as she removes "her national heroine from the family interior ... attach[ing] her to shadowy and temporary associations with obscure, international connections" (100). If the incomplete union was oppressive, it was also a "civic and discursive opening" (154).

Ferris's comprehensive research throughout this argument invites trust. Professional and disciplinary divisions between a nationally-defined Irish literary studies and a period-defined British literary studies too often keep scholars in these overlapping fields apart. Ferris, however, demonstrates that she is at home in both areas, well aware of recent work in both Irish Studies and British Romanticism. Her extensive plot and character analyses are also consistently informed by her wide-ranging use of contemporary literary theory: she moves beyond the obligatory references (Anderson, Habermas) to draw usefully on a wide variety of theorists including de Certeau and Bakhtin. This is a work that keeps capable hold over both its specific analyses of national tales and the broader implications of those analyses for the narrative construction of nineteenth-century Irish identity. As such, it is a welcome contribution to its field.

Julie M. Dugger Benedictine University

Brendan Frederick R. Edwards. *Paper Talk:* A History of Libraries, Print Culture, and Aborginal Peoples in Canada before 1960. Lanhan, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2005. 225 pp.

The story of First Nations' relationship with European modalities of print and language is complex and dispersed. Bibliography offers one essential cornerstone: Joyce Banks's *Books in Native Languages in the Rare Book Collections of the National Library of Canada* grounds us in the onslaught of print by which Europeans sought to convert and contain Aboriginal Canadians, while James Danky and Maureen Hady's *Native American Periodicals and Newspapers*, 1828–1982 continues the story with many examples of Indigenous communities creating their own print resources. *Paper Talk*, approaching the topic through First Nations' attitudes toward and access to reading, provides a different entrance. Its "plot" is the unfolding of a struggle over the powerful medium of print, as Aboriginal communities sought its benefits without utterly yielding to the agendas of church and state.

208 | *Gerson*

Reviews.indd 208 2/24/2008, 4:03 PM

The result of thorough research in government archives, supported with copious notes and references, *Paper Talk* is a valuable compact resource on the history of Aboriginal literacy in Canada. It begins with an introduction to prevailing indigenous pre-contact sign systems such as wampum belts, petroglyphs and pictographs, winter counts, and pictorial birchbark scrolls. Presenting Canada's First Peoples as inclined to forms of literacy before the arrival of Europeans, Edwards deals carefully with the delicate issue of the origins of the scripts known as M'ikmaq hieroglyphics (first described in the seventeenth-century by Récollet missionary Father Christian LeClercq) and Ojibwe and Cree syllabics, whose attribution to the Methodist missionary, Reverend James Evans, is under some dispute. With both languages, Edwards notes, Evans enjoyed considerable assistance from educated Native advisors. Once established in 1840, the Cree system spread quickly, due to the fact that it "drew on shorthand, as well as symbols already in use among the Cree" (51).

For missionaries, Native literacy was inseparable from conversion; Edwards informs us that in the records of the Department of Indian Affairs, "the earliest report of a library in any Aboriginal community" is a Sabbath school library conducted in 1864 by the Wesleyan Methodist Society for the Saugeen Chippewas at French Bay on the Bruce peninsula (49). For the Department of Indian Affairs, Native literacy was one component of a larger program of control and improvement, in which only salutary texts were recommended. Hence recreational reading received little support, and the libraries of the Indian day schools contained few attractive titles. Some Native elders regarded Western literacy with suspicion, linking reading with idleness and loss of traditional skills. However, Edwards is more interested in tracing the stories of Native individuals and groups who sought to encourage reading and establish libraries but were thwarted by a bureaucratic and short-sighted system that, under the administration of Duncan Campbell Scott, lacked sympathy and imagination.

Throughout the volume, figures emerge who are dedicated, fascinating, and often heroic. Especially valiant is Charles A. Cooke, a Mohawk clerk and translator who spent more than thirty years (from 1893 to 1926) working for the Department of Indian Affairs. His efforts render Edwards's account of the first quarter of the twentieth century brighter than the following period, although his proposal for an inclusive circulating collection of Native records, to be known as the "Indian National Library," was limited by Scott to a small disorganized body of material restricted to government employees. Cooke also produced one of the first newspapers in the Mohawk language (*Onkweonwe*, 1900), compiled important linguis-

Book Reviews | 209

Reviews.indd 209 2/24/2008, 4:03 PM

tic data on Iroquois personal names, and in his last years assisted Marius Barbeau and others at the National Museum of Canada. Another lost cause documented by Edwards is the 1901 attempt of Joshua Adams, the Dominion Government Indian Lands Agent at Sarnia, to enable the members of the Aamjiwnaang community to create a free circulating library on their Reserve. However, the Department of Indian Affairs refused to envision anything beyond the books in the day school that they already administered. It was up to private funding to establish the first successful effort, the Lady Wood Library, built in 1911 in the Mi'kmaq community of Lennox Island, in Prince Edward Island. A multifaceted community centre, it offered an important opportunity for local self-management. While we are told about the initial establishment of this library, it would be nice to learn about its subsequent fate. Another dropped narrative thread concerns the teaching of skills related to the printing trades at a number of Western residential schools around the turn of the century, accompanied by the production of student newspapers (79–80).

Edwards represents the following period, 1930 to 1960, as an era of neglect, characterized by an underfunded educational system and little government interest in assisting Aboriginal readers. In this section, acknowledgement of the pervasive effects of the Depression might have rendered him a little more charitable: Indian day schools were not the only institutions to suffer during the 1930s. In the post-Depression period, Edwards again salutes heroic efforts. These include attempts to have traveling libraries reach reserves at Mud Lake in Ontario and Bella Coola in British Columbia, the success of the women of the Fort St. James Indian Homemakers' Club in founding a library in 1954 (the book's only example of female agency, other than the will of the deceased Lady Wood), and the persistence of Angus Mowat in establishing a fully-formed public library for the Cree and Ojibwe of Moose Factory in 1958. In this section, Edwards balances his focus on libraries with attention to the establishment of the newspaper, *The Native Voice*, in 1946. This first enduring "outlet of Aboriginal protest and resistance" (141) presaged the rise of Native print culture in the 1960s and 1970s. His appended lists of books approved for Indian day schools provides further insight into the cultural dissonance experienced by Native children who desired to read.

Given the changes that arose with the Centennial generation of First Nations authors and activists, it is unfortunate that this study does not proceed beyond 1960. The information in this book is excellent and important, yet the author could have been better served by his publisher. Substantive editing would have reduced repetition and rescued some

210 | *Gerson*

Reviews.indd 210 2/24/2008, 4:03 PM

details currently hidden in the notes by integrating them into the main text, and copy-editing should have caught typos. I hope that Brendan Edwards will expand further on this topic at a subsequent stage in his scholarly career. The history of libraries and reading is an important and neglected component of cultural history, and Edwards possesses a good knack for penetrating government records to retrieve colourful characters and engaging human stories.

Carole Gerson Simon Fraser University

Works Cited

Banks, Joyce. *Books in Native Languages in the Rare Book Collection of the National Library of Canada*. Revised and enlarged edition. Ottawa: National Library of Canada, 1985.

Danky, James P., ed., and Maureen E. Hady, compiler. *Native Periodicals and Newspapers*, 1828–1982. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984.

Amin Malak. *Muslim Narratives and the Discourse of English*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005. 181 pp. \$30.51 / US\$ 24.95

A fascinating and rich group of literary narratives are brought together in *Muslim Narratives and the Discourse of English*. Some of the authors whose works are treated here are well known, including those by Bookerprize nominees Abdelrazak Gurnah and Ahdaf Soueif and a former winner of this same prize, the now-famous Salman Rushdie. Works by these authors together with those of Fatima Mernissi, Nuruddin Farah, and M.G. Vassanji as well as several less well-known authors like Che Husna Azhari, Adib Khan. and Ahmed Ali are also included. This short study proposes that these literary works should be read together as "Muslim narratives" and offers interpretations of them as such.

The book is divided into eight chapters, most of which focus on reading works by one author, although several chapters read two or more texts together under a theme such as exilic contexts or women's autobiographies. A full three chapters focus specifically on women's writing. Malak is at his best in the most compelling chapter, "Crisis Reading/ Reading

Book Reviews | 211

Reviews.indd 211 2/24/2008, 4:03 PM