

The collection features fourteen essays and reflections, which are categorized by theme under four headings: “Foundations,” “Identity Affordances,” “Mediated Communities,” and “Reflections.” Some of the entries are reprints of key essays related to digital identity: Helen Kennedy’s work on anonymity (and lack thereof) in personal home pages, Mary L. Gray’s study of how digital resources influence rural LGBTQ youth, and Lisa Nakamura’s “Cyberrace.”

Many of the essays employ case studies where the objects analyzed tend to be either digital platforms or groups of users on those platforms (or both). In addition to entries on online identity performance in general (Nakamura) and on social-networking sites (Cover), many of the essays are case studies. Topics include personal home pages created as part of a women’s distance-learning course (Kennedy), “Spousebusting” surveillance technologies (Gregg), Facebook (Morisson), national memory/history archives (Rivard), “six-word memoir” microblogging community (McNeill), lifelogging and health-tracking technologies (Banner), perinatal death mourning forum communities (Micalizzi), a Montreal-based platform created for and by the city’s homeless community (Bouclin). Smith and Watson’s “Digital Toolkit” and Poletti and Rak’s introduction both balance a summary of the current state of the study of digital identity with predictions and suggestions for future directions. The future also looms large in the collection’s concluding reflections by Philippe Lejeune and Lauren Berlant, who discuss the future of auto/biography studies, autobiography in general, and new directions for academic research and how it is disseminated.

The collection reflects a recent turn in auto/biography studies that is also evident in a 2015 special edition of *Biography*, titled *Online Lives 2.0*. Both collections of essays use case studies and interdisciplinary methods, and the editors of *Online Lives 2.0* propose that scholars in auto/biography studies have much to gain by “drawing on the qualitative and quantitative work of our colleagues in other disciplines” (McNeil and Zuern xxxix). Although the individual contributions to *Identity Technologies* will no doubt be useful for scholars interested in the specific cases they describe, the book as a whole provides a sense of future directions in interdisciplinary scholarship in digital identity. In addition to Smith and Watson’s exhaustive “digital toolkit,” which features topics and questions that could facilitate productive discussion in the interdisciplinary study of online identity, the rest of the essays collected in this volume will likely stimulate future scholarship in this field through their function as examples of the

kinds of theoretical frameworks and methodologies that can illuminate digital identity work.

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Work Cited

McNeill, Laurie, and John David Zuern. “Online Lives 2.0: Introduction.” *Online Lives 2.0*. Eds. Laurie McNeill and John David Zuern. Special issue of *Biography* 38.2 (Spring 2015): v–xlv.

Claudia Malacrida. *A Special Hell: Institutional Life in Alberta’s Eugenic Years*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015. 302 pp. \$32.95.

A Special Hell is an important contribution to scholarship on eugenics that both supplements and extends our understanding of the broad spectrum of eugenics in Canada. Malacrida’s primary interest is in what she calls “a passive form of eugenics,” namely the “lifelong internment of ‘mental defectives’” (4) at the Michener Centre, a provincially-run institution located outside of Red Deer, Alberta. Although described by the province as a centre for “the residential care and training of mentally defective Albertans” (3), Malacrida’s analysis leads her to conclude that Michener is more akin to a “gulag” (30) or prison than a care facility. Founded in 1923 as the Provincial Training School, at its peak in 1970 the Centre housed upwards of twenty-three hundred inmates. It is no surprise, Malacrida argues, that the 1920s and 1970s are important in the history of the Michener Centre as well as Alberta’s Sexual Sterilization Act, enacted in 1928 and repealed in 1972. *A Special Hell* expands our understanding of eugenics beyond sterilization alone, reminding readers that institutionalization is both driven by eugenic logic and itself a form of eugenic programming.

The text also decentres sterilization as *the* eugenic practice in twentieth-century Canada: although medical experimentation and sterilization appear in Malacrida’s study, they are not the focal point until chapters 8 and 9. Such an organizational choice reinforces Malacrida’s argument that institutionalization and the dehumanization that accompanies it were important preconditions for Alberta’s Sexual Sterilization Act. Malacrida notes that social reformers lobbied heavily for eugenic sterilization because

“segregation was not adequate in containing the threat of degeneration” (28). It strikes me as surprising that, although this text places institutional segregation and sexual sterilization on a continuum of eugenic practices in twentieth-century Alberta, Malacrida maintains the distinction between passive and active eugenics. These terms distinguish structural practices through which “potentially ‘bad breeders’ are removed from society and the sexual arena to prevent breeding” (63) from medical interventions that cause individual infertility, respectively. I wonder if Malacrida’s argument might be made even more provocative through terminology that connects the eugenic practices of segregation and sterilization rather than distinguishing between them.

Divided into ten chapters and two appendices, *A Special Hell* offers a detailed history that clearly demonstrates the depth of Malacrida’s research. Chapter 1, “Introducing the Michener Centre,” provides readers with some general academic work on institutionalization, engaging most closely with Foucault’s theories of surveillance and discipline as tools that construct the normal and abnormal subjects. Through concepts including normalization, medicalization, and the development of the professional (a series of terms that will likely feel familiar to academic readers), Malacrida outlines the birth of the Michener Centre. *A Special Hell* engages closely with the specificities of one institution as a reflection on institutionalization as a general practice. Drawing such connections, Malacrida reminds us that “the benign motives described in the institution’s history were firmly embedded within broader and more draconian discourses concerning the segregation, devaluation, and eugenicization of people who were deemed to be deficient” (5).

Language is a primary point of consideration for Malacrida, and this book opens with a note on language that precedes the text. Here, the author explains her use of historical terms such as *mental defective*, *feeble-minded*, *idiot*, *moral taint*, and *moron* without scare quotes “so as not to whitewash the violence embedded in much of the historical language” (np). Language and its companion, silence, are central not only to Michener’s history but also to our current understandings of institutionalization. Through the text Malacrida offers many terms to describe people living in Michener, including inmates, children (in a footnote Malacrida explains that the term “child” was applied to any resident regardless of age), residents, survivors, and prisoners. The title of chapter 2, “Entering the Gulag, Leaving the World,” is similarly worth dwelling on for a moment. This title positions the world of the institution and the world beyond it as entirely separate from each other. Malacrida’s text complicates this divide, reminding the

reader that they flourished precisely because of connections between the institution and the world adjacent to it, most clearly because the Centre required a substantial amount of direct and indirect labour. Yet the separation of the institution from the “World,” *A Special Hell* explains, was often utilized by Michener employees to establish and maintain extreme levels of control within the facility. Characterizing Michener as a gulag, Malacrida actively reminds the reader of the deeply political implications of this research. *A Special Hell* is an “emancipatory history that comes from the positions or standpoints of survivors” (243). Perhaps the most valuable element of this text is Malacrida’s primary research, namely the first-hand accounts of Michener’s architecture and the interviews she has conducted with nearly two dozen survivors, families of former residents, and former employees. The material from these interviews is extensive and wide-ranging. The notable exception here concerns sterilization: as Malacrida notes, survivors and the family of former residents often don’t know or refuse to disclose personal sterilization history.

A Special Hell details the range of violence residents experienced at Michener. With the exception of chapter 5, the middle chapters of Malacrida’s text focus on specific forms of violence, including acts of dehumanization, quotidian violence, extreme physical and sexual violence, exploitation and inhuman labour practices, and exposure to the Eugenics Board. Each form of violence experienced by inmates at the institution entailed a bodily intervention: “From clothing to haircuts to food choices to dental extractions, routine institutional practices conveyed a clear message about the inhumanity of residents and telegraphed that inmates’ bodies were not their own but instead belonged to the institution, which had the right to do to those bodies whatever it deemed necessary or convenient” (88). Convenience for workers, Malacrida reminds us many times, is consistently prioritized over care of the patient. The author draws this conclusion from a wide range of resources and archival materials, including patient files and reports written by Michener staff; correspondence between staff and the families of patients; reports from local news outlets; historical and contemporary provincial documents concerning the treatment of persons with disabilities; scholarly work; tours of the Centre; and perhaps most centrally a series of interviews with Michener survivors, their families, and former employees. The interviews are also the most powerful critical resources in *A Special Hell*, and ultimately Malacrida’s concerns about institutionalization are established strongest through the words of ex-inmates and their families.

Working with survivor testimony and against official historical documents, Malacrida's text speaks back to the dehumanizing function of the institution. In short, *A Special Hell* participates in the important political process of rehumanizing ex-residents, whose humanity was stripped away through normal institutional practices and extraordinary acts of violence. As an emancipatory history, interviewees "name hurts, describe exploitation, acknowledge power relations, and remember history as it occurred for those most oppressed by it, rather than reproducing memories that serve dominant interests" (243). I understand Malacrida's participation in this process, and the text that results from her impressive level of multi-modal research, as an act of allyship. *A Special Hell* names perpetrators of extraordinary violence when possible, but it also reminds us that perpetration is complicated and that the complicity of the general public of Red Deer (and Alberta) helped Michener thrive for decades. As Malacrida puts it, ordinary and extraordinary violences were "permitted to unfold precisely because these children did not have allies outside to expose the institution and make it accountable for its actions" (58). *A Special Hell* is, broadly speaking, a contemporary expression of solidarity with former residents of the Michener Centre.

A Special Hell does not relegate the history of institutionalization to the past. Contemporary discrimination against disabled Albertans and "the threat of continued or renewed institutionalization" (233) are central concerns for Malacrida and her work. Michener may not admit new patients at this point in its history, but "leaving the bricks and mortar of the place standing means that there remains a too-easy alternative in the form of reinstitutionalization when the will and resources to support community living fall short" (231). In the final pages, then, Malacrida returns to the importance of the structure of the institution. Because economic arguments so often motivate eugenic projects, from segregation to sterilization, and because discrimination of disabled people remains today, Malacrida makes clear that to leave the architecture of Michener intact means to make reinstitutionalization too easy and too likely to recur in the future. *A Special Hell*, which begins with the story of this specific institution, concludes with a call (indeed, an insistence) to bring about the destruction of all institutions like Michener.

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Gillian Whitlock, *Postcolonial Life Narratives: Testimonial Transactions*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2015. Oxford Studies in Postcolonial Literatures Series. 242 pp.

The introduction of Gillian Whitlock's *Postcolonial Life Narratives: Testimonial Transactions* immediately alerts readers to its impressive scope. The book successfully draws connections between life writing produced and read in disparate places at disparate times by disparate audiences in order to demonstrate the ways in which life writing can articulate the impact of conflicted human subjecthood on bodies, lives, and peoples. The book is divided into two parts along a temporal logic, but variations on the term "divided" are inappropriate descriptors for Whitlock's text, given its constant attention to unexpected connections between groups of texts.

Part 1 focuses on what we might broadly call "pre-contemporary" case studies. Chapter 1 traces and compares the textual histories of two life narratives published in 1789: Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* and Watkin Tench's *Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay*. While the two texts are written from starkly different perspectives, those of an emancipated slave (Equiano) and a British Marine Officer (Tench), both "offered an autobiographical account that gave witness to the previously unseen, and in turn called upon the reader to bear witness to unknown and scarcely imaginable scenes from the 'New World'" (16). In chapter 2, Whitlock compares the two texts from chapter 1 to a 1796 letter from an Australian indigenous man, Woollawarre Bennelong, and argues that, similar to the first two narratives, the letter testifies to the individuality of Australian indigenous people and the dynamics of first contact. Chapter 3 analyzes Saartjie Bartman's (famed as the "Hottentot Venus") 1810 argument that the "freak shows" in which she was featured were not exploitative but, rather, reflected her free will. This decision, in Whitlock's estimation, gives us "insight into humanizing discourses in colonial modernity" (36) because she refuses to be subject to discourses that frame humanitarian actions as necessarily compassionate (40).

In chapter 4, Whitlock contrasts Mary Prince's 1837 *History with Equiano* and Bennelong's texts, arguing that the Prince's text "reveals how gender and sexuality constrain the voice, embodiment, and agency that become available for women in the slave narrative" (46). She further argues that Baartman and Prince's texts indicate that cultural discourses limit the extent to which women's bodies are legible in testimonial narrative. Chapter 5 turns to Susanna Moodie's *Roughing it in the Bush*, written between 1832 and 1852. Moodie's humanitarian sensibility and white civil-