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Yes, and Back Again by Sandy Marie Bonny

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Review of Sandy Marie Bonny's *Yes, and Back Again*

*Yes, and Back Again* by SANDY MARIE BONNY  
TDP, 2015 $19.95

Reviewed by CATRIONA DUNCAN

*Yes, and Back Again* tells the story of a young couple who move into an old home in west Saskatchewan that is filled with as much history as it is asbestos. While Tanis renovates her and her husband's new home, she uncovers clues that reveal the lives of the house's past owners. Utilizing her genealogy training, historian Tanis pursues the story of her predecessors while Neil is launched into a mystery of his own. As a high-school teacher and student advocate, Neil becomes entangled in the shocking disappearance of two of his female students. Both girls are of Métis descent and their disappearance is an all too familiar occurrence in this Saskatchewan town.

Through her narrative, Bonny attempts to bring to light the shady underbelly of Canada's historical and current racist treatment of its First Peoples. The disappearance of the two Métis girls is representative of the hundreds of Aboriginal women who have gone missing within Canada's borders. The storyline of the two missing girls is an important literary opportunity to expose the injustices done to Aboriginal women in Canada and can be read in a multitude of ways. In one reading, Bonny falls short on elucidating the countless horrors faced by Aboriginal women. Bonny could have used this opportunity to impress upon the Canadian reader the violent reality of hundreds of Aboriginal Canadians, but instead chooses to showcase the “victims” as willing participants in their disappearance, leaving a bitter taste in the mouth of anyone who is aware of Canada's murdered and missing Aboriginal women and girls.

The other reading takes into consideration that Bonny created a happy ending for the two girls in order to juxtapose the tragedies that hundreds of women face, reminding readers of those tragedies. Bonny may have also been tapping into the reader's anticipation for violence against the young girls in order to highlight how quickly violence becomes the norm, troubling our concept of reality. Kudos should be given to Bonny for trying to raise awareness to this national tragedy through her literary portrayal, even if her attempt did not fully hit the mark.

Bonny demonstrates her talent as a writer through her use of analepsis and creation of relatable characters. The narrator brilliantly shifts between Neil and Tanis's experiences in their new home and those of its previous owners. Bonny peppers the past storyline with clues that allow the reader to participate in the current mystery being solved by Tanis, which in turn creates a deeper engagement with Tanis as a character. Similarly, Neil's characterization is strengthened by his entanglement in the case of the missing girls. Neil's eager-to-help nature lands him in trouble with the police when the line between an appropriate relationship between student and teacher is crossed during the investigation. The reader sympathizes with Neil's duty to his students, and Bonny skillfully creates situations for Neil in which the reader shares in his emotional turmoil between right and wrong. Bonny creates a glimpse into the inner workings of characters by including instances of communication between characters through social media and cell phones. Not only do these interactions serve to flesh out characters, but the presence of communicative technology and their digital records play an integral part in the search for the missing girls.

The expert crafting of Bonny's novel in terms of its narratological structure is unfortunately overshadowed by countless grammatical errors that one would not expect to find in a professionally published novel, especially one financially assisted by the Canadian Council for the Arts. The onus of
these errors is likely not on the author, but fall on the publishing house who did not perform diligent copy editing techniques. These errors are distractions that jar the reader out of Bonny's intriguing storyline, hindering what would be a fully intriguing and enjoyable reading experience.

CATRIONA DUNCAN is currently an MA candidate at the University of Victoria's department of English. Her research interests include 16th and 17th century London and book history.