

BOOK REVIEWS

Unarrested archives: case studies in twentieth-century Canadian women's authorship, by LM Morra, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2014, xi + 244 pp., CAD\$70.00 (hardback), ISBN 978 1 442648 81 4, CAD\$29.95 (paperback), ISBN 978 1 442626 42 3, CAD\$29.95 (EPUB format), ISBN 978 1 442617 74 2

Linda Morra poses many significant questions about the relationships between archives, material records and the creative work of women in literary fields. There are five chapters in *Unarrested Archives*, and each focuses on the work, experiences and literary records of one Canadian woman writer. This approach is taken 'to showcase how women writers were regulated and contained, and how at times they existed in or negotiated both personal and professional antagonist relationships' in the context of historically specific ideologies of class, race and sexual identity (p. 7). As Morra states, her work 'invites rethinking of seemingly clear designations, of what the archive means, of what power structures are undergirded by papers under house arrest, and by whom and for whom archives are established' (p. 11). Conceptually, 'arrested' and 'unarrested' are used in the framing and analysis of the authors' papers and their respective placements in and out of formal archives. Through this the numerous and often multiple paths that personal and literary papers, in various forms, can take is considered. These include when papers are arrested (detained and/or captured by institutions) and when they are not (unwanted by institutions, withheld by creators and/or discarded by institutions) (pp. 8–9).

The women whose creative lives and archives are examined in the book are: Pauline Johnson (1861–1913), Mohawk poet and stage performer; Emily Carr (1871–1945), writer and artist; Sheila Watson (1909–1998), academic and creative writer; Jane Rule (1931–2007), novelist, short-story writer of lesbian fiction and gay rights activist; and M NourbeSe Philip (1947–), poet, playwright, novelist, short-story writer, academic, essayist and activist. Using these descriptors to list the women who feature in Morra's book feels somewhat antithetical to Morra's project, but also necessary to briefly identify them and present the chronology that is followed. Morra selected these women and particular elements of their creative work to '[showcase] the extraordinary range and the crucial evolution of women's agencies' which were only possible in particular historical contexts (pp. 11–12).

Through these case studies, what Morra provides us with are five 'approaches to and modes by which both archives and women's agencies are defined' (p. 177). They are the archives of embodiment, kinship, imminence, activism and the minor archive. Elements of these approaches can be seen in a number of the women's lives and in a range of ways: for example, embodiment is featured most directly in the examination of Pauline Johnson's stage performances that cannot themselves be contained within archives but material traces of them remain. In other case studies we gain insight into other aspects of embodiment: through Sheila Watson's journals written in Paris and purposely retained by her (when others were not) to be archived as part of her stated desire for her story to be told. In a different way again, the contemporary political environment of a Canadian institutional multicultural collecting agenda now needs material from non-white people in institutional collections, and Caribbean writer M NourbeSe Philip's creation and personal custody of her archive (purposely an unarrested archive) can be read in response to this. While other themes are also important in these examples, I use them there to briefly demonstrate the value of the approach that Morra has devised. And in identifying this list, Morra advises it is not exhaustive, but '[offers] a preliminary range researchers might employ to approach or analyse women's records and their means of expressing self-agency through

or against established repositories' (p. 177). I think the methodology can also offer the same to archivists in thinking broadly about gendered ideologies in archival institutions collecting policies and practices.

A theme that emerged through the case studies in *Unarrested Archives* is the relationships between the author, the archivist and/or custodian of the material and the researcher who works on the material archive. The differences involved with working on materials of people who are living, as opposed to those who are dead, are seen across all of the case studies. Most vividly this is encountered in relation to Morra being granted access to parts of M NourbeSe Philip's papers. Morra writes: 'After spending some time in an office rented in Toronto for the purpose of looking through her private boxes of papers, I appreciated the full gravity of what I had asked to examine' (p. 157).

Unarrested Archives was finalist for the 2014 Gabrielle Roy Prize (English), awarded by the Association for Canadian and Québec Literatures, and it is the work of an academic scholar. It provides a detailed analysis of women's creative work in specific archives. It is an important reminder of how the material traces which are preserved and the perceived value of them are mediated by historically and culturally specific notions of race, sexuality, class and gender.

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Preserving our heritage: perspectives from antiquity to the digital age, edited by Michele Valerie Cloonan, London, Facet, 2015, 702 pp., GBP £69.95, ISBN 978 1 856049 46 7

Now, go, write it down on a tablet, and inscribe it in a record, that it may be with them for future days, a witness forever. (Isaiah 30:8)

Carving out a line between academic tome and coffee-table book for those who love preservation, this publication is a collection of texts covering many perspectives on preservation from the worlds of archives, museums and libraries. For the student or professional working in any of these fields, this book presents readings that will stimulate discussion and thinking about concepts and new areas in the professions. For the casual reader, there is much to be gleaned broadly without the barriers of many academic works.

At over 700 densely packed pages, it appears a daunting mission to read (and, given its size, almost impossible to peruse without a table to rest it on), however the structure of the book is such that it is easy to dip into it for a paper on a wide range of preservation-related topics, or to locate specific content. Each chapter is preceded by a summary, which is a useful précis of the subject matter within.

The opening chapter, 'Early Perspectives on Preservation', contains excerpts from famous and also lesser known works dating from around 630 BC (such as the biblical passage above) to the comparatively modern 1800s. These early writings on the topic of preservation and longevity of information give both the scholar and the curious a clear insight into the beginnings and also the reasons for the professional practice of preservation.