, the siege and the many resultant deaths. The changes in national boundaries, names and political circumstances measure every rogue's unstable role; places can disappear overnight, citizenship is moot, and the freedom of peace is negotiable. The necessary contrast of mischievous roguery with the serious barbarity of death is one of the ways that the playful construction of any rogue can be undercut: in such circumstances there is no cure but to beat the rogue to teach him a lesson, although his lesson is only learned later, with the losses of war.

The lesson, then, is one of perception. What can one do in such company except become a poet? The rogue assigns to himself a writing riddle, insoluble if acquiescent. This same figure is tested in Jordan Bolay's essay, "'Same Old Ed, . . . Uncommitted': BMW Socialism and Post-Roguery in Guy Vanderhaeghe's Early Fiction." Again, mobility, automobiles and symbols of movement suggest the ideal of running away as cure for disillusionment, although this figure is more deflated rogue than functioning traducer. Ed, the key character under scrutiny, is flaccid, unsure of himself, yearning to be a wastrel and a vagabond, and failing. Instead, he is a "fat, lazy, emotional, unemployed intellectual," usefully summarized as a non-violent shit-disturber. He is unfortunately limited by his milieu; it is difficult to be a villainous knave in contemporary Saskatchewan (a quiet province in western Canada), and the impossibility of that dream articulates how man descends as encapsulation and embrace of rogue watered down into a socially immobile and ironically hypocritical watcher. He is less scoundrel than lazy political knave, a voyeur of others' endeavors, unfailingly sarcastic about their delusions, claiming that he says what others cannot say.

This scoundrel, who cannot see himself clearly, is the patron saint of those who abandon noble causes, the march of roguery now determined by economic circumstances more than any ideal of independence or outlaw. Here is the transit to the outsider as failure, unemployed, defensive, vagrant. He is ultimately a pathetic fool who embodies both the roles of critic and criticized, cunning blockhead and risible knave. While he claims to be a disappointed idealist, measuring the "drugged, dragooned, down-trodden, dominated, and nearly drowned" state of the lower class, he is a walking case of constant revision, cutting his cloth to suit his audience, and in the process deluding himself about his own motivation. He erases himself and his own ideals, and while Bolay argues that his

vanishment is not a forfeiture, but a rejection of all social convention, dominant and emergent, sanctioned and counter-cultural. It is a self-removal from the politics of language, for the novel, driven by Ed's

narration, and therefore his very diegetic existence, depends on his continued expression through language. And through this disintegration, Ed transcends roguery to become post-rogue,

as readers we must then ask whether or not it is possible to be post-rogue, or merely abject loser.

Ronnie Scott's analysis of representations in comics unpacks further what could be construed as a post-rogue movement toward "reinvigorated" inclemency. In "Aussies, Rogues and Slackers: Simon Hanselmann's Megg, Mogg and Owl Comics as Contemporary Instances of Rogue Literature," Scott argues that Simon Hanselmann's Megg, Mogg and Owl comics can be understood as rogue texts, showing characters responding to social and generic limits and reconnoitering those limits through a restless and innovative presentation and content. This creative exploration of how to cross boundaries flags these comics as an aberrant species, depicting "low life" and petty crime, deceit and deviance. Scott lays out the various genres that have succeeded rogue literature, incorporating some of its aspects, but broadening its influence and application: grunge fiction, dirty realism, social protest literature, fanzines and Fantagraphics. At the same time, realism is arguably the motivator here; Hanselmann observes that: "People are horrible. People are cruel. People are abused," and this text incorporates his certainty in the content it explores. The connections between mental illness, trauma, and desperate need are shown to be inescapable, and the divisions between prank and illegal act, between idea and physical assault, between rebellion and injury, are all crossed lines. The inevitable abjection that follows is not negated: "The structure of the comic begins to complicate and move towards change, when antics that may be appealing precisely because they are criminal are shown to affect characters to the point of trauma," so that some characters eventually want to go rogue from going rogue.

Using the "sharehouse" setting (a flat or house temporarily shared by several people unable to afford their own living space) to probe the dynamics of friendship and romance gathers characters who refuse to adapt to societal norms, who are outside the law and even bordering on deviant. The sharehouse sanctions the rogue in company with other rogues, a mixture and connection that incites unusual acts. But the parameters of the genre persist; the sharehouse dwellers communicate with their own distinctive cant, and in their milieu practice a code of honour among thieves, or honour among rogues. The connection to the oral tradition too is marked by the combination of fragmented overhearing, anecdote and vignette. The rogue gesture of crossed boundaries concretized by the comic form of frames and disconnected drawings, as Scott says, problematizes sequential orthodoxies.

Is some articulated law necessary for the contrast of roguery to take place? In “The Rogue as an Artist in Patrick deWitt’s *The Sisters Brothers*,” Hilde Staels undertakes to address how this revisionist western disrupts and supplants its popular western and picaresque forebears. Staels compares the “traditional” rogue with the self-aware rogue in Eli Sisters’s shift toward a reformed rogue, and how in the process the hypermasculinity of the Frontier myth is critiqued. Once encapsulating the gunfighter, the killer, the revenge artist and the outlaw, Eli Sisters turns rogue against his own occupation, and thus turns human. As the rogue who wants to repent, who no longer wants to be a rogue, Eli must negotiate two elements: his determinedly violent brother, Charlie, whom Eli must save from himself, and his own tendency toward sympathy. As the sympathetic listener, Eli is “more interested in digging out his own and other people’s hidden sadness and suffering” than in getting rich or wreaking revenge. Haunted by what he has done, what he has neglected to do, and by his own sense of what is ethical, Eli is aligned with a female sensibility; he is, after all, a Sister. The paper argues that Eli meets and takes to heart lessons from “the three spinning Sisters from classical mythology.” Haunted rogues who repent are certainly rare enough, but when they are combined with western outlaws, their cleansing effects more than mere reformation. In short, they meet with rogues’ justice, and are meted out what they have meted out, if only to be relegated finally to a life of gentle stasis, at home with their mother. “The difference between who he was then and what he is now” reforms Eli completely, and although he is figured as a writer, an artist of sensibility, here is one rogue text that seeks to achieve some closure, some “ethical” accommodation of these micreants’ future if not their past.

The adventurousness of the rogue writer is intricately explored in Mark Metzler Sawin’s “The Lynching and Rebirth of Ned Buntline: Rogue Authorship during the American Literary Renaissance.” Again, the lure of the wicked west and the American dream of upward mobility, alongside the ability to don different identities and survive by one’s wits, motivates this prolifically rogue publisher and rogue writer. Itinerant rather than reliable, always with an eye to the main chance, the story of “Ned Buntline” (Edward Z. C. Judson) argues for self-invention and re-invention as not only survival, but a cultural strategy that actually ended up shaping the discourse of the nation, the United States a reflection of this secret love of scandal, and its resultant underhanded politics. As a wastrel and a seducer, always in search of a story, his writing, however exaggerated, shaped the social order of the time, an affective reach that extends to the present day even though Judson and his texts may be long forgotten. That his transformation from ink-stained wretch to popular chronicler was in some way enabled by the lynching that he survived suggests the extent to which

the rogue who provokes a powerful response then takes that lesson to heart, and learns how to avail himself of its potential, always keeping in mind base human interest in bad behaviour. As Sawin says:

He abandoned his place among the elite writers of his day and embraced the life of a writing rogue with an authorial voice that would cause riots, launch political parties, and make him one of the most innovative and important writers of his era.

The potential for both high and low-grade scandal, the interest in all that was scurrilous, and the faux horror with which those writings were greeted played directly into Buntline's need for an audience, the dupes who would pay for his newspaper and his stories, the suggestive gossip that he propagated and marketed. Both perpetual writer and scandalous stretcher, Buntline's was a case of living his text, and in the living, texting his excess.

The life of a writer/rogue provides both a template and a temptation. The travel, the impecunious stretches, the fights and dodges between friends and enemies, paint a colourful and undeniably attractive swashbuckling line of action. Both infamous and celebrated, Judson's embrace of his own roguish alter-ego, Ned Buntline, foreshadows how easily confidence men can swing the attention of their fellow citizens, and scam their loyalty. As the exemplar of a man hyper-conscious of the next story or opportunity, he serves as an effective symbol for the extent to which the United States is willing to embrace and forgive its public rogues.

In contrast, and as a diametrically obverse Canadian measurement, Kit Dobson's "Men Without Fingers, Men Without Toes" offers a quietly meditative cross-genre essay that discusses both missing digits as markers of the rogue body, and the men who lose those parts to labour or accident. He makes the important point that to go rogue is also to go missing, to disappear, and in that image of disappearance he evokes the beautifully melancholy absence of sacrifice. The laughter of these disfigured men, despite their maiming, argues for a gentler, more repentant rogue, aware of his own pain, but proud of what he has achieved with the real physical instrument of his body. As Dobson says: "Digits, missing digits, and the labours that pull bodies apart: these show up, again and again, throughout the lives of those around me." Here is an aspect of rogue chronicles that is much disregarded, brought to light in this essay with extraordinary empathy.

Dobson discusses in turn the writing of George Ryga and Patrick Lane, and how alienation and struggle both inspire and limit the men who live that metaphorical dismemberment, making the afterlife of these working

rogues an absence. Most of all, he beautifully describes “how the rogue lives on in the afterglow of aging, fumbling past glory and failure,” while those same failures enable us, as writers and critics, to “do the work of interpreting their stories.”

In the rogue world, context is everything. The story of all rogues, then, is the coagulation of hard work and its recompense, loss and regret and misunderstanding, but ultimately a celebratory disfigurement, a disruption of wholeness, and a beautiful alienation, material or textual.

These essays in dialogue with one another form a section of this issue of *Text Matters*. The other papers—in “(Sub)versions and (Re)visions,” “Negotiating Traumas” and “Liminal Spaces”—amplify this discussion in other directions, addressing issues of resistance, metaphor, correction, and the echoes of both orthodoxy and refiguration. What is richest about these works is how reading and writing between the spaces enables not only unruly reading, but peace, healing, and to some extent, a resolution of trauma, both major and minor, the small trembling of all our limbs, those that we hold close and that we lose.

Aritha van Herk is the author of five novels, *Judith*, *The Tent Peg*, *No Fixed Address*, *Places Far From Ellesmere* and *Restlessness*. Her history of Alberta, *Mavericks: An Incurable History of Alberta* frames the exhibition on Alberta history at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary. With George Webber she has published *In This Place: Calgary 2004–2011* (Photographs by George Webber, Words by Aritha van Herk) and *Prairie Gothic*, both books that develop the idea of geographical and historical temperament as tonal accompaniment to landscape. She has published most recently a work of prose-poetry, *Stampede and the Westness of West*. She is a Member of the Order of Canada, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, and recipient of the Lorne Pierce Medal, awarded to recognize achievement in imaginative or critical literature in Canada. She teaches literature and Creative Writing in the Department of English at the University of Calgary.

vanherk@ucalgary.ca

Vanja Polić is Associate Professor at the Department of English at the University of Zagreb, Croatia, where she teaches literary theory, contemporary Canadian literature and film, and the 18th-century British novel. She has published articles on Canadian literature and culture in Croatian and international journals, and is the author of a monograph

on the rhetorical practices of self-legitimation in the prefatory materials of the early 18th-century British novel (2012). Her research interests include contemporary Canadian literature, postcolonial literature and postmodernism. Her current project concerns contemporary western Canadian literature, with special emphasis on the revisions of the myth of the West. She is the President of the Croatian-Canadian Academic Society and a member of the editorial board of *Canadian Literature: A Quarterly of Criticism and Review*.

vanja.polic@zg.t-com.hr