

## Terry Fox and the National Imaginary: Reading Eric Walters's *Run*

Tanis MacDonald

Volume 36, numéro 1, 2011

URI : [https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/scl36\\_1art02](https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/scl36_1art02)

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The University of New Brunswick

ISSN

0380-6995 (imprimé)

1718-7850 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

MacDonald, T. (2011). Terry Fox and the National Imaginary:: Reading Eric Walters's *Run*. *Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature canadienne*, 36(1), 18-33.

# Terry Fox and the National Imaginary: Reading Eric Walters's *Run*

TANIS MACDONALD

Prosthesis, in replacing with an artifice, literally puts itself forward; it displays its own artificiality. . . . Putting something forward is always a speculative gesture, a type of solicitation.

— David Wills, *Prosthesis*

Saint Terry Fox, who ran so far with one mortal and one metallic leg; who set a shining example of courage in the face of overwhelming odds; who showed what the human body can do in the way of locomotion without fossil fuels; who raced against Mortality, and in the end outran his own Death, and lives on in Memory.

— Margaret Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*

IT IS AXIOMATIC TO SAY THAT Terry Fox is widely and nearly uncritically admired both in Canada and on an international level. His image has become iconic in the thirty years since his death in 1981 at the age of twenty-two. His name stands not only for the Terry Fox Foundation for Cancer Research, but perhaps more immediately for a widely understood act of generosity, backed by a gritty demonstration of physical will. He has become a representative symbol for good citizenship in the Canadian national imaginary, exemplified by the syllogism that Terry Fox is the one subject upon which all Canadians can agree. Situated firmly within this cultural discourse, Margaret Atwood's reference in the penultimate chapter of her 2009 novel *The Year of the Flood* to Fox as "Saint Terry" — one of many future-world role models adopted as "saints" by the God's Gardeners apocalyptic sect — is, in many ways, a typically Atwoodian cultural reference that appears initially to be irreverent but has a core of astute comment on the rhetorical forces at work in Canadian culture. "Saint Terry" in Atwood's book is the patron saint of Wayfarers, and with fellow Wayfarer-Saints Sojourner Truth and Ernest Shackleton, he is respected by the Gardeners as someone who understood that long and difficult journeys are necessary to support the greater good of humankind. Offered as role models to the Gardener

children, Wayfarer-Saints are revered because they “knew so well that it is better to journey than to arrive, as long as we journey in firm faith and for selfless ends” (Atwood 404). In this context, Atwood’s reference to “Saint Terry,” wry though it is, underscores Terry Fox’s place in Canadian cultural and literary history. Although *The Year of the Flood* assumes an adult audience, Atwood pinpoints Fox’s cultural legacy as a role model for children and adolescents and so illuminates the ways that Fox is employed in fictional contexts for consumption by child and adolescent readers.<sup>1</sup>

The process of making the historical person of Fox over into a fictionalized literary character that represents both personal and political alliances introduces possibilities for reading “Terry” as a constructed fiction that claims veridiction (or truth-telling), while pointing to Fox as a problematic symbol of nationalism, heroism, and sacrifice. Add to this heady mixture the fact that the hero in question is a man barely out of his adolescence and a hero consistently offered to pre-adolescent and adolescent readers as a historical role model, and one of the results is that Fox’s literary incarnation has been built on a continuum of perpetual adolescence that promises the fruits of productive and proud adulthood to young readers by offering a role model who, as Atwood noted, “in the end outran his own Death, and lives on in Memory” (404). Terry Fox is — in the Canadian literary imagination — a perpetual adolescent: infinitely available through media imagery, consistently called upon to inspire through the tropes of heroism, youth, and determination, and profoundly lost to illness and time. Placing historical persons in fictional contexts is a staple of the historical novel, but the “Terrytexts” that employ at least some elements of fiction distinguish themselves by their urgent claims to an untouchable and undiminished veridiction, the kind of unadulterated truth-telling that all experiments in historiographic metafiction and other postmodern modes insist is impossible to maintain.

Such insistence upon the “true story” mixed with the need to fashion a compelling narrative account — as is Eric Walters’s challenge in his 2003 YA novel *Run* — means that the constructed elements of fiction become even more prominent when set against passionate truth-claims within the text. The contrast between these two elements — fiction and history — leads to the other quotation that heads this article, from David Wills’s *Prosthesis*. Wills’s minute examination of his father’s

wooden leg as an influential trope of substitution and displacement in art and literature throughout several centuries could hardly be more fitting to literary explorations of the Terry Fox story, particularly as Wills carefully delineates the meanings of prosthesis to connote substitutions of both limb and text. Wills suggests in *Prosthesis* that the very act of writing about a prosthesis — in this case, that mechanical leg so important to the story of Terry Fox — “is inevitably caught in a series of complex displacements; prosthesis being nothing if not placement, displacement, replacement, standing, dislodging, substituting, setting, amputating, supplementing” (9). Wills’s text is useful for considering what the acknowledged and necessary artifices of fiction may have to do with biographical storytelling, rhetorical refashioning, and the didactic force of the Terry Fox story. For example, what do various authors’ uses of the phenomenon of “Terry Fox” as a prosthetic device do to promote or change the national imaginary as it is written into young people’s literature? The phenomenon supplements the national rhetoric of unity and good citizenship by offering a narrative that is both compelling in its portrayal of youthful determination and outrageous in its portrayal of the “impossible” feat of running a marathon a day on one biological leg and one artificial leg. In this way, everything that has been written about Terry Fox as a cultural phenomenon and historical event becomes in its turn another kind of prosthetic device that replaces or substitutes for the person of Terry Fox — narrative (whether non-fiction or fiction) that acts as a speculative gesture holding up constructions of national citizenship through a complex play of displacements.

In light of Wills’s contention that every text about prosthesis can only replace what has already been replaced, my own examination of how Fox’s prosthesis is offered as both material reality and iconic symbol to young Canadian readers also has a prosthetic function. Just as the artificial leg invites speculation, and as the books about Terry Fox invite critical analysis, so too is this analysis a kind of “artifice” in Wills’s sense of the term, one that solicits further critical examination of the role of the adolescent hero in the Canadian national imaginary, the adolescent appetite for such literary work, and the adult production and maintenance of such literary appetites. And finally, into this series of displacements come claims of the force of veridiction and the staying power of authenticity. Like Douglas Coupland’s 2005 *Terry*, Eric Walters’s *Run* was written with the approval of the Fox family. In Walters’s case,

he was chosen by the family as the best writer, in their words, to “tell Terry’s story in a way that would reach a younger audience” and to answer the requests from “educators, parents and supporters” for a book that could accomplish “the worthy goal of sharing Terry’s story with today’s youth” (Fox vii). Interestingly, the official approval of the Fox family and the Terry Fox Foundation supports Walters’s mix of fiction and non-fiction as a “true” depiction of Terry Fox because of — not in spite of — the text’s fictional elements. Wills’s question in *Prosthesis*, then, becomes very appropriate to this examination: in what ways can writing be “true” when it has the “consistency of a ghost” (10)?

Atwood’s and Walters’s novels are not alone in regarding the cultural legacy of Terry Fox as a phenomenon whose historical significance is matched by his rhetorical significance in Canadian culture. Literary iterations of Fox are numerous, and many of these texts were written with the child or adolescent reader in mind. Each Terrytext negotiates the narrative force by relying variously upon historiography and poetic tropes of heroism and goal-oriented achievement as vital components of national citizenship, emphasizing the events of the now-historical Marathon of Hope. These Terrytexts include films like 2005’s CTV movie *Terry*, whose script was written by award-winning children’s playwright Dennis Foon and which received the approval of the Fox family, and more problematically, the 1983 cinematic release, *The Terry Fox Story*, a film that the Fox family initially authorized but have since disavowed. Written work ranges from picture books intended for child readers like Maxine Trottier’s *Terry Fox: A Story of Hope* (2005) and Ann Donegan Johnson’s *The Value of Facing a Challenge: The Story of Terry Fox* (1983) to anthologies for tween readers like George Sherwood’s curiously named *Legends in Their Time: Young Heroes and Victims of Canada* (2006). Adolescents also make up part of the readership for Leslie Scrivener’s authorized biography, *Terry Fox: His Story*, first published in 1981 but re-issued in revised editions in 1983 and 2000. A scholarly examination of folk poetry written by Ontarians in response to Fox appears in the “Appropriating a Hero” chapter of Pauline Greenhill’s 1989 *True Poetry*. More traditional devices of fiction like focalizing narrative, free indirect discourse, and focus on artifacts as metaphors can be found in scrapbook-style texts like Jeremy Brown and Gail Harvey’s “pictorial tribute,” *Terry Fox* (1980), and Coupland’s *Terry* (2005). I do not propose to survey this long list of texts, but rather to examine

Walters's YA novel as an example of Fox's literary legacy. Key to this examination is an analysis of the ways in which this literary legacy is shaped by adult writers for consumption by young readers as part of the national imaginary that emphasizes the accessibility of mature achievement through Fox's image of perpetually adolescent and perpetually heroic persona.

In a recent article in *Canadian Literature*, Sally Chivers reads Fox as a "TransCanadian" figure whose place in the national mythology is predicated on the ways texts claim both ordinary and extraordinary status for Fox. Using Benedict Anderson's concept of "horizontal comradeship," Chivers notes that although imaginations are doubtless piqued by the daily marathon run by Fox in the spring and summer of 1980, Fox's artificial leg — despite its prominent, unmistakable position in the historical event — is often effaced in favour of reading Fox's story as an illness narrative: "the appeal of the story is Terry's extraordinariness masked by a discourse of ordinariness, and this strategy ironically sidesteps ordinary disabled people" (Chivers 83). Certainly, placing Fox in the national imaginary is a large project, the scope of which only becomes more enormous if we consider the force of elegiac rhetoric upon illness narratives and the appeal of the heroic tradition. Chivers asserts correctly that reproductions of the Fox narrative not only "hold Fox up as the quintessential Canadian, suffering and victorious before adversity" but also "endorse Terry Fox as the ultimate citizen" (84). Like Chivers, I am not interested in refuting claims of Fox's historical impact or actual personal qualities so much as discussing the complications inherent in turning a historical figure — particularly a young disabled man — into such a determinedly rhetorical one, including the ways in which a national imaginary influences — or is influenced by — such a "turn," and the way that literature functions as a pivot in the process.

American disability theorist Rosemarie Garland Thomson notes that "the disabled figure operates as the vividly embodied, stigmatized other whose social role is to symbolically free the privileged, idealized figure of the American self from the vagaries and vulnerabilities of embodiment" (7). With respect to Thomson as a pioneer in the field of literary disability studies, I am not at all certain that Canadians are looking to the figure of Fox — "vividly embodied" though he definitely is in our literature — as a symbol against which temporarily able-bodied Canadians may free themselves from the drag of normative embodiment

by comparison with less normative bodies. In fact, quite the reverse seems to be the more popular cultural strategy where Fox is concerned. Canadian-composed texts seem eager to free Fox into ordinariness, as Chivers notes: to be a symbol of how the vagaries and vulnerabilities of embodiment can and do happen to everyone, and as an example to young readers that pain, amputation, and illness should not get in the way of a good idea, better citizenship, and a metaphor for Canadian unity.

While child and adolescent readers are often targeted as the reading audience for Terrytexts, the tendency to offer an image of Terry as a perpetual adolescent suggests a displacement of, or supplement to, the metaphor of the “golden youth” so often invoked in violent national conflict in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a metaphor that mixes the sweet potential of a boy with the stalwart bravery of a man. A typical example is featured on the opening page of Brown’s text, in which he describes Fox as a “mere youth, clean of limb, clear of mind, indomitable of purpose,” emphasizing his incipient heroism before sealing the image with another description of “this handsome, tragically crippled youth” a few paragraphs later (9). Brown also warns against being “cynical, jaded,” and “hard bitten” when discussing Fox (9-10); however, particularly when Terrytexts are so clearly aimed at young readers, we must ask what can it mean that Canada’s “ultimate citizen” is a perpetually wounded, perpetually running, perpetually adolescent subject. Mavis Reimer, in her introduction to *Home Words: Discourses of Children’s Literature in Canada*, reminds readers that “one of the traditional tasks of children’s literature has been to produce its readers as good citizens, a task closely bound up with its imagining of home” as both national and personal space (xvi). Noting that such imaginings as they appear in texts for young readers should never be assumed to be wholly benign but rather regarded as a conscious use of hegemonic forms, Reimer emphasizes that adults write children’s texts with the understanding of “the central importance of children to the reproduction of societal consensus. It is, of course, literally true that the consent of children will determine the replication of the terms of the dominant ideology of the future” (13).

What kind of ideology, and what kind of child reader, is supported by literary iterations of the figure of Terry Fox in twenty-first century literature for child and adolescent readers? At least part of the answer lies

in examining the fictionalized Terry Fox as he appears in Walters's *Run*, a post-adolescent figure with whom adolescent readers are implicitly asked to identify. The assumption that Fox will be, as my own students would say, someone they "can relate to" is not unrealistic, but neither is it a given that Fox's official biography of growing up in the Canadian suburbs in a warm, loving family, with a passion for the physical challenge of sports and a loyal best friend (Doug Alward, driver and organizer of the Marathon of Hope), plus the much-touted drive to do whatever he puts his mind to, will reflect the realities of every Canadian adolescent. The idealization of Fox's biography serves another function than merely authorizing Fox's image for use in raising funds to cure cancer for the Terry Fox Foundation. It also preserves him in a kind of didactic amber as a handy — and relatively cool — example of a figure ripe for literary revisitation.

But such literary revisitations arrive with their own paradoxes to be unpacked as historical fact crushes up against ideological notions of the truth, even in texts with the best of intentions. Terry Fox's literary legacy is no exception. As W. David Shaw discusses in *Elegy and Paradox*, the force of writing about the dead — especially the publicly known and revered dead — means that veridiction takes on a special force of its own, struggling for control with elegiac tropes of transcendence and the cultural need to valorize loss. Certainly in the three decades since Fox's 1980 Marathon of Hope, a generation of children has been taught to believe in Terry Fox as a kind of saintly fraternal figure, someone old enough to admire but young enough to emulate. Walters's *Run* draws some of Terry's dialogue from actual speech or writing by Fox, and also writes fictional dialogue for him and for Doug Alward, dialogue that the Fox family, in its foreword to *Run*, calls Walters's ability to craft "words from Terry that he did not actually speak, but could have spoken" (viii). The novel also offers a central fictional narrative of a runaway boy befriended by Fox during the Marathon of Hope, though an argument could be made that the narrative is similar in tone to the many stories of Fox befriending and inspiring young people with illnesses and other problems as he ran through their towns and neighbourhoods.

The plot of *Run* tells the story of a thirteen-year-old boy who is a chronic home-leaver for reasons that he cannot articulate. The boy, young Winston MacDonald, is only able to say that school is boring,



his father is absent, and his mother is too wrapped up in her anger with his father to notice him. Buffeted by his father's aggressive insistence on "getting some answers" from him, Winston's confusion begins to clear once he joins his new friend Terry in the meditative space and practice of the run: "It wasn't like I knew why I was running off and just wasn't telling him [Winston's father]. I was still trying to figure it out myself, and the little I thought might be right didn't make any sense. It just seemed like the only time anybody noticed me was when I wasn't there" (Walters 91). While the metaphor of running away from his problems is made clear to the reader, and to some extent to the young protagonist, Walters presents Fox as a friendly opposing force to the young runaway's impulses to escape. In contrast to the confused and sometimes recalcitrant Winston, Terry is represented as a good son who runs toward home, family, and potential greatness. The fictionalized Terry's discussions about the importance of home are linked to the metaphor of the run as a space of creation and dedication rather than a vehicle of escape, and this idea is deeply influential on Winston's ability to rethink his habit of running away. Terry's declaration of himself as a synecdochical vehicle for hope is Walters's primary figurative use of Fox as a role model within the text, exemplified in Terry's summation of his project to Winston: "I may be running across the country, but I'm not running *away* from anything. I'm running *to* something. I'm running to my home in Port Coquitlam, running to help all those people, all those kids, who can't run" (141).

Shipped off to spend some time with his father, a gruff old-school print journalist who roams the country pursuing stories, Winston arrives at the Nova Scotia stretch of the Marathon of Hope in May of 1980. *Run* gives readers a boy's-eye view of the historical details of the run, shot through with life lessons in masculine responsibility, adolescent maturity, and the differences between fact and truth through Winston's frequent conversations with Terry and Doug, as well as his charged debates about the goals of journalism with his father. While the book offers a "you-are-there" historical re-enactment of the Marathon of Hope, its strongest plot element is the protagonist's (and not incidentally, the reader's) proximity to Terry as a fraternal mentor figure, someone who not only inspires a nation with his project, but who can also — incredibly, in terms of the material history of the run — take time away from running, refuelling his body with food, water and sleep,

and meeting scores of journalists, to solve one boy's familial problems. As Terry takes Winston under his wing, Walters fashions Terry's speech into a rhetorical force that does not preach or carp like Winston's parents' speech, but also does not allow Winston to shrug off his situation and disown his choices. Not far removed from adolescence himself, the fictionalized Terry offers advice that Winston takes to heart, not only because Terry is heroic and clear-thinking, but also because he is an older boy who understands as real adults — like Winston's parents — cannot.

Discussing “homing and unhoming” in Canadian children's literature, Mavis Reimer isolates a narrative thread that appears, not coincidentally, in *Run*: “the most valued story in English-language Canadian children's literature is a narrative in which the central child character, pushed out of an ordinary home by the decisions or behaviour of powerful adults, journeys to an alien place and, after a series of vicissitudes that occupy most of the tale, chooses to claim the unfamiliar space as a new home” (1). This describes the plot of *Run*, with one minor exception; prompted by Terry, Winston returns to his old home, the apartment that he shares with his mother, but with a more mature attitude and an understanding of the power of choice that makes his old home “new,” due to a better relationship with his parents, and “unfamiliar,” in its promise of a future that he will not want to escape. Reimer also describes the method by which home is “a product of human shaping and sharing” in children's texts, and *Run* may be considered iconic in its use of a material object — in this case, Terry's prosthetic leg — as a literary device that commands the force of the narrative. Reimer identifies that the refashioning of home is predicated on “an understanding often signalled at the turn of the narrative by the exchange of a *manufactured object* between characters who have previously been in conflict with one another” (1; emphasis added). Chivers notes in her article that Fox is often discussed as a “one-legged runner,” as though the prosthesis was too artificial to even be considered a “mechanical” or metal and fiberglass leg, despite the daily hard use as a leg that the prosthesis received during the Marathon of Hope (82). By noting this elision, Chivers suggests that Fox's prosthesis is simultaneously omnipresent in and absent from discourse surrounding his heroism. However, Walters's *Run* features the prosthetic leg several times, first, by foregrounding Winston's nervousness about referring to the prosthetic leg and, ultimately, by using the prosthetic leg as the catalyst for the determination of

the conditions of maturity. This physical and psychological “exchange” of the prosthesis does indeed become the symbol by which Winston reconfigures his concept of home: a symbol of the kind of determination and maturity that Terry commands in the narrative and, eventually, the same qualities that Terry encourages Winston to demand of himself.

In *Run*, Walters uses the prosthetic leg as an object that signifies the virility and vulnerability of an open wound in two incidents in the narrative. The first incident occurs near the beginning of the book, when Terry catches Winston looking at his prosthesis and unstraps the leg to hand it to the shocked boy. Walters’s narrative, written in Winston’s voice, implies that the boy is trapped between horror and honour, and is dizzied by the clash of his own corporeal dread with Terry’s trust in him. But it is Winston’s wish to impress Terry, who has already astounded Winston with his athletic ability, that provides a strong injunction against the child’s impulse to terror, and Winston immediately turns the leg into a masculine symbol: “I was amazed at how light it was. I turned it around slowly, looking at it from every angle. It looked strong, powerful, like something the bionic man would have” (85). The reference to the Lee Majors television series is not casual in this passage; Walters at once provides a cultural reference that would have been available to a thirteen-year-old boy in 1980 and gets a few other cultural echoes in return. The opening lines of *The Six Million Dollar Man* refer to Steve Austin, an American test pilot who is nearly killed when the plane that he is testing for the government crashes: “We have the technology. We can rebuild him.” Terry’s prosthesis, as Winston inspects it, is “the technology” through which Terry is “rebuilt”: the means by which it is possible for Terry to run. A page later, Terry notes that “it wasn’t that many years ago that an amputee couldn’t have even attempted what I’m doing because the artificial legs were downright primitive” (86). The “technology” that the prosthesis represents in this passage is easily admirable, as is the more historically embedded idea that the prosthesis represents a kind of armour in Terry’s “fight,” both tropes that satisfy the masculine dynamics of this *Bildungsroman*, as well as providing perspective on contemporary heroism that conforms to the parameters set out by Greek epic poetry.

Walters defines “hero” in his author’s note at the end of *Run* as “a man of incredible strength and determination whose legacy and spirit live on” (197), but a more involved discussion of the nuances of heroism

in the novel occurs when Winston reads Mac's first newspaper article about the Marathon of Hope. The newspaper article ends with Mac's firm assertion that Terry is a hero, a statement complicated by Winston's — and the reader's — perception of Mac as a worldly and hardened newsman who has seen it all and only cares about what sells newspapers. Winston is at first moved by his father's use of the word "hero" to refer to Terry, with whom the boy has already established a friendship. But he becomes suspicious of the term when the father boasts that the boy has been convinced of Terry's heroism through a skilful journalistic use of rhetoric rather than through his own observations. Mac's bullying tendencies show as he grills his thirteen-year-old son on the importance of diction and the definition of heroism: "Have you met many heroes in your time? . . . I'm not talking about some joker who plays hockey. I'm talking about a hero, a real hero. Somebody who undertook a brave deed, maybe risked his life" (69). For all his bluster, Mac admits that he cannot determine what constitutes bravery, and the father's hesitation to do so gives Winston the chance to observe Terry with an eye to casting him in the hero's role.

French classicist Nicole Loraux examines the felicity conditions for heroism in her study *The Experiences of Tiresias: The Feminine and the Greek Man*. Working from the traditions established in ancient Greek texts, principally Homer's *Iliad*, Loraux contends that heroism requires a blend of corporeal wounding and dramatic virility, most often available to literature through the image of the wounded warrior. In Greek epics, the wound is opened in battle and remains open as a symbol of virility and as an indication of the warrior's service to the nation-state: "the male body" is written as "toughened and vulnerable at the same time" with "virility . . . expressed by what can be seen on the male's opened body, as if the warrior's wounds speak for the quality of the citizen" (88). As a visual symbol, and increasingly as a literary and filmic character, Fox has been imbued with "the wounds of virility" that yield "the heroic weakness of strength" (88). The rigours of the cross-country run pit the body in a battle against the elements, against expectation, and, ultimately, against its own frailties. In *Run*, Terry's prosthesis provides a parallel for the warrior's penetrated armour that hides the wound of virility, the stump that bleeds prolifically and poignantly in every literary exploration of the historic run. It is important to note that the wound in Loraux's reading of the Greek epics is not construed as failure of the

body but rather as indisputable confirmation of the hero's worth: "Far from being the source of disgrace, the wound becomes the most efficacious proof of the hero's virility . . . he is close to invulnerable when he surpasses himself in mighty deeds, but with an open gash in his body, he is destined to be seen for what he is, a great hero" (95). The act of seeing is vital, with emphasis upon the way the warrior's wounds are perceived by those who are not engaged in battle — a group that comprises the Greek citizenry in Loraux's context, but which includes Winston, Mac, the reporters, and, significantly, Walters's youthful readers in the context of *Run*. Additionally, Loraux stresses that only certain wounds qualify as masculine heroic markers: "the manly body is a body to be opened . . . according to the rules" (96). The rules, in Greek epic, mean that the body must be opened in the midst of hand-to-hand battle. In the absence of war in Canada at the end of the twentieth century, one of our requisite rules for heroism is the opposition to a violent and irrational foe, and in the Terry Fox story, cancer is cast as such a foe, just as surgery and physical exertion take the place of hand-to-hand battle.<sup>2</sup>

In *Run*, the vulnerability of the stump and its attendant wound is harder for Winston to look at than the prosthesis. When Terry first hands him the prosthetic leg, Winston refuses to look at his stump: "I turned my head a bit — the thought of looking at the stump where his real leg used to be made me feel a bit sick" (Walters 85). But it is not long before the wound demands Winston's gaze despite his admission that he had "worked hard at not imagining the end of [Terry's] leg" (133). A series of openings precipitates a crisis in Winston's understanding of Terry and of his own responsibilities to Terry's friendship. As the exertion of the run opens the sores on Terry's stump and blood flows down his leg, Terry "opens" his body to Winston's gaze, and the fearful dimensions of physical pain and mortality are opened to Winston's observation. The incident enables Winston to discover an adult crisis and the definition of heroism for which he has been searching, but both discoveries are underwritten as an adolescent compact of secrecy between Winston, Doug, and Terry. It begins when Winston notices "red streaks running down Terry's artificial leg — it looked like blood! I gasped and brought my hand up to point at Terry's leg . . . 'You're . . . You're . . .'" (132). Winston's stammer is significant; he identifies the wound but he cannot name it, and disability theory would suggest that since the wound is not his own, it is not for him to name. It is Terry who names the wound, and just as quickly,

disavows it: “I’m bleeding, but I’m not hurt” (132). He describes the wound to Winston as “a cyst,” a “sore,” and “a blister,” changing from the medical-style term to more prosaic terms (133), partially to simplify his explanation to the still-shocked Winston, and partially to minimize the significance of the blood. Doug interjects that Terry is “as stubborn as a mule” because he will not stop running even with physical evidence of his opened body. The scene is sealed as one that defines heroism in the book for Terry returns to running, and Doug stays behind to solicit and secure Winston’s promise of silence, that the boy will tell no one — meaning, “no adult” — about the conditions of heroism that he has just discovered, a promise the boy is eager to make and keep (136).

The incident, in which Winston becomes a junior partner to the young men through his shared knowledge of the “secret wound,” affirms the “boy’s world” of which Walters writes. Despite Winston’s understanding of the Marathon of Hope as a significant event, Walters also offers it as a kind of male adolescent idyll seen through childish eyes: the freedom of driving, eating as much as you want in restaurants, and sharing a view of the country with your best buddy. The contrast between Terry and Doug’s relative freedom and Winston’s parent- and school-dominated life, where his only freedom can be found in the choice to disappear from his mother’s apartment for two days, is the contrast between childhood and young adulthood. Winston’s inclusion in the secret of Terry’s bleeding cyst is nothing less than a promise of mature adulthood, almost — but not quite — within his grasp. Terry and Doug ask Winston to keep the bleeding cyst a secret that only the three of them share. The pact represents a maturing for Winston, but it also suggests a return to boyhood secrets for Terry and Doug. By emphasizing their initiation of this unofficial but very serious pact, Walters suggests that despite their ages, adulthood is only sometimes within the grasp of the two young men.

This youthful male compact is destroyed by Winston’s egocentric father’s need to capture the public’s attention with a new angle on Terry’s run, and his unflattering portrayal of Terry and Doug in an article slated for national publication precipitates his son’s next runaway incident. It is not insignificant to the text that Mac first notes that two (real-world) female reporters, Christie Blatchford and Leslie Scrivener, have written more interesting stories than his own. Grumbling, “Back in my day, no self-respecting woman would ever dream of becoming”

a reporter, Winston's father offers some noxious sexist comments that provide a few clues as to why both his marriage and paternal role-modeling have failed so far (116). After boasting openly to his son that he "never lets the truth get in the way of a good story" (68), Mac follows up by saying, "it would sure make one heck of a story if he [Terry] was crooked. The only thing the public likes better than building up a hero is tearing one down. Tragedy sells more papers than triumph" (69). Fox and Alward's much-discussed insistence on scrupulous accuracy of time and distance during the run asserts the value of the truth as something that is perpetually in peril and that must be assiduously defended against such craftiness as Mac's sensational journalism, which features conflict between Terry and Doug and adheres to Mac's hardened "if it bleeds, it leads" dictum. Sincere youth opposes cynical adulthood repeatedly in *Run*; Winston confronts his father's hypocrisy, and Mac eventually withdraws the story, missing his deadline for the first time in his career in order to do so. The possibility of a genuinely responsible maturity of insight becomes the key to Winston's relationship with Terry, and to his return home as a mature adolescent instead of an impulsive and inarticulate boy.

It is no surprise that Christie Blatchford's often-quoted statement about Terry Fox — "He gave us a dream as big as our country" (qtd. in Walters 197) — is never far from any written discourse about Fox, and this article is no exception. Considering the prosthetic function of the text, and an actual prosthetic limb as a primary symbol of our national imaginary, is the dream that is "as big as our country" actually a displacement: the dream of desiring such a dream? In Canada at this cultural moment, to "write" Terry Fox is a "rite" of sorts. Truth and fact intertwine in *Run* to produce a labyrinth of ideas about Fox's place in the national imaginary and the cultural marketing of his image as a hero to young readers. It is, in many respects, a distinctly Greek view of Fox that Walters offers to young readers in *Run*, a hero whose youth and determination connote "the shifting state of the masculine: vulnerable-invulnerable, wounded but intact, strong for being able to welcome the flaw within but the moment afterward triumphant for having conquered weakness, the body indomitable and delicate" (Loraux 100). To pit such a literary conception of the historically situated "indomitable and delicate" Terry Fox against the force of authenticity is undeniably an anxious notion, and such anxieties are mirrored in the ways that Terrytexts

like Walters's *Run* offer complex readings of masculinity, heroism, and responsible adulthood to young readers, and encourage those readers to locate themselves as inheritors of Fox's project and personality within the Canadian national imaginary.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Many texts that retell the story of Terry Fox use the appellation "Terry" to refer to the historical person, but that seems presumptively familiar in a scholarly article. I will use "Fox" to refer to the historical person, "Terry" to refer to the quasi-fictionalized version as it appears in many Terrytexts, and both names — "Terry Fox" — to refer to Fox as a cultural phenomenon.

<sup>2</sup> While Loraux's examination of the Greek hero is undeniably scholarly, a photo that first appeared in the *Toronto Star* and is reproduced on page 88 of Coupland's book shows Fox wearing a victor's laurel in Nathan Phillips Square, an image that offers compelling contemporary evidence that some of the Greek traditions connected to the hero are alive and well in Canadian culture, and being practiced, recognized, and understood by people other than academics.

## WORKS CITED

- Atwood, Margaret. *The Year of the Flood*. Toronto: McClelland, 2009. Print.
- Brown, Jeremy and Gail Harvey. *Terry Fox: A Pictorial Tribute to the Marathon of Hope*. Toronto: Brownstone, 1980. Print.
- Chivers, Sally. "Ordinary People: Reading the TransCanadian Terry Fox." *Canadian Literature* 202 (2009): 80-94. Print.
- Coupland, Douglas. *Terry*. Vancouver: Douglas, 2005. Print.
- Foon, Dennis. *Terry*. Dir. Don McBrearty. Perf. Shawn Ashmore. Shaftesbury Films/CTV 2005. Film.
- Fox, family of Terry. Foreword. *Run*. Toronto: Penguin, 2003. vii-ix. Print.
- Greenhill, Pauline. *True Poetry: Traditional and Popular Verse in Ontario*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1989. Print.
- Johnson, Ann Donegan. *The Value of Facing a Challenge: The Story of Terry Fox*. La Jolla: Value Communications, 1983. Print.
- Loraux, Nicole. *The Experiences of Tiresias: The Feminine and the Greek Man*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995. Print.
- Reimer, Mavis. "Discourses of Home in Canadian Children's Literature." *Home Words: Discourses of Children's Literature in Canada*. Ed. Mavis Reimer. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2008. xi-xviii. Print.
- . "Homing and Unhoming: The Ideological Work of Canadian Children's Literature." *Home Words: Discourses of Children's Literature in Canada*. Ed. Mavis Reimer. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2008. 1-25. Print.
- Scrivener, Leslie. *Terry Fox: His Story*. 1981. Toronto: McClelland, 2000. Print.



- Shaw, W. David. *Elegy and Paradox: Testing the Conventions*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1994. Print.
- Sherwood, George. "Terry Fox: A Marathon of Hope." *Legends in Their Time: Young Heroes and Victims in Canada*. Toronto: Natural Heritage, 2006. 195-206. Print.
- The Terry Fox Story*. Dir. Ralph Thomas. Perf. Eric Fryer, Robert Duvall, Chris Makepeace. Vestron Video/Home Box Office, 1983. Film.
- Thomson, Rosemarie Garland. *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*. New York: Columbia UP, 1997. Print.
- Trottier, Maxine. *Terry Fox: A Story of Hope*. Toronto: Scholastic, 2005. Print.
- Walters, Eric. *Run*. Toronto: Penguin, 2003. Print.
- Wills, David. *Prosthesis*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995. Print.