Author : Ceri Morgan

Title : Avenue (rue) Coloniale

Introduction

This prose-poem is part of a larger critical-creative project on Montreal, which mixes memoir, feminist theory and literature. A key intertext is Nicole Brossard's *French Kiss* (1974), a celebration of language and desire. In Brossard’s counter-cultural novel, Marielle, also known as Elle, drives across Montreal from a French-speaking east side to an English-speaking west side and back again. As she does so, a francophone and anglophone woman engage in a lengthy kiss which is projected across urban space to a place and time outside or beyond patriarchy. Other moments see the women hang out with Marielle and two male friends, exploring and enjoying the pleasures of the city. My prose-poem is a tribute to Brossard’s novel, Montreal, and the feminist writer, Martine Delvaux, who lives in, and has written about, a neighbourhood featured in *French Kiss*.

“Une fois” (Brossard 1980, 13). One time. Once upon a time. A time which curled and curved. Marielle’s on rue Sherbrooke in her mauve convertible. I’m walking on Coloniale: past the store selling lavender chocolate, the gay sauna puffing occasional breaths of steam. I’m heading towards Rachel where I buy still-warm *nata*, tipping my tongue to the caramelised custard crust. Slipping on a vintage coat in the *friperie*, I look in the dusty mirror, embrace the blue-gold day. Store windows glint purple as Elle’s *c(h)ar* glides by. Slush puddles shine. Canailles in my earphones, I turn on my heels, stride back the way I came, glance at my watch to see both hands meet. Rue Coloniale, a “no man’s land” of “potagers improvisés” (Delvaux 2012, n.p.). The dead-eyed dogwoods fix me in their sights. A meeting at the corner of Duluth: I touch my face to his, smile as I think of violet eyes. French kiss: ‘introduire la langue dans la bouche de l’autre’ (Brossard 1980, 83). Lips, teeth bump, smack and chatter, settle into a semi-somnolent rhyme. Grime on the sidewalk, the boots of passers-by: winter’s loosening. My turquoise ski jacket makes some men stare. *Fy nghariad*, I’m dazzled by you. You’re marvellous, delicious in my mouth. The bobble-heads wobble in the tea-shop window. Salt-cod *croquetas* catch on the air. “Sur Coloniale, on se berce dans la cuisine” (Brossard 1980, 129). Record my friend reading with the thrum of the city. The laugh in her voice. Traffic sounds.

References

Brossard, Nicole, *French Kiss* (Montréal: Quinze 1980). First published (Montréal: Éditions du Jour, 1974)

Delvaux, Martine, ‘Histoires vraies 3: Boundary Road’, *Pop en stock* (2012) <http://popenstock.ca/dossier/article/histoires-vraies-3-boundary-road>

Acknowledgements

*French Kiss* cited with the kind permission of Nicole Brossard and les Éditions du Jour.

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