



Transient Questions: New Essays on Mavis Gallant (Cross/Cultures 74)

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Mavis Gallant has been a leading literary figure in Canada since her first short story, published in 1951, and has grown to be considered internationally as a modern master of the genre. Her writing is nuanced, sensitive, gifted, deep and concise. She leaves everything open for the hidden potential that can always be discovered. Times change; society, history, politics may develop out of recognition. Cultures metamorphose. Literary landscapes and theories are renewed. But the classics of our time stay where they are, pillars of that which is solidly about us. Mavis Gallant's work is of that calibre: her writing will remain interesting and relevant no matter what else happens. This book is an exploration of what Gallant's readers are thinking now: where they place her in the panorama of literature and what meaning she has for them now. Scholars continue to probe into the stories, their characters, the capsules of history they present, and continue to find them challenging. As with Shakespeare, no amount of scrutiny will yield the final answer. That is how complex Gallant's writing is. Especially now, when the positioning of her characters is a more prominent condition in general, we need to review Gallant's artistic insights. As Francine Prose says in Harper's Magazine: Gallant's cast of characters are a "motley assortment of refugees, fugitives, and travelers" and "displaced persons scrambling on the margins of a society they will never belong to." This is the modern condition. As with other great writers, Gallant shows herself to be prophetic in cutting down to the roots of the sensibility of our era. We are reading her work, and we are thinking about it and talking about it. This book is part of that large conversation. Contributors are: Neil Besner, Di Brandt, Nicole Cote, John Lent, Gerald Lynch, Maria Noelle Ng, Peter Stevens, Simone Vauthier, Per Winther.

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