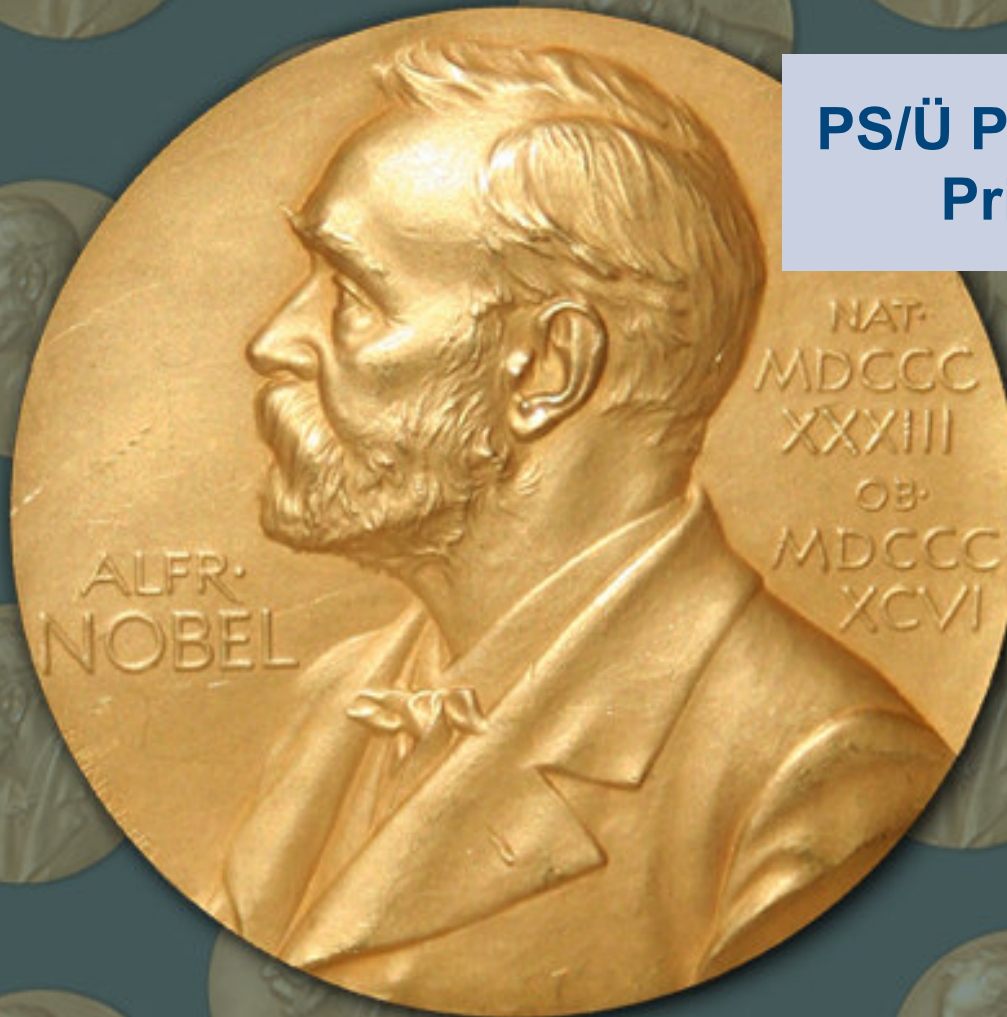


**PS/Ü Postcolonial Nobel
Prize Laureates**



PS/Ü Postcolonial Nobel Prize Laureates

Session 12: Women Laureates

The Postcolonial Short Story

Prof. Dr. Nora A. Pleßke

Vertretungsprofessorin

Lehrstuhl für Englische Literaturwissenschaft

Time: Wed 12:00 – 14:00

Room: MG1/02.06

Email: nora.plesske@uni-bamberg.de

Website: <https://www.uni-bamberg.de/englit/personen/prof-dr-nora-plesske/>

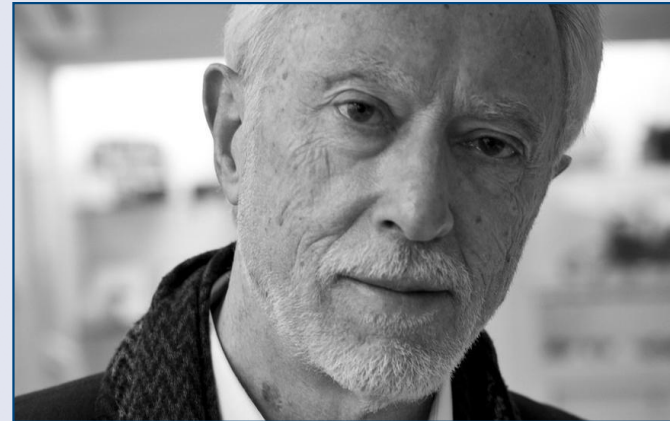
Office Hours: Wed 16:00 – 17:00, U9, 202 (register via VC)

The Nobel Lectures: Literary / Apartheid

Wole Soyinka, “This Past Must Address Its Present” (1986)



J.M. Coetzee, “He and His Man” (2003)



Nadine Gordimer, “Writing and Being” (1991)



Doris Lessing, “On Not Winning the Nobel Prize” (2007)





Women Laureates

Nadine Gordimer's *The Conservationist* (1974)

Nadine Gordimer (1923-2014)

- **Background:** Born to Lithuanian father and English mother in South African mining town, supporter of Mandela, wrote more than 13 Novels and 200 short stories
- **Collections of Short Stories:** *Face to Face* (1949), *The Soft Voice of the Serpent and Other Stories* (1959), *Six Feet of the Country* (1956), *Friday's Footprint and Other Stories* (1960), *Not for Publication* (1965), *Selected Stories* (1975), *Something Out There* (1984), *Jump and Other Stories* (1991), *Loot and Other Stories* (2003)
- **Novels:** *The Lying Days* (1953), *Occasions for Loving* (1966), *A Guest of Honour* (1970), *The Conservationist* (1974), *July's People* (1981), *None to Accompany Me* (1994), *The House Gun* (1998), *The Pickup* (2001), *Get a Life* (2005)
- **Novels banned:** *A World of Strangers* (1958), *The Late Bourgeois World* (1966), *Burgher's Daughter* (1979)

Nadine Gordimer (1923-2014)

- **Prizes:** James Tait Black Memorial Prize (1971), Booker McConnell Prize (1974), Grand Aigle d'Or Prize (1975), South African News Agency (CAN) Literary Award (1975, 1991), Nobel Prize (1991)
- **Topics:** Draw attention to atrocities of apartheid, master-servant relations, mindsets and attitudes, neocolonial situation, move from liberal to radical phase, move from explicitly political to private lives

Nadine Gordimer, “Nobel Lecture: Writing and Being” (1991)

- “Some of us have seen our books lie for years unread in our own countries, banned, and we have gone on writing. Many writers have been imprisoned. Looking at Africa alone – Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Jack Mapanje, in their countries, and in my own country, South Africa, Jeremy Cronin, Mongane Wally Serote, Breyten Breytenback, Dennis Brutus, Jaki Seroke: all went to prison for the courage shown in their lives, and have continued to take the right, as poets, to speak of trees.”

Nadine Gordimer (1923-2014)

Nadine Gordimer, “April 27: The First Time” (1994)

- “Is there any South African for whom this day will be remembered by any event, even the most personal, above its glowing significance as the day on which we voted? Even for whites, all of whom have had the vote since they were eighteen, this was the *first time*. This was my own overwhelming sense of the day: the other elections, with their farcical show of a democratic procedure restricted to whites (and, later, to everyone *but* the black majority), had no meaning for any of us as *South Africans*; only as a hegemony of skin.”

Hermoine Lee, “Interview with Nadine Gordimer” (2004)

- “We had the same reaction [party when the Berlin Wall fell] when the apartheid walls came down. Then comes the morning after. Then comes the hangover. [...] [...] I don’t think we had given much thought to [...] the idea what would happen the morning after. That of course is what we are dealing with now.”

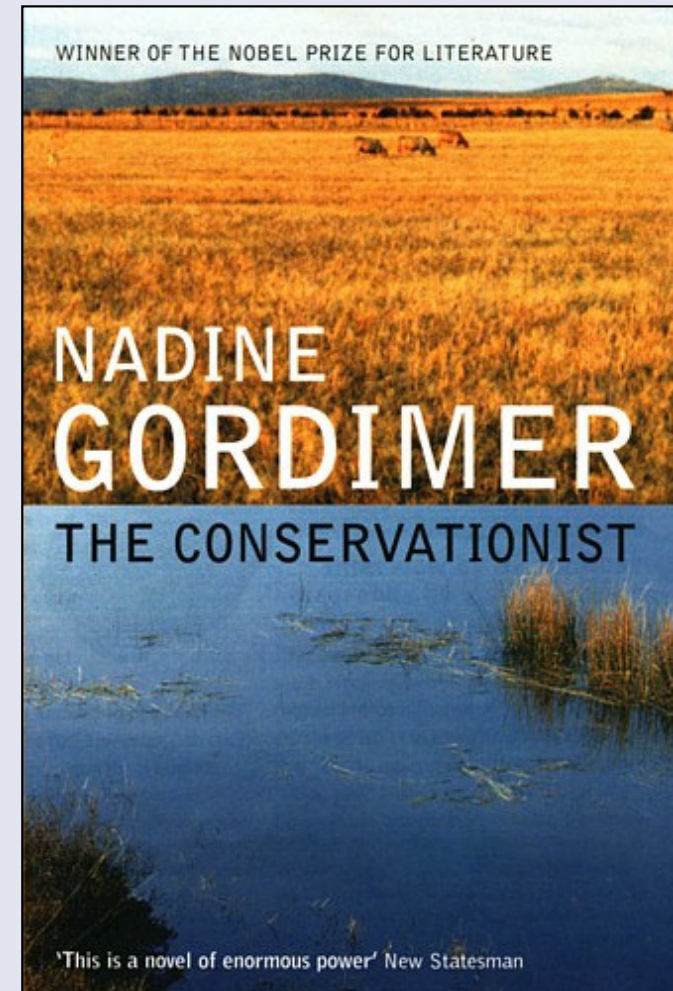
Nadine Gordimer, *The Conservationist* (1974)

Content:

- Psychological Disintegration
- Zulu Mythology and Biblical Apocalypse
- Anti-Apartheid Writing
- Women's Writing

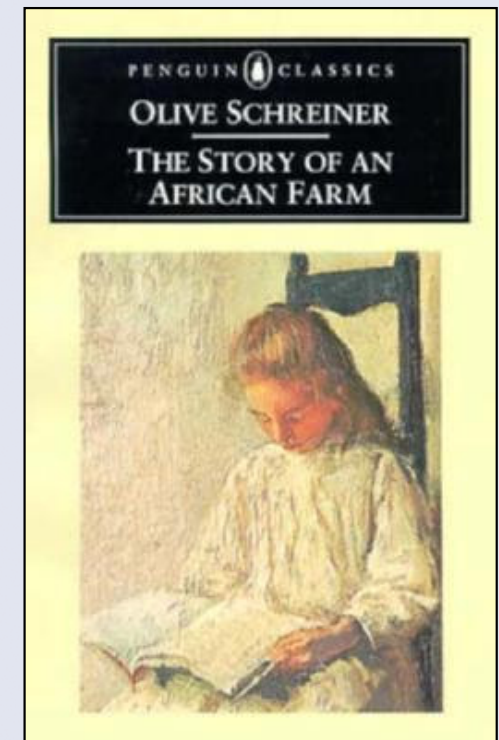
Discourse:

- Unreliable Narrator
- Present Tense
- Stream of Consciousness



Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm* (1883)

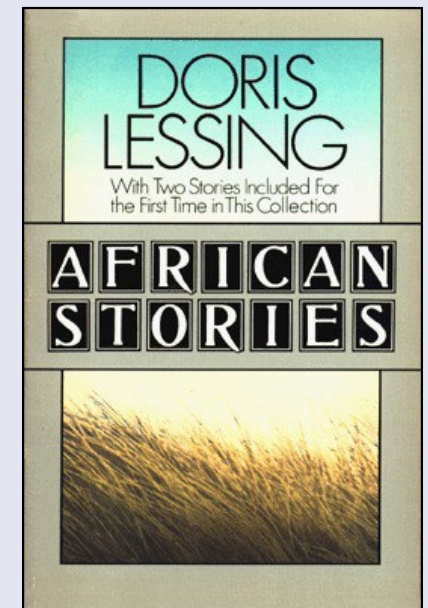
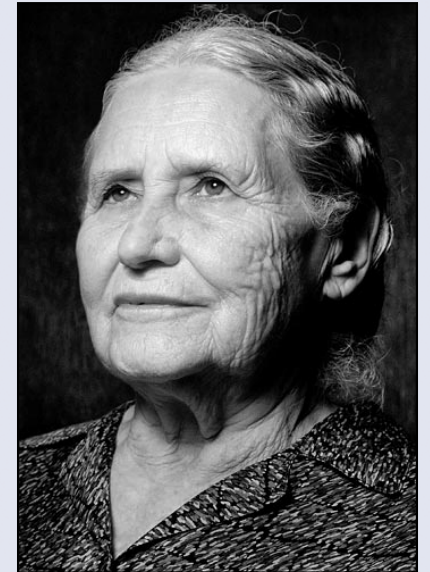
- Imperial romance
- Settlement colony, colonial society, colonial identity
- Uniquely South African landscape
- White encounter with physical and human geography of interior produced disillusionment, suffering
- Symbolic transformation
- Tradition of liberal realism
- Critique of colonial order and pioneer of feminist ideas



Doris Lessing's *The Grass Is Singing* (1950)

Doris Lessing (1919-2013)

- “Persian-born, Rhodesian-raised and London-residing novelist” (Ridout and Watkins 2)
- “Her fifty-five works – twenty-six copious sometime dishevelled novels, a regiment of short stories, plays, poetry, essays, memoirs, autobiographies, opera *libretti* and apocalyptic fables –display a wide panoply of themes, ranging from left-wing politics, feminism and sexual license to religious, zealotry, schizophrenia, racism, terrorism, the climatic calamities of drought, flash floods, war.” (Tiger 94)

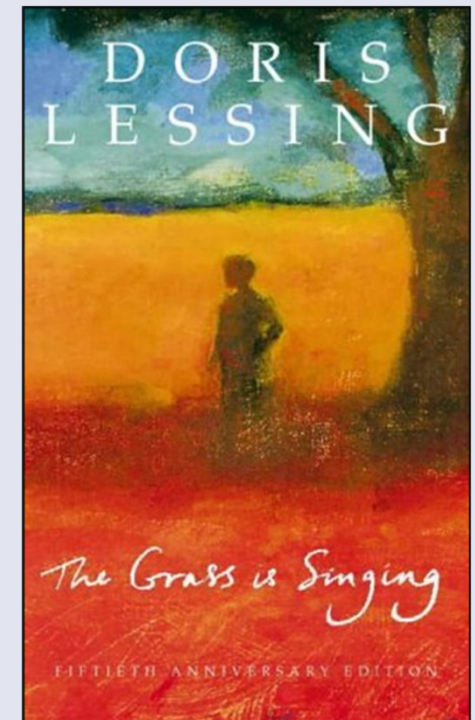


Doris Lessing's *The Grass Is Singing* (1950)

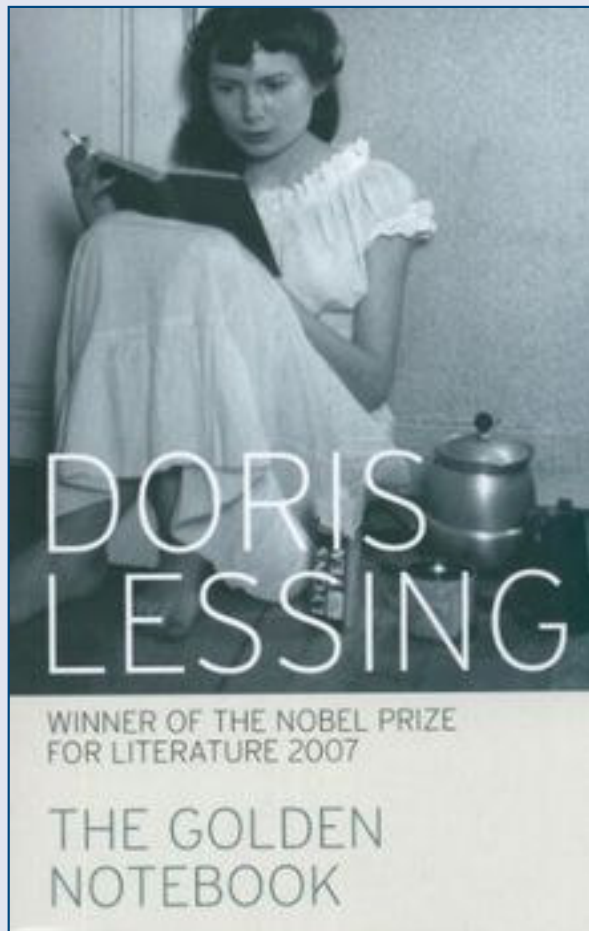
Blurb: “The Nobel Prize-winner Doris Lessing’s first novel is a taut and tragic portrayal of a crumbling marriage, set in South Africa during the years of Apartheid.

Set in Rhodesia, ‘The Grass is Singing’ tells the story of Dick Turner, a failed white farmer and his wife, Mary, a town girl who hates the bush and viciously abuses the black South Africans who work on their farm. But after many years, trapped by poverty, sapped by the heat of their tiny house, the lonely and frightened Mary turns to Moses, the black cook, for kindness and understanding.

A masterpiece of realism, ‘The Grass is Singing’ is a superb evocation of Africa’s majestic beauty, an intense psychological portrait of lives in confusion and, most of all, a fearless exploration of the ideology of white supremacy.”



Postcolonialism and Feminism



Nobel Prize 2007: “Oh, Christ!”

Prize motivation: “that epicist of the female experience, who with scepticism, fire and visionary power has subjected a divided civilisation to scrutiny”

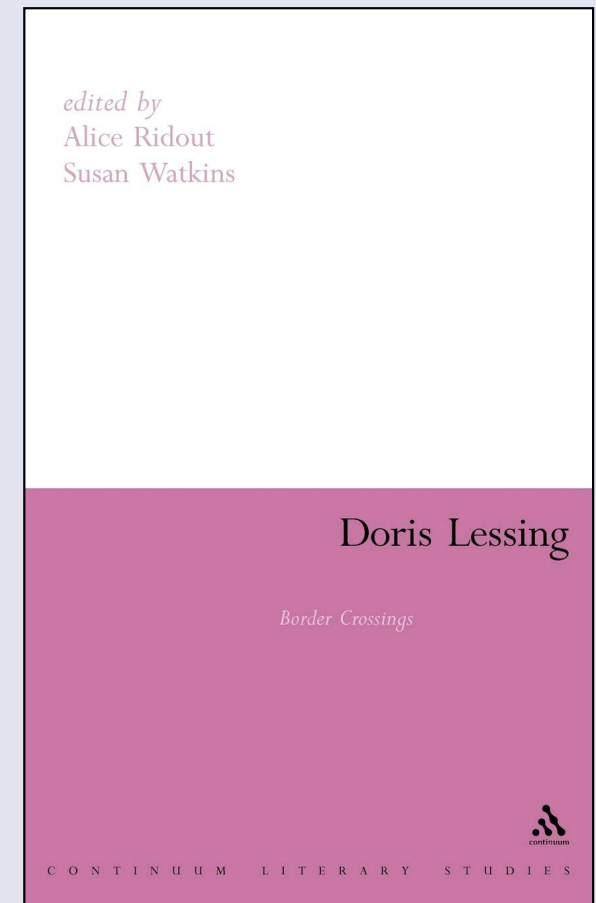
Oeuvre: “Her most experimental novel, *The Golden Notebook*, from 1962, is a study of a woman's psyche and life situation, the lot of writers, sexuality, political ideas, and everyday life.”

(Nobel Prize Website)

The Female Laureate and Border Crossings

“Following the award, however, the reception in the media in more than one country ‘fixed’ her reputation. She was a feminist; she as an anti-feminist. She was a Marxist; she was an anti-Marxist. She was a social realist; loathing realism, she was an apocalyptic fabulist.” (Tiger 93-94)

“Ms. Lessing, who joined the Communist Party in Africa, repudiated Marxist theory during the Hungarian crisis of 1956, a view for which she was criticized by some British academics.... Although she has been held up as an early heroine of feminism, Ms. Lessing later disavowed that she herself was a feminist, for which she received the ire of some British critics and academics.” (Rich and Lyall qtd. in Ridout and Watkins 2)



Points of Discussion

- White Women (Writers) and Apartheid
- Postcolonialism and Feminism
- Female Nobel Prize Laureates
- Gender and Literary Awards
- ...

Alice Munro's Short Stories (1968-1994)

Alice Munro (1931 -)



“I’m particularly glad that winning this award will please so many Canadians. I’m happy too that this will bring more attention to Canadian writing.” (CBC 2013)

- Alice Munro, Ontario-born Nobel Prize in Literature winner 2010

Positive Reception of Alice Munro

Almost exclusive approval and enthusiastic reactions in praise of author:

1. First time in over 100 years of existence, highest literary distinction went to Canada; Postcolonial Status of Canada; internationally renown novelists like Margaret Atwood and Michael Ondaatje
2. Only 13th female writer to win the prize of 110 Nobel Prizes in Literature awarded at the time; 1:9 ratio of prizes won; feminist topics
3. Distinguished writer of short stories; short story as Canada's preeminent form; largest readership for short fiction
4. Leading withdrawn lifestyle; no engagement in the public discourse; no political writer
5. Seen as a writer's writer; sales success and international acclaim; recipient of most important literary awards

(Nischik 9-10)

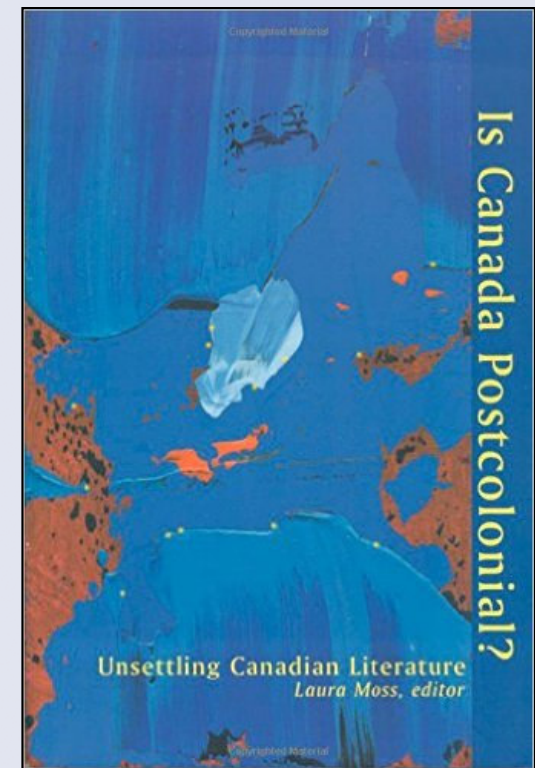
Is Canada Postcolonial?

❖ The answer is a “complex yes, no, and maybe. Or rather, it still depends.” (Moss 23)

- Many aspects of Canadian literature and culture lend themselves to discussion within the framework of Postcolonialism:

1. Colonial History and Decolonisation
2. French as Conquered People
3. Immigration
4. First Nation Peoples
5. Multiethnic Society
6. Multiculturalism
7. U.S.-American Neo-Colonialism

❖ Canada is at once and the same time a model transcultural, subtly colonial, and postcolonial society as it is strongly affected by neocolonialism.” (Lutz 307)



Decolonising Canadian Literature

In 1864 Edward H. Dewart wrote in his preface to the anthology *Selections from Canadian Poets*:

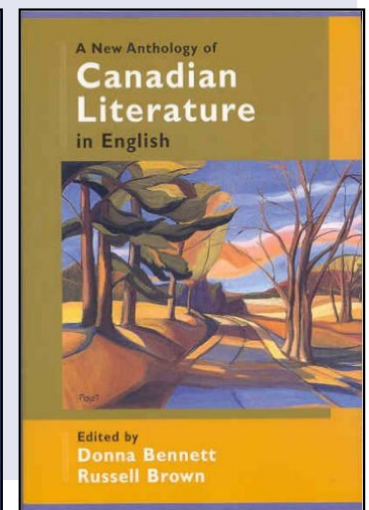
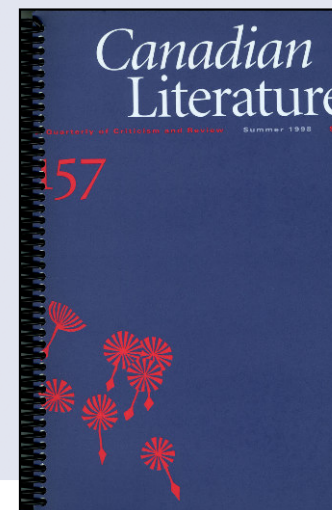
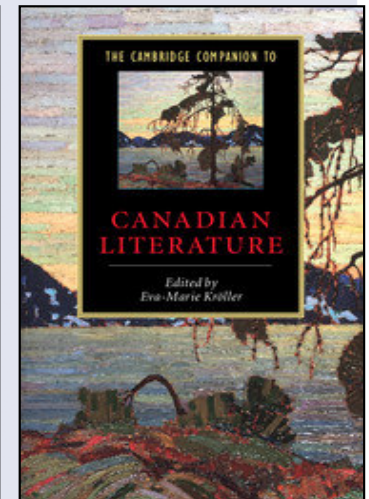
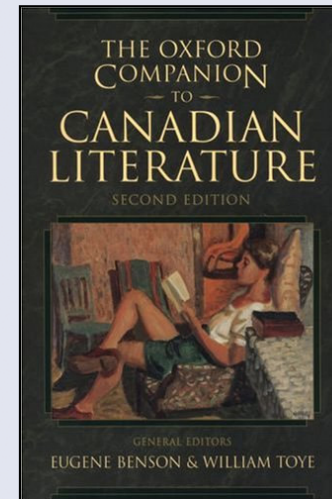
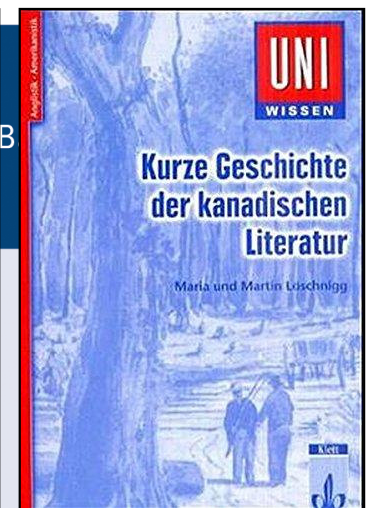
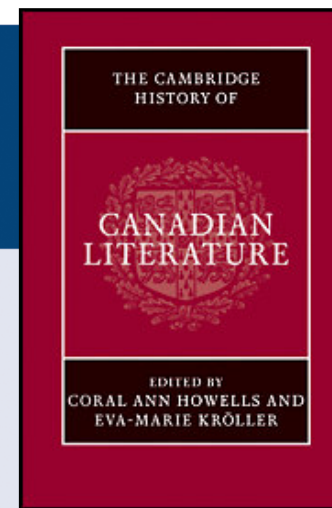
“A national literature is an essential element in the formation of national character. It is not merely a record of a country’s mental progress: it is the expression of its intellectual life, the bond of national unity, and the guide of national energy.”

“It seems to me that Canadian sensibility has been profoundly disturbed, not so much by our famous problem of identity, important as that is, as by a series of paradoxes in what confronts that identity. It is less perplexed by the question ‘Who am I?’ than by some such riddle as ‘where is here?’” (Frye 338)

Canadian Literature since 1960

“Canada is a place where Canadians from many different countries and origins find a space to explore, among other things, the question, ‘Who am I’. Canadian literature today is clearly defined by its diversity and its transculturalism.” (Lutz 308)

1. Regionalism
2. Postmodernism
3. Aboriginal Literature / Native Writing
4. Multi- or Transcultural Literature



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