

## *Elizabeth LeFort: Canada's Artist in Wool/L'artiste canadienne de la laine.*

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au Canada ; en plus de l'exemple des peintres du Groupe des Sept, Patrick Imbert mentionne pour les États-Unis le cas de George Alsop, qui idéalisait les paysages du Maryland pour y projeter la vision « d'un nouveau paradis terrestre » (24). Cet « attachement émotionnel au territoire » se manifeste et se transpose de diverses manières, comme l'indique le titre de l'ouvrage ; lieu transcendé ou idéalisé, lieu d'appartenance, point de départ (25). Toutefois, des variantes peuvent exister dans cette classification, passant du nomadisme à la sédentarisation ; par exemple, « le concept de home comme maison en mouvement appartenant surtout à la culture anglo-saxonne » s'oppose à l'idée du jardin qui implique au contraire l'idée d'un enracinement (55). Plus loin, d'autres exemples touchent l'Amérique latine. Dans un monde où les distances sont abolies par les nouvelles technologies, Internet, les migrations, on peut se demander comment nos repères identitaires d'hier connaissent de nouvelles limites et des mutations.

Tout ce livre invite à la réflexion et à l'analyse du lieu et de ses significations, voire de ses extrapolations dans la création littéraire et audiovisuelle. Les auteurs touchent autant aux études littéraires qu'aux approches culturelles centrées sur la symbolique des espaces (195). À première vue, ces lieux sembleraient peut-être banals sur le plan urbanistique, mais ils sont pourtant riches sur le plan culturel et historique : par exemple l'aéroport, ou encore le quartier de la Petite Italie à Montréal (88). De plus, ces analyses provoquent aussi des ricochets qui renvoient tour à tour à plusieurs conceptions théoriques (sémiologie, postmodernité) et ouvertures transdisciplinaires, par exemple à propos de la transculturation (189). On en apprécie la richesse quant aux auteurs consultés dans différents corpus et les correspondances qui y sont créées sur le plan théorique. Les étudiants à la maîtrise et au doctorat apprécieront particulièrement cet ouvrage concis et imaginaire.

## LAURA SANCHINI

Review of

Doucet, Daniel. 2010. *Elizabeth LeFort: Canada's Artist in Wool/L'artiste canadienne de la laine*. Sydney, NS: Cape Breton University Press.

Pp. 192, ISBN: 978-1-897009-36-9, \$24.95.

Upon entering the Acadian village of Chéticamp in Cape Breton, visitors are greeted by a sign proclaiming the village to be the "Rug-Hooking Capital of the World." This local pride can also be seen in the town's landscape, which is dotted with folk art galleries that display the work of local artists. The museum at *Les Trois Pignons* Cultural Centre, for example, houses an impressive collection of locally made hooked rugs and other folk art objects. For the interested learner, the museum also regularly offers rug-hooking classes to both locals and tourists.

Renowned as it is for its hooked rugs, it is little wonder that the accomplished Acadian rug-hooker, Elizabeth LeFort, gained the recognition, respect and fame that she did for her work. Daniel Doucet's *Elizabeth LeFort: Canada's Artist in Wool / L'artiste canadienne de la laine* is an ethnographic biography of the celebrated Acadian Cape Breton rug hooker. This is a valuable book for two reasons: it is the first book to examine LeFort's life and art; and the book's hefty appendix is a pictorial

compilation of a collection of her works, many of which are not on display in any public venue.

LeFort began honing her craft at age thirteen when she quit school to begin hooking mats to help supplement her family's income. Doucet explains that her early hooked mats were fairly ordinary until she received a postcard from her brother in England. This postcard, which depicted a thatched roof cottage, sheep and ducks in various shades of brown, inspired Elizabeth to reproduce this landscape on a hooked mat. This was revolutionary in Chéticamp rug hooking, as Doucet notes, "moving from the mats normally done in several bright colours to incorporating twenty-eight shades of the same colour into a design was a quantum leap for her. Did she get help? No, she did not" (16). Doucet paints LeFort as a strong-willed, determined artist who knew and respected the value of her work. In fact, when her first tapestry was completed, she decided it was worth more than the typical ten dollars and demanded twenty-five dollars from the

shopkeeper who purchased her work. So pleased was the owner that not only was LeFort paid the twenty-five dollars, the hooked rug was then sold for fifty dollars and six more were commissioned. This was the beginning of Elizabeth LeFort's life as an artist.

Doucet then traces her rise to preeminence in the world of handicraft. After meeting Kenneth Hansford, a wealthy and powerful businessman who would later become her husband, she began to sell many of her works with Hansford as her art broker. Hansford soon became her most influential supporter because he "became haunted by the idea that Elizabeth's work was absolutely unique. He made it his personal mission to promote her genius and make her famous" (29). With his never-ending support, coupled with her obvious talent, LeFort gained an international reputation. Of particular interest to me is Doucet's discussion of her religiously influenced tapestries. He explains that her favourite works are those with religious themes, a fact supported by the sheer volume of her tapestries dedicated to religious figures and events. Her works have graced the walls of Rideau Hall in Canada, Buckingham Palace and the Vatican. In her later years, Université de Moncton honoured LeFort with an honorary doctorate (in 1975) and in 1987 she became a member of the Order of Canada.

The layout of Doucet's book is impressive. As an entirely bilingual publication, it honours LeFort's mother tongue, with both the English and French text running side-by-side for the length of the book.

This is significant as it allows the reader to enjoy the book in Canada's two official languages. The text is interspersed with beautiful colour reproductions of Elizabeth's work as well as archival pictures of her life, which gives the reader a welcome visual aid. In addition to the pictures found in the body of the text, the book's lengthy appendix is a listing of Elizabeth's works, often accompanied by colour pictures of the tapestries. This is an invaluable tool for those interested in her works and in the history of Cheticamp rug hooking.

The book is presented as both biography and ethnography. Doucet not only tells the story of Elizabeth LeFort, but often does so in her own words. This is definitely one of the book's strengths. Doucet includes multiple quotations from his many interviews with LeFort before her death, and this in turn helps reveal a more complete picture of the woman behind the art. In this way, Doucet has also written a book that can be used as an ethnographic tool for scholars working in the field of Acadian folk art. This book is beautiful to look at; however, the bilingual, picture-filled format emphasizes breadth over depth, which in turn renders a narrow examination of her life. While this book deals with subject matter that has been the focus of previous scholarship, it is a valuable book for both scholarly and popular audiences. What it lacks in the way of analysis, it more than makes up in visual appeal as it offers readers a rare glimpse of legendary Cheticamp rug hookings.

## DIANE TYE

Review of

Sarah A. Gordon. 2009. *"Make It Yourself": Home Sewing, Gender, and Culture, 1890-1930*. New York: Gutenberg-e. Columbia University Press.

Pp. 164, cloth, ISBN 978-0-231-14244-1, \$60. Gutenberg-e. <http://www.gutenberg-e.org>.

When my twenty-eight-year-old great-grandmother found herself widowed with three young children in 1910, she turned to the only available option to keep her family together: she took in sewing. Later, she helped support her son's family by sewing clothing for her grandchildren and, when my mother was a teenager and the financial pressures eased, Gram made elaborate dresses for her so that she became known as one of the best dressed girls in the vil-

lage. Over her lifetime, my great-grandmother's reputation as a skilled seamstress became a point of pride not only for her but her extended family.

In *"Make It Yourself": Home Sewing, Gender, and Culture, 1890-1930*, Sarah Gordon shows how my great-grandmother's experience was far from singular as she highlights the ways that women blurred the lines of work and leisure to find multiple meanings in their sewing. In exploring the