

solitary inquiry. However, such solitude can allow for freer range than when one is part of a multidisciplinary team where the labour is divided along disciplinary lines and one stays largely within one's own silo.

The selection is heavy on historians of various sorts, which suggests a greater emphasis on (or comfort with) sources than methods. There are lots of insightful comments about method along the way, but it might have helped to have at least one concerted reflection on the nature and connectivity of disciplinarity, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinarity, and anti-disciplinarity – perhaps even two contrasting ones by a philosopher of science and an aesthetician. But the recurrence of questions about what can or should constitute a source for historical work helps hold the collection together; and, of course, part of the importance of history derives from its straddling humanities and social sciences and its nourishing of great prose stylists as well as number-crunching cliometricians. The lure and authority of text as primary source and most desirable product of research will not dissipate easily, nor perhaps should it. As James Hull demonstrates, there is lots of writing, like engineering texts, that has yet to be read critically by non-engineers. But the importance of visual culture to historical reconstruction and analysis should be more readily granted than it currently is. Skeptics should go first to the accomplished and provocative essays by Jonathan Vance and Caroline-Isabelle Caron (on public monuments and television respectively). Oral culture is less well served here, despite being an indispensable 'bridge' to understanding and respecting Aboriginal and treaty rights in Canada. There are several effective engagements, too, with demographic and identitarian issues, but the most magisterial performance is left to the end. Chad Gaffield uses the theme of census data to identify currents in recent history, to convey the complexities of methodological sharing, borrowing, and theft, to challenge historians and non-historians alike to eschew stereotyping and cliché as inexcusable signs of intellectual laziness, and to regard history as more fluid than fixed by virtue of its expandable and hence porous borders within and beyond which rigour is essential but purity never an option. (LEN FINDLAY)

Raymond Siemens and David Moorman, editors. *Mind Technologies: Humanities Computing and the Canadian Academic Community*
University of Alberta Press. xlii, 317. \$44.95

The best contributions to this book reach beyond the impressive range of Canadian accomplishments to the core problematic of the field: what the mechanical has to do with the humanistic. Some less adventurous pieces document solid work in the older disciplines. Some are more vestiges of the past than indications of a desirable future. Here I will concentrate on the first of these.

Humanities computing is approximately sixty years old but a mere adolescent in self-awareness and so is bestirred by conflicting thoughts, as here. But computing's inexhaustible potential for imagining and exploring possibilities gives deeper reason for the multivocality. When in his fine essay Michael Best admonishes us to be experimental and adventurous, he names the game, not just the current state of play. The book's URLs and other signs of the passing moment similarly instruct us how to read it: not for foundations but for a trajectory. Its interdisciplinarity instructs us further, to read primarily for the methodological contributions, such as in Murray McGillivray's piece, for his persuasive document-centred approach to serving traditional goals better than print.

Stephen Reimer asserts (as Ian Lancashire's and Russon Wooldridge's lexicographic projects impressively suggest) that computing changes research fundamentally 'by extending our reach and improving our efficiency.' As beings in space-time, we dismiss either at our peril; if wise, we investigate the cognitive differences they make. Lancashire's concern with stylometry thus directs us from mind to brain, and so to the possibility of a bridge toward the neurosciences. One need only look to the proceedings of last year's 'Autonomy, Singularity, Creativity' conference (<http://asc.nhc.rtp.nc.us/>) to see how promising that and similar bridges are.

Robert Good and Charles Clarke report on software that uses but avoids the limitations of the highly structured metadata of digital media collections.

The fundamental question raised is familiar: what is text? The best response comes at the end, in Geoffrey Rockwell's afterword: (1) our theories are craft-theories, arising from and informing our digital constructions; (2) these theories begin to emerge from silence when we must say why one tool is preferable to another for a given job; and (3) *any* text we interact with is embedded in tools that authorize or thwart different types of interpretation. Seeds of a fine and much-needed book are here.

The editors' argument for modelling may suggest that tools map scholarly processes move-for-move. After arguing for the importance of statistical assumptions, the late Paul Fortier points out that the increasing sophistication of software obscures them but that we can infer the suitability of procedures no one could carry out by hand. Thus complexity forces us from strict imitation toward the synthetic and creative, as for example in contemporary physics. It is one of computing's many gifts to us.

Based on their experience at McMaster, Andrew Mactavish and Rockwell argue that models from the creative visual and performing arts are what we need to respond to the problematic status of method

and technique in the humanities. Both are at home in the arts, the crafts, and in engineering, which informs software development. If anything, the authors underplay the potential of such an expanded practice to untie us from what theoretical biologist Robert Rosen in *Essays on Life Itself* describes as 'a mind-set of reductionism, of looking only downward toward subsystems, and never upward and outward' to systems with a life of their own.

Both the Orlando Project described by Susan Brown et al. and the Virtual Buildings Project described by John Bonnett turn on the superiority of active engagement over passive consumption. The ambition of Orlando is to advance the historiography of literature, first by encoding the entities and structures of a literary history in markup, then getting their audience to engage with that markup as end-makers of knowledge, not mere end-users of information. Virtual Buildings is based on an improving encounter with similar constraints, specifically through modelling historical buildings. Students learn not just that history is more than facts but that it is written in interaction with them. Thus a playful tool also supplies a useful corrective to the notion that computers are knowledge jukeboxes.

The research culture in Canada seems, as Patricia Clements, David Moorman, and David Strangway have described it, to be supportive to an exemplary degree, though there remains work to be done, such as in providing a national archive for research data. The graduate teaching programs sketched by Sean Gouglas, Stéfán Sinclair, and Aimée Morrison are well on their way, requiring now the leadership of a Canadian PhD. (WILLARD MCCARTY)

Andrew Lawless. *Plato's Sun*

University of Toronto Press. 2005. xvi, 364. \$65, \$31.95

In *Plato's Sun* Andrew Lawless combines an 'introduction to philosophy' with a sophisticated presentation of philosophical issues, ideas, and thinkers in the Western tradition from antiquity to the present day. In addition to covering several major areas of philosophy (metaphysics, epistemology, logic, ethics, and philosophical issues of language) Lawless uses the historical development of each issue as a major theme, though he does not stick with strict chronology in each chapter. He wants to reveal philosophy as a struggle, as 'the aporetic exercise of trying to think the unthinkable and knowing that you are' rather than a set of pronouncements. Thus he makes the introduction of philosophy analogical in style and substance to the prisoner's journey in Plato's allegory of the cave, from darkness to the sunlight of insight or wisdom,