

A Systemic Framework Applied: The Empirical Science of Literature and the Nineteenth-Century Canadian Novel Preface

In English-Canadian literature the study and application of literary theory is essential because it appears that the traditional resistance of English-Canadian scholars to employ and to apply literary theory resulted in scholarly and intellectual stagnation (Bloodgett 1986).¹ This state of English-Canadian scholarship was also criticised — excepting the international reputation of feminist literary criticism — in the recent second edition (vol. 4) of the *Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English* (Rajan 133-58). The state of scholarship is markedly different in Québec, where literary theory has had and continues to have a stronger voice in the analysis of literary texts. The specific discipline of comparative Canadian literature within the field of comparative literature is again very small and struggling. This article, it is hoped, will further interest in the scholarship of comparative Canadian literature. The immediate aim of this article is to present a selected amount of steps taken and results obtained with the application of the systemic theoretical framework "Empirische Literaturwissenschaft," (Empirical Science of Literature, ESL) (Schmidt 1980-82) to novel prefaces in the nineteenth-century Canadian literatures.²

1 Generally speaking, literary scholarship relies on a metaphorical narrative. It is not that English-Canadian scholars do not use literary theories in the analysis of literary texts. It is more that literary theory as a framework with and within which the text is approached, if it is apparent in the scholarly work at all, is implicit and not explicitly stated.

2 The designation "the Canadian literatures" means both English-Canadian and French-Canadian literature (Bloodgett 1982, 13-38). In recent years for a growing number of scholars the designation includes, in addition to the two main stream literatures, English-Canadian and Québécois (French-Canadian literature in the nineteenth century), the large amount of ethnic Canadian writing and such other 'marginal' literatures as Franco-Ontarian, Acadian, Franco-Manitoban, etc., literatures.

Briefly, the application of the ESL concerned an attempt to present three as yet unexplored but related literary aspects of the nineteenth-century Canadian novel literatures.³ Firstly, it was postulated that the preface to nineteenth-century Canadian novels in English and in French is a genre in itself, exhibiting the usual characteristics of a genre and, as such, deserving of scholarly attention. Secondly, English-Canadian and French-Canadian novel prefaces were presented according to a typology. Thirdly, the prefaces were analysed, based on the typology and the framework of the ESL. Within the first argument, the hypothesis that the preface is indeed a genre was built on a taxonomical survey and on genre-theoretical notions found in the secondary literature of the preface. The result of the taxonomical discussion was that German, French, and English terms which presently have or have previously had the meaning "preface" indicate the literary historically autonomous status of the preface, i.e., that it is a genre in form and content. In addition, the taxonomical survey implicitly outlined a possible history of the preface. The survey of a representative corpus of scholarly preface studies found in German, English, American, Canadian, French, and Québécois scholarship also resulted in the finding that the preface is a genre in its own right.

Within the second argument, the desirability of a preface typology rested on two arguments. Firstly, several theoretical and critical studies about the preface call implicitly or explicitly for a typology of the genre. Jacques Derrida in his *La Dissémination* (1972) and Gérard Genette in his *Seuils* (1987), to name two works by well known scholars, specifically call for a corpus-based typology of this genre.

In general, the taxonomy of the preface and the secondary literature defined the preface as a type of text (genre) whose position and mechanisms mediate between the author, the text for which it was written, the readership, and, although this aspect has been largely unexplored, the publishing industry. This definition, which is in essence a multidimensional functional configuration of a literary text, paradigmatically determines that the preface should be studied within a systemic view of literature. All of the above areas of prefatorial interaction can be placed within the principles of the ESL.

Although the ESL is a fairly new theory of literature, it has already achieved some importance. This is indicated, for example, by Hauptmeier's (et al.) recent article, "Empirical Research on Understanding Literature," in *Poetics Today* (1989), by a separate entry in the seventh edition of Gero von Wilpert's *Sachwörterbuch der Literatur* (1989), the many articles appearing

3 The principles postulated in ESL have been applied to nineteenth-century English-Canadian and French-Canadian novel prefaces in Tötösy 1989, 1990a, and 1990b.

in S.J. Schmidt's (ed.) *Poetics, the Siegner Periodicum zur Internationalen Empirischen Literaturwissenschaft* (Peter Lang 1982-), and others. Wilpert's entry will serve here as a concise description of the theory:

Empirical Science of Literature: new, systemic literary theory, initiated by S.J. Schmidt and others, based on intersubjective testability. It considers literary theory (Literaturwissenschaft) as an empirically oriented social science (Sozialwissenschaft) and its subject the total area of social interaction with and within the literary text(s). It is built on a system of aesthetic communication between the text/producer (Produktionsbereich), the processing of the text (Vermittlungsbereich), its reception (Rezeptionsbereich), and its post-production processing (Verarbeitungsbereich). In and with this system of aesthetic communication the objective is to combine socially relevant aspects of literary history, and psycho-literary, socio-literary, didactic, and critical perspectives. (233. This and all subsequent translations are mine)

An innovative feature of the ESL is that it prescribes a *scientific*⁴ approach for the study of literature in the following sense: with as little metaphorical language as possible, the inquiry should follow the steps of an explicit stating of the theoretical position, a hypothesis, the application (testing) of the theoretical framework, analysis, and discussion of the results. Other, more specific features are, for example: the ESL accepts the notion of literary period and literary genre and Schmidt notes that "a quick look into the newest literary histories attests to the fact that literary history cannot exist without periodization" (1982, 17). The periodization of literature includes the concept of genre, among other literary, sociological, and artistic categories (1982, 18). Furthermore, the periodization of literature is related to literary history and the systemic view of literature assumes that "no moment can be exempt from a categorical designation of historicity in the literary system" (1982, 31). Thus, the designation of the preface as a genre, its position and functions within the system of the Canadian literatures, can be studied both diachronically and synchronically. The preface as a genre, respectively its usage, i.e., the decision to write it, and its function, i.e., content, form, and style, implies an important systemic choice because

The decision of a producer of literature to use specific linguistic forms for the organization of the text (stylistical, rhetorical, compository, etc.) and the use of specific units from the linguistic inventory of a society mirrors the author's relationship with the dominant literary and text-organization expectations. (1982, 103)

Although in recent scholarship typologies have not been favourably received, the ESL encourages such an undertaking. The argument that typologies are not only legitimate but necessary lies in the insistence of ESL on empirical research. At the same time, typologies, as for the English-Canadian and French-Canadian prefaces, contain important systemic dimensions, which, when properly analysed, will result in an understanding of literature as system. In addition to this argument in favour of typology, an important difference between a traditional typology and the typology of the preface within the framework of the ESL should be pointed out. It is legitimate to provide a typology of the preface within the framework of the ESL because "the postulate of empiricity creates an extreme need for description and explanation" and this description and explanation occurs in a socio-literary context (1983, 27). In other words, a typology is appropriate if it is placed in a larger framework of social and literary relationships. These literary relationships are defined by the four main fields of the literary system. The fields (Bereiche) are defined by Schmidt as "an *a priori* selection of those socio-literary areas of problems which may be relevant from the ESL point of view" (1982, 60). These fields are the already mentioned fields of production (Produktionsbereich), of reception (Rezeptionsbereich), of processing (Vermittlungsbereich), and of post-production processing (Verarbeitungsbereich). A more precise formulation of these fields into systemic categories then follows: "In a second step singular problems will be studied in each analytical category of literary communication" (1982, 60). These analytical categories are essentially more focused versions of the above fields and in which the focus is on analysis. But other important areas of literature, when viewed as a system, have also been incorporated into the ESL framework. To mention a few, the ESL recognizes the process of canonization (1982, 18-19). This is important insofar as the prefaces themselves and many if not most works by authors of Canadian novels in English and in French have been and still are viewed as non-canonical texts. The ESL states that in the systemic view of literature the study and consequently the mutation of previously non-canonized types of literature is necessary (1982, 19). Another example of a systemic instance is the role of the publisher: "[t]he market oriented publisher has transformed in Europe since the nineteenth century all cultural relationships by following economic models of capital accumulation and the cult of novelty" (1982, 114-15).

The choice of the ESL as a theoretical model is appropriate because it allows for the study of the Canadian literatures in a socio-literary context rather than in an aesthetically oriented one which would lead, in the case of the preface, to one-sided and, consequently, limited results. It is an important postulate of the ESL that literary analysis should be based on empirical research, while attention must be paid to avoiding the danger of

4 For an excellent discussion of what a *scientific* approach to literature means see also Even-Zohar 9-44.

a neo-positivist analysis. A further proposition of the ESL framework is that its results should be presented in a non-metaphorical language. This results, for example, in a stylistic approximation of scientific presentation such as a preference for passive construction as opposed to the usage of active verbs. The theoretical framework of the ESL prescribes that the preface as a literary product and the prefacer as the producer — within the category of production —, the readership as the receiver, the publisher as an element of processing, and scholarship or simply any kind of secondary literature of the preface as the category of post-production processing can be analyzed in a systemic manner. In this way, the preface can be studied in its several dimensions. While this approach would normally create difficulties because it would require, in each case of a literary topic, an enormous amount of research and a widely varied expertise, in the case of the Canadian preface, because of its smaller corpus and because of the manageability of the nineteenth-century Canadian literary system, such a study is workable. This is not to say that the nineteenth-century Canadian literary system is manageable *per se*. Rather, the period is largely unexplored and the secondary literature is small, specifically in the case of English-Canadian literature — although it is worth pointing out that often the 'how' of using the data existing in the available secondary literature could eliminate the problem of the lack of a larger secondary corpus. In other words, with the appropriate theoretical framework and exploitation of the data existing in the available secondary literature, the deficiency of an English-Canadian, and, by extension, of a comparative Canadian secondary corpus, can be rectified. As to the question of manageability, in the case of a larger or already more frequently researched topic, the answer is the interdisciplinary approach, such as the multi-volume *Letteratura italiana* (Asor Rosa) or the incipient project "Towards a History of the Literary Institution in Canada" of the Research Institute for Comparative Literature at the University of Alberta.

As the above brief description indicates, the ESL framework is comprehensive and sophisticated. However, there is one serious omission in the ESL framework and this is the area of translation. As other important systemic studies of literature have shown, particularly the area of translation studies resulted in important findings. Specifically, the Polysystem Theory (Even-Zohar. For a selected bibliography see Dimić/Garstin) succeeded in the construction of a systemic perspective including the dynamics of

translation.⁵ One further aspect of the ESL is in need of a brief explanation. The term "empirical" has its own connotations. It is important to note that the ESL is, in its concept, structure, and, if properly applied, in its application, absolutely not neo-positivist. Schmidt explains his position with regards to possible accusations of neo-positivism in a section entitled "Exkurs: Hinweis für Neopositivismus Argwöhner" (1980, 7-11). In a study on West German readership by Hintzenberg (et al.), based on the ESL theory, the authors again very carefully describe their position with regards to the concepts of empiricism and positivism (1981). The non-neo-positivist concept and application of the ESL has been discussed in an issue of the Hungarian journal of comparative literature and theory, *Helikon* (1989), the entire issue devoted to this approach to literature with articles by German and Hungarian scholars.

The corpus of the nineteenth-century Canadian novel literatures has been compiled in the case of French-Canadian novel literature. It is to the credit of the excellent Québécois scholarship which, among other important works, produced the *Dictionnaire des oeuvres littéraires du Québec: des origines à 1900* (1980). This work in particular makes the study of French-Canadian literature less problematic in comparison with reference works available for the study of English-Canadian literature. Québécois scholarship also produced important works with systemic approaches to literature and this was done even before the formulation of a clearly systemic theoretical base. For example, John Hare's 1963 article "Introduction à la sociologie de la littérature canadienne-française du XIX^e siècle" contains data which has been very useful for this present study. In general, Québécois scholars, notably the Université de Laval group, subscribed to the "institution littéraire" approach and their studies resulted in such excellent works as Maurice Lemire, éd., *L'Institution littéraire* (1986), Lucie Robert's *L'Institution du littéraire au Québec* (1989), or the recent collection of essays on literary theory by Marc Angenot (et al., eds.) *Théorie littéraire* (1989), in which there is a chapter on "Le système littéraire."

5 The Polysystem Theory of Itamar Even-Zohar offers an alternate and equally sophisticated systemic framework, including the area of translation (Even-Zohar 1990). This theory has, since 1969, attained international prominence and there are today several 'schools' working with it, such as the Tel Aviv Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, the U of Leuven group, the U of Alberta Research Institute for Comparative Literature, and others. Briefly, the difference between the Polysystem Theory and the ESL can be found in the Polysystem Theory's more narrative presentation of the theoretical framework, while the ESL offers more exacting and precise formulations. For an example of the application of the Polysystem Theory to the Canadian literatures see also Tötösy 1988.

In English-Canadian novel literature the compilation of the corpus has been accomplished (with some omissions and, as this compilation pertains to both literatures, in the case of the French-Canadian novels, with some wrong classifications) by a project whose objective was to microfilm all monographs published by Canadians in Canada and abroad.⁶ The project began in 1978 under the auspices of the "Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions" (CIHM) with the collaboration of the National Library. The project consisted of several stages and was completed in July 1988 with 58,650 entries in total. The CIHM now consists of the actual texts on microfiche and, also on microfiche, among several library systems categories, a bibliography of the titles. In addition, a bibliography of the works also exists on computer tapes. These computer tapes, after several steps such as a conversion into another computer program, allowed for the extraction of titles of fiction from both literatures. Once the list of all fiction was obtained, this allowed for a hand-search of the microfiched texts to establish which were novels and which were not, and then whether the novel had a preface or not. In this way, a fairly reliable list of prefaces to novels in the Canadian literatures from the beginning until 1900 was constructed.

After the composition of a list of the prefaces the actual implementation of the ESL framework could begin. As introduced above, the ESL and, coincidentally, the genre theoretical secondary scholarship required a corpus-based preface typology. Although Genette presented a typology in his book *Seuils* and a similarly sophisticated preface typology has been found in Lausberg's *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik: Eine Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaft* (1960), neither of these typologies proved themselves to be appropriate for a typology for the English-Canadian and French-Canadian prefaces. This was not possible for several reasons. Firstly, as it became clear after a preliminary reading of the prefaces, the English-Canadian prefaces have a specific structure which would have allowed the application of the Genette typology only partially. Secondly, although the French-Canadian prefaces have a structure which would have allowed for the application of Genette's typology, the application of a typology to only the French-Canadian prefaces and not to the English-Canadian ones would have been methodologically faulty. Thus, although the Genette typology has been considered and used, a specific typology has been developed. The best method to develop this specific typology was found to be the use of a 'data sheet.' The data sheet was

constructed based on the following: 1. Preface types found in works on the preface; 2. The concepts of the four ESL categories; 3. Typological characteristics discovered during a preliminary reading of the Canadian prefaces. Thus, the data sheet, although serving ultimately to facilitate an analysis according to the four ESL categories, is concurrently used for the construction of a preface typology. In the following, the data sheet is summarized, excluding the more detailed explanation and description of the data categories.⁷

The Data Sheet:

1. *The bibliographical data of the novel (CIHM)* _____
2. *The title and the author of the preface* _____
3. *Typology*
 Acknowledgement ___ Apologetic ___ Critical ___
 Dedictory ___ Ethical ___ Explanatory ___ Integral ___
 Preemptive ___ Promotional ___ Subversive ___ Length
 of the preface _____
4. *Systemic data in the preface*
 Literary Theory ___
 Literary Genre ___
 References to Literary Figures/Texts ___
 Mention of Other Arts ___
 References to or Address of Readership ___
5. *Summary of the preface* _____
6. *Theme of the novel* _____
7. *Remarks* _____

In this typology the various types of prefaces have been further divided into subcategories. Thus, the reading of the prefaces resulted in a typology exemplified by detailed preface characteristics. After the typology, specifically systemic data were extracted from the prefaces (No. 4 on the data sheet). The results of these two extractions formed the basis for the analysis of the prefaces according to the four ESL categories.

Due to restrictions of space, the corpus-based typology, i.e., each typological category provided with quoted examples from the prefaces, cannot be presented here. However, a statistical account for the corpus of the prefaces should be offered. In the case of English-Canadian literature the

6 There is also the National Library's retrospective bibliography of Canadiana. However, this compilation contains limited bibliographical data and it is not accessible electronically. Works listed in this compilation can only be seen (read) in the indicated libraries, which can be in Canada, in the U.S., or in Britain in most cases.

7 These can be found in Tötösy 1989 and 1990a.

extraction of fiction from the CIHM yielded 1,080⁸ titles. Out of these 1,080 fiction titles, 556⁹ were visually (on the microfiche) established as bona fide novels. Out of the 556 novels 239 contain a preface.¹⁰ This results in 43% of the English-Canadian novels containing a preface. In the case of French-Canadian literature, the fiction extraction yielded 146 titles. Among the 146 titles, 102 were established as novels. Of these 52 contained a preface.¹¹ The proportion here is 51% of the novels containing a preface. Thus, French-Canadian novels had a slightly higher percentage of prefaces. In more general terms, in both cases roughly half of all novels had a preface. Here, two brief samples from the application of the ESL framework from the category of reception (Rezeptionsbereich) and from within the category of production (Produktionsbereich) the subcategory of product, i.e., one aspect of the prefaces as the product, will be presented.

The reception of the preface has one aspect which belongs to the ESL category of post-production processing. This aspect, essentially the ways that scholars use information found in prefaces, will be discussed in that category. Here, the reception of the preface by the readership is of importance. There are limited possibilities to analyse this relationship. The most immediate possibility is to see how the readership is mirrored in the preface. However, in the case of the Canadian novel prefaces, unlike the data shown by Heyden's *Zielgruppen des Romans: Analysen französischer Romanvorworte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (1986), the data of this relationship are limited and limited to data in English-Canadian prefaces.

Generally speaking, the prefacer perceived the preface negatively. This observation holds if the few instances where there is a discernible reaction of the prefacer to the preface are acceptable as representative data. Most examples are, even if in nuances, more deprecative than appreciative. Overall, the prefacers' view seems to be that prefaces are not read by the

8 The number of English-Canadian and French-Canadian fiction titles extracted from the CIHM has varied (Tötösy 1989, 1990a, 1990b) because of the problem of duplicates in the electronic files. It appears that the present numbers are final.

9 This number does not include re-editions such as those of Hailburton's and Richardson's novels. Prefaces of re-editions do not contain significantly different data. Occasionally, in addition to the original preface of the work, a biographical preface on the author is added.

10 This number does not include re-editions of novels with the same prefaces and it does not include cases where the novel contains more than one preface. Consequently, the number of prefaces is actually higher. However, the structure of the typology prohibits the duplication of prefaces and thus the lower, typologically speaking, and more exact number was chosen.

11 These numbers were arrived at with the same exclusion of re-editions and multiple prefaces, as in the case of the English-Canadian figures.

readers. However, this attitude (perhaps) signals a *topos*, a rhetorical ploy or trick, thus inviting the reader to read the preface.

The most obvious aspect of the category reception is the prefacer's address to the readership. The typology of the English-Canadian prefaces resulted in several subcategories which contain readership data. These subcategories show that the prefacers were aware of their readership, even if in a limited sense. On the other hand, the available data do not suggest that the prefacers/authors targeted certain readership groups as Heyden (cited above) found in the prefaces to nineteenth-century French novels. Other preface studies, for example Riefstahl's (1934) or Ehrenzeller's (1955) also demonstrate that prefacers consciously targeted certain readership groups. The answer why this was not so in nineteenth-century English or French Canada may be found in the composition of the readership in nineteenth-century Canada.

There is a general understanding in works on nineteenth-century Canadian literatures that the readership was limited to the privileged and that these privileged were not a numerous class. Although at this time there is no complete empirical or statistical foundation to this accepted view, some empirical data has been collected.¹² Harvey J. Graff's dissertation *Literacy and Social Structure in the Nineteenth-Century City* (1975) and his subsequent book (1979), contain data which, although limited to a few cities in Ontario, offer the possibility to postulate a hypothesis about the nineteenth-century English-Canadian urban readership.¹³ Graff's findings were that in Ontario in 1861 93% of all males and 92.5% of all females were literate (519). But, as Graff concedes, these percentages do not "always signify an ability to understand what was read" (413). He is obviously speaking about the difference between literacy and functional illiteracy. A revealing statement about the nineteenth-century urban Ontario literacy rate is this: "All indicators, thus, suggest that the reading ability commonly attained was an imperfect one" (441). If this information is combined with what we may assume about the reading of novels in nineteenth-century English Canada, namely, that novel reading was frowned upon and that only certain novels, the morally acceptable ones, were generally read, the readership indeed becomes almost homogeneous and relatively small. Graff sees the roots of

12 Here is an indication of the limited secondary corpus in the scholarship of the nineteenth-century Canadas. There have been only a few studies on this topic, and these concentrated on literacy which is not necessarily equatable with an ability to read literary texts. Thus, any analysis will have to be hypothetical, based on information inferred from analogous data.

13 The Mays and Manz study (1974) is an analysis of literacy levels in Ontario. However, this is difficult to apply to a question of readership of literature.

functional illiteracy in the poor shape of institutional education. In his discussion of the secondary school system of nineteenth-century Ontario, he also mentions some aspects of reading habits and concludes that

Reading fiction represented a negative, unwise use of literacy, wasteful to the individual and dangerous to society. 'Novel reading,' the *Christian Guardian* [Jan. 28, 1852] exclaimed, 'is pernicious to man as an intellectual and a religious being. Novels make few appeals to reason. This neglect soon engenders an aversion to profound thought, which results in inability.' Good men, moreover, were not often authors of novels; good men and women should not therefore be their readers. (446-47)

Examples found in prefaces confirm this attitude. Prefacers attempted to persuade against this, it seems, generally accepted negative attitude towards the novel of the time. But their persuasion rested on their awareness of the importance of morally acceptable writing. This explains why it came about that the ethical aspect of the prefaces was so strong.¹⁴ The prefacers indeed needed to attempt to advocate the ethical, moral, and religious acceptability of their work — in response to what they thought their readership was like. Addressing youth and women, as the examples show in English-Canadian prefaces, was particularly important. Graff writes that "the threat [of novel reading] was perhaps greatest to young unmarried women and to children, whose moral innocence it was most important to protect" (447). The resistance to novels, as Graff's study shows, was an almost total social fact. He documents that "schoolmen, not surprisingly, added their voices to the cries against novel reading" (447). Interestingly, the resistance to novel reading was not only an attitude of the leading strata of society (clergymen, educators, politicians, the upper classes). Graff found that the working class, too, decried novel reading:

Importantly, however, the working class press censured the school system itself for the prevalence of this state of affairs. The public system, they reported, made attendance and reading instruction compulsory, and then gives them dime novels for perusal, having previously given them a taste for such reading. (447)

Although it must be assumed that the above negative attitude towards novel reading was all-pervasive, in my view its effect must have been more differentiated. Graff's study contains this seemingly contradictory observation:

The rise and easy availability of cheap, popular literature, aimed at the pleasure and amusement of the lower as well as the middle class, provided material which many would quite naturally find suited to their tastes. Easy to buy, sold on street corners and hawked on the pavements, within the financial grasp of all but the very poorest, this was material simply read, easily understood, appealing, pleasing, and exciting.... (447)

In this context, we must assume that although novel reading was decried, this was done with reference to a certain type of novel. Due to the fact that we do not have empirical readership data as to what kinds those "cheap, popular" novels were, this part of the question too, must be hypothetical. The question and answer become even more complicated, because the "good" and "bad" novels, with regards to the novels examined in this study, are difficult to relate to each other.

The literacy rate in French-Canada was lower than in English-Canada. David M. Hayne declared categorically that in nineteenth-century French Canada "only a fraction of this tiny population could read and write" (67). Allan Greer's studies "L'Alphabétisation et son histoire au Québec: état de la question" (1978, 1983) contain valuable information on nineteenth-century Lower Canadian literacy in statistical and descriptive forms. His data is somewhat broader than that of Graff because it includes rural and urban literacy ratios. A complicating aspect of Greer's data is that he used census numbers for his literacy calculations, thus limiting his data points. Greer, similarly to Graff, found that literacy did not necessarily mean a full ability to read and comprehend (1983, 27-45). (This differentiation is important. In second language acquisition research, including and meaning literacy, distinction is made between the BICS [Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills] and CALP [Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency] levels. For novel reading a lower level of CALP would be necessary. In my opinion, Graff's or Greer's literacy figures would include no more than 40% of a lower level CALP.) In 1861, when the Lower Canadian population was approximately 1.2 million (*The Canadian Encyclopedia* 3 1796), 61.8% of the rural, and 81.8 % of the urban population was moderately literate ("lire au moins") (Greer 1983, 44). By 1891 this did not significantly change, although the population did not increase by much either (*The Canadian Encyclopedia* 3 1796). The ratio was 67.3% for the rural, and 82.2% for the urban population (Greer 1983, 44). The limited readership of French-Canadian fiction seems to be confirmed also by Maurice Lemire, in his article "Les Relations entre écrivains et éditeurs au Québec au XIX^e siècle" (1983). He states that fiction authors "donnent leurs livres aux institutions," i.e., to "bibliothèques de collèges, d'écoles et de paroisses" (217). This observation allows the inference that the output of published fiction, which was higher at this time, did not mean a significantly higher level of readership, because it is more than likely that these libraries and parishes had a low rate of

14 The ethical category is defined as a preface containing explicit or implicit value judgement(s) of a moral (moralizing), ethical, humanistic, economic, political, religious, social, or generally ideological nature.

borrowing. More, the type of institutions receiving the donations did not indicate a larger readership, because these were not public libraries and the readers were mainly from the educated and professional strata. Based on these observations I suggest that the situation of novel reading was analogous to the situation in Ontario. However, one interesting aspect of Greer's data begs attention. He found that Lower Canadian female readers were by 20% more literate than male readers (Lemire 38-44). This is dramatically different from the almost equal ratio found by Graff. At the same time, Greer questions the exact meaning of literacy, and I would suggest that the majority of this group was functionally illiterate and therefore not capable of serious novel reading. Had there been a significant ratio of urban Lower Canadian female novel readership, surely some preface data would have indicated this. However, the readership data of the French-Canadian prefaces is generally scarce and no targeting of any readership group occurred. On the contrary, as data suggested, the prefatorial readership address is general. Thus, we must accept that the readership is perceived by the prefacers as a homogeneous, Roman Catholic, French-Canadian, and conquered population.

Another important aspect with regards to the readership is the question of the type of novels read in the nineteenth-century Canadas and, consequently, the relationship between this aspect and the preface. Mary Vipond contended in her study "Best Sellers in English Canada, 1899-1918: An Overview" (1979) that

By and large, Canadian middle-class reading tastes seem to have been more conservative than American ones; Canadians were slower to pick up a new author, but slower to abandon an old favourite too. ... The popular fiction of both countries depicted for the most part the lives of members of the middle class or aspirers to it. Religious, idealistic, filled with good intentions and thus able ultimately to triumph over both dilemma and adversity, the characters were guides and models for readers searching for hope and happiness in their own lives. (109-10)

This conservative attitude of the English-Canadian readership is reflected in the prefaces and mirrors, at the same time, the most likely middle-class readership.¹⁵

In sum, the nineteenth-century English-Canadian novel readership of the kinds of novels under study here, i.e., the novels with prefaces compiled from the CIHM and listed in the appendix of the dissertation, and in the majority 'popular fiction,' i.e., non-canonized, must be assumed to have been fairly small and homogeneous in English Canada. Although for different

15 Although the 'proletarian' novel existed in English-Canadian literature, neither the genre nor the readership could have been significant (cf. Watt 1976).

reasons, the readership in French Canada consisted of a similar structure. A further differentiation can be made that in English Canada the readership of these novels must have been somewhere between the 'masses' of the 'cheap, popular' novels and those who were against the reading of novels because of their bad reputation. Both the French-Canadian and the English-Canadian novel readership and the prefacers/authors demonstrably knew of the negative attitude towards the novel and thus wanted to assure the reader that their novel was not a 'bad' or 'immoral' one. It must be also considered that the popularity of 'cheap' novel reading discussed by Graff, is related to an urban readership. This is important, when considering that the majority of the population in the Canadas was rural. The situation was similar in French Canada where the negative attitude towards novel reading has existed and has been propagated by the Roman Catholic church. Taken together, the above observations indicate that the relationship between the prefacers/authors and the readership contained elements of strain in both English and French Canada in the sense that the readership consumed one type of reading material and the prefacers/authors were attempting to attract them to read another. At the same time, the authors/prefacers needed readership and needed to sell their writing. Thus, it is perhaps for this reason that readership groups were only rarely targeted by the prefacers of nineteenth-century Canadian novelists. They recognized the necessity to speak to a 'non-descript' readership. The small readership and the environment hostile to the novel created by the educated, the churches, schools, etc., did not allow for the singling out of specific groups which were large enough to buy the novel specifically offered to them.

As another selected sample of the analysis of the prefaces, in this case with reference to form from the category of production, a brief discussion about the length of the prefaces and its systemic dimension will be presented. The analysis of the length of prefaces had some interesting results. Meaningful statistical comparison between the preface lengths could only be made for those written after 1860, because before that time there are too few French-Canadian prefaces. The average length of the English-Canadian prefaces between 1800 and 1860 was 3.7 ± 0.8 (mean \pm standard error, $n=39$) pages. After 1860 twenty year periods were analysed. Between 1860 and 1880 lengths were 1.4 ± 0.2 (mean \pm standard error, $n=50$) pages and 3.9 ± 1 (mean \pm standard error, $n=17$) for English and French prefaces, respectively. This average shows a decrease in the length of English-Canadian prefaces to less than half from the 3.7 in the previous period. Between the English-Canadian and the French-Canadian prefaces the comparison shows that the French-Canadian prefaces were significantly longer. This discrepancy is even more pronounced in the next twenty year period: 2.2 ± 0.3 (mean \pm standard error, $n=169$) pages for the English-

Canadian prefaces and 6.8 ± 1.42 (mean ± standard error, n=30) pages for the French-Canadian prefaces.

The first question here is why were the English-Canadian prefaces shorter? (This question, beyond its appropriateness in the present context, has been important when a decision had to be made whether the typologies of Lausberg and Genette were employable or not. As it turned out, because of the particularities of the English-Canadian prefaces, among which their brevity was decisive, neither of these typologies seemed appropriate.) The answer may be found partially in a linguistic argument. If it is true that in English one tends to say in fewer words more concisely what one wants to say than in French, the English-Canadian prefaces did just that. Obviously, such a statement is contentious. (For example, Barbara Godard wrote in her preface to her translation of Nicole Brossard's *Lovhers* (1986) that English tends to be more precise and concise than French.) Another, (socio-literary) reason may be that the French-Canadian prefaces felt a greater need to communicate directly with their readers because they felt that the aim of patriotism and morality can thus be better and more clearly served. Since French-Canadian society and the French-Canadian readership were more homogeneous than the English-Canadian, the explanation of this authorial strategy is perhaps an acceptable hypothesis. The length of a preface may also have been in relation to circumstances dictated by the publisher. It may be that, from the time of Catherine Beckwith Hart, who said that it was her publisher who requested a preface, until later in the century, English-Canadian publishers wanted to save on space while the French-Canadian publishers did not.

The above two selected and brief samples of analyses with the framework of the ESL offer an indication of the applicability and more, the appropriateness, of such a framework for the study of the Canadian literatures.

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Is There a K in Africa?: The Modern Parables of Kafka, Laye and Coetzee

There has been a recent resurgence of critical interest in the parable as a literary form. Most of the more recent commentators, such as Frank Kermode, Paul Ricoeur, and Theo Elm, and some of the less recent ones, such as Walter Benjamin, have tended to draw an analogy between parable and paradox.¹ The parable's customary disjunction between text and meaning has thus been interpreted as "a double function [of] simultaneous proclamation and concealment" (Kermode 47) or, alternatively, as a yoking of "Sinnhoffnung" and "Sinnverbot" which activates "die Sinnorientierung des Lesers durch Wirkungsstrategien die ihm den allgemeinen Sinn zugleich verbergen" (Elm 204). Many of these commentators have pointed to the emergence in the twentieth century of "modern parable," a literary form which, although obviously better suited to the short story (itself arguably a modern form), is by no means restricted to the short story. While the most famous examples of modern parable remain the short stories of Kafka, other examples may be found among his novels (*Der Prozeß*, for example, has been called by Walter Benjamin "eine entfaltete Parabel") or among the "Lehrstücke" of Bertolt Brecht. "Parabel," says Norbert Miller, "bezeichnet vielmehr einen, wahrscheinlich den ausschlaggebenden Grundzug unserer Epoche" (267). One may not wish to agree with Miller's claim, but it is certainly true that the parable has become a recognizable and increasingly popular literary form. The reasons for this are not hard to see: the depiction in much of twentieth-century literature of a contingent, fragmentary, and seemingly impenetrable world finds an ideal medium in the parable which, like the riddle or, to a certain extent, the allegory, poses a hermeneutic problem by at once inviting and frustrating interpretation. Kafka's parables are an extreme example of the problem in that the reader is given a riddle to solve which has no solution; the didactic intent of the Biblical parable is retained, but only within the context of an unfulfilled promise. Modern parable, in Kafka's work and elsewhere, tends to undercut the notion of interpretability and, by extension, the notion of 'truth': the emphasis has

1 See the essays in Elm and Hiebel; also Kafka's own parables and paradoxes, especially the famous "Von den Gleichnissen" (10).