



## ILE D'OR

Mary Lou Dickinson  
 Toronto: Inanna Publications and  
 Education, Inc., 2010

### REVIEWED BY ANN GAGNÉ

“How important those sounds had been through all her childhood, framing her sense of time and place.” Libby (Muir) Morley, one of the four main protagonists of Mary Lou Dickinson’s *Ile D’Or*, carefully evokes life in a mining town. She demonstrates how rock blasting creates a specific sense of space and place; the rattling becomes the backdrop. Dickinson also emphasizes the rattling bones left in the closet, deftly weaving the stories of four people who grew up in a small mining town in northwestern Québec. By revisiting, reminiscing, and recreating Libby, Nick, Lucien, and Michelle’s stories, the novel delineates the journey to find one’s roots (*nos racines*). *Ile D’Or* is a novel that is interested in highlighting the tension between memory and the history that written word recreates.

Dickinson’s descriptions of locations and the cast of secondary characters (the police officer, the priest, the mine owner), portray the sights and sounds of a remote community. Most importantly she creates a connection between the land and the people who inhabit it.

Dickinson’s use of mining centres like Rouyn, Noranda, and Bourlamaque, serves to geographically locate the action while the action is temporally located through references to historical events; flashback sequences that are textually provided as interior monologues. What is particularly interesting and valuable about *Ile D’Or* is Dickinson’s ability to tease out the socio-political tensions present in mining towns where, “Anglos who came in and built the mine [are then] forgotten.”

At the centre of *Ile D’Or* is Guy Dion, a ghost figure who is representative of the journey between memory and written word, as well as the perils common in remote communities: alcoholism, addiction, and alienation. Issues of spousal abuse and rampant infidelity are used in the novel to strengthen Guy’s story. At the same time Dickinson’s two main female protagonists, Libby and Michelle, embody gendered empowerment; the ability to move beyond sexualized and objectified positions, in order to take charge of their bodies.

More than a tale of how you can’t come home again, *Ile D’Or* describes the struggle of Ukrainian immigrants (like Nick Petranovich’s family) and “Hinglish Pollacks” to find their own place within a town that is becoming increasingly more Francophone. The majority of the action in the novel takes place in the early ‘80s after the first Québec referendum. The novel delves further, to specifically contextualize the FLQ crisis and how it affected Québec and Quebeckers. The apprehension about conscription during the Second World War is also developed through the contrast of Libby’s father Walter, who fought for the Queen, and the Paquin brothers, who fought and died in a war that they didn’t believe was theirs.

Dickinson’s novel shines with well-developed characters that have historical and emotional baggage. Even her minor characters, like the young streetwise Maurice Blouin, come to life through Dickinson’s strategic use of French dialogue and sayings.

The physical separation of Michelle Dufresne’s parents, her father in the Catholic cemetery and her mother in the Protestant one across the street, highlights the tension between language and religion that causes divides in the small town.

*Ile D’Or* is definitely a page turner that provides insight into historical, social, and linguistic differences in a politically unstable Québec. Through the diaries and letters that are interspersed in the narration, Dickinson demonstrates the importance of telling your story and acknowledging your origins. Dickinson’s creation of the *tête carré* as a social position in the novel shows the fight to move beyond simple stereotypes and ethnic slurs. I highly recommend this novel, which teases out how the nostalgia and complexity of childhood can provide a heightened sense of self-awareness.

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## 1 WAY 2 C THE WORLD: WRITINGS 1984-2006

Marilyn Waring  
 Toronto: University of Toronto  
 Press, 2009

### REVIEWED BY MALGOSIA HALLIOP

This wide-ranging collection of writings by feminist economist Waring, who became well known in Canada through the 1995 National Film Board documentary *Who’s Counting? Marilyn Waring on Sex, Lies, and Global Economics*, gathers together some of her work for New Zealand newspapers and magazines