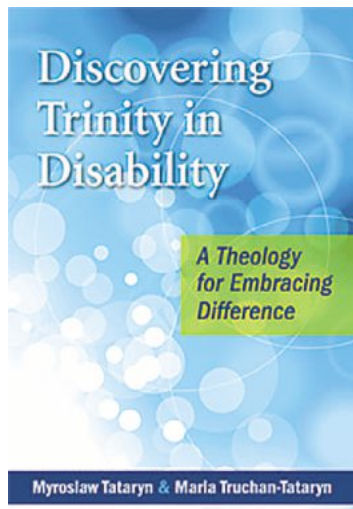


# salonbooks

## Embracing difference



**MICHAEL HIGGINS**  
mysteries & mystics



**Discovering Trinity in Disability: A Theology for Embracing Difference** by Myroslaw Tataryn and Maria Truchan-Tataryn, Novalis, 128 pages

A few years ago, Dennis Desroches, critical theorist and English professor at St. Thomas University, initiated a discussion with Denis Grecco, theologian and then Pope John XXIII chair at the same university. The topic was around why theology should, must, be engaged with critical theory.

Grecco welcomed the challenge, seeing the insights theology can make to a deeper understanding of human meaning. The constructs of meaning could provide a rich cross-pollination of thought, discipline and perspective in such a conversation.

Terry Eagleton, the eminent British theorist and storied academic, has done

**DISCOVERING TRINITY IN DISABILITY HAS BOTH BROAD APPEAL FOR ALL THOSE PROFESSIONALLY INVOLVED WITH THE "DISABLED" AS WELL AS FOR ALL THOSE MOVED BY A PASSION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND A TRUE EQUITY.**

very much the same thing in the past decade. Drawing on the rich, if not often controverted theological and philosophical systems of the past, Eagleton has deconstructed the many heavy-handed orthodoxies of the fashionable anti-religion polemicists of our time.

The spousal team of Myroslaw and Maria Truchan-Tataryn have joined forces to bring theology into serious dialogue with disability studies, and, in doing so, have drawn heavily on the rich discourse of critical theory.

*Discovering Trinity in Disability* is a bold and imaginative work, part collective autobiography, part advocacy argument, part penetrative analysis and part *cri de cœur*:

"After years of listening and sharing with others, we have finally arrived at the opportunity to marry our academic backgrounds of theology and disability studies in the humanities to write down our thoughts about living in the world as Christians. We focus on disability and our Christian tradition because we have

learned that disability is an enduring, fundamental aspect of humanity that has been manipulated and wronged by society."

Persuaded by their own experience – personal, familial and academic – that this "manipulation" must cease and an intelligent and sensitive corrective to those "wronged by society" is imperative, their book is a genuine and creative effort to form a credible "theology for embracing difference." To that end, the book has both broad appeal for all those professionally involved with the "disabled" as well as for all those moved by a passion for social justice and a true equity.

The authors readily interpolate incidents and impressions drawn from their own direct experience as parents into the text. They are candid in dealing with the challenges they have faced in both the church and in society at large in relation to two of their three daughters. This candour adds immeasurably to the potency and immediacy of their case for embracing difference.

One of their more arresting observations occurs near the end of their book when they make a counterintuitive claim for a blessed singularity:

"We have discussed how the North American obsession with conformity to a commercially contrived concept of a desirable body alienates people whose bodies cannot approximate the fashion trend. Ironically, the people labelled with difference who have been rejected from the mainstream may be those with the greatest power to confront existential humanity. Disability's foregrounding of our elemental physicality enhances understanding of our humanity, which in turn facilitates spiritual growth and divinization."

Carefully read, this short book should have long term consequences liberating for us all – religious and secular. ☞

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## The Internet's black eye

Her black hair was hanging down, swaying in the early morning breeze on Sept. 13, 2011. It was all the life that remained in her shirtless, disembowelled corpse suspended by the hands and feet under a pedestrian bridge in the Mexican border city of Nuevo Laredo. Next to her, was another body, of a young man, his bloodied head lolled forward from the pinch of his shoulders extending his arms up to meet the length of rope from which he, too, turned.

The only explanation for the brutality exercised on these unknown victims was a yellow piece of Bristol board, which read, "This will happen to all the Internet snitches," listing three Mexican websites and then the warning, "we've got our eye on you." It was signed "Z," which police believed to mean the Zetas, a drug cartel. Nuevo Laredo is only divided from Texas by a thin sliver of the Rio Grande. Interstate 35 even turns into Leandro Valle, a main drag in Nuevo Laredo's city centre, leaving the land of the free in its wake.

This horrifying incident is just one of the many Ronald J. Deibert tackles in *Black Code: Inside the Battle for Cyberspace*. The director of the Canada Centre for Global Security Studies and the Citizen Lab at the Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto, Deibert has written the kind of book that should interest every one of us but that few are likely to read and even fewer will actually take to heart.

This is because Deibert is saying things we don't want to think about.

"Most of us are vaguely aware that there is a seamier, darker side to the Internet, but we tend to assume it is hidden deep in the shadows," writes Deibert. "Never before have we had such a grand illusion of freedom through technology, when, in fact, that very freedom and technology are constrained by ever-expanding state laws and corporate regulations. This is not how it should be, or was meant to be."

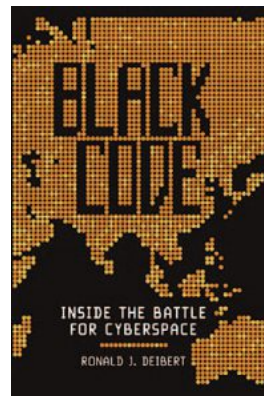
Deibert's titular black code refers to the myriad components that today form the policing of cyberspace, "a dark world largely free from public accountability and independent oversight." In *Black Code*, Deibert outlines the rise of black code and the potential, and more and more often too real, dangerous ramifications of it.

"As with any such wholesale social change, we should expect unintended consequences, not all of them desirable. Past experience with the printing press, telegraph, radio, and television tell us that new media environment shape and constrain the realm of the possible, favouring some social forces and ideas over other."

What concerns Deibert the most is the current corporate control of cyberspace. As it was before the Internet, corporations and businesses entwine with politics to affect consequences both domestic and international. However, the difference online is the "companies that control huge swaths of cyberspace are at once flexing their political muscles and being deputized with more expansive policing responsibilities."

With numerous shocking examples, Deibert shows how, "When private companies are entrusted with the responsibilities and powers to police the Internet, questions of transparency, due process, and accountability inevitably arise."

He is particularly discouraged by the rise of what are called "other requests" – non-court-ordered requests from governments to companies such as Google to remove content from the Internet. These requests "dwarf" court-ordered requests, and are rising in



**Black Code: Inside the Battle for Cyberspace** by Ronald J. Deibert, Signal, 320 pages

number. The top 10 countries filing "other requests" are all democracies, including Canada.

The murky question becomes, how do Internet companies decide what "other requests" to heed?

"When pressed with content take-down requests, the companies often opt for the cheap and easy solution rather than demanding due process, risking expensive legal battle, or getting expelled from lucrative markets."

As a result, many companies based in democracies can end up colluding with "some very nasty regimes" by complying with local laws. This is a problem Deibert anticipates will continue to increase as the digital divide between industrialized and developing nations shrink. Although Somalia ranks 181 out of 194 countries in life expectancy, about 40 per cent of the country is online.

"These new digital natives love their smartphones and apps as much as the rest of us, the uses to which they are often put are dramatically different, and this difference is affecting cyberspace itself. . . . It is a western conceit to think that just because we invented the technology its uses will conform to our original design."

Neither governments nor corporations are much interested in spending money on policing the Internet. As such, cyber crime is one of the world's largest growth businesses, there is such as thing as the Iranian Cyber Army and the black code grows.

"Electrons may move at the speed of light, but legal systems crawl at the speed of bureaucratic institutions, particularly across international borders. . . . Can security and openness be reconciled?"

Here in Atlantic Canada, this has mostly come to the fore regarding cyber-bullying. My sense has been the public is generally aghast that no legal control over such a serious matter exists. *Black Code* contextualizes this debate and issue on a global scale. Deibert wants us to know we should be outraged, there are democratic solutions and things can change.

"This much can be said: it is peculiar to cyberspace that we, the users, shape it as much as we are shaped by it. We are at it every day, every night, transforming it all the while. Cyberspace is what we make of it. It is ours. We need to remember this before it slips through our grasp." ☞

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**After Desire** by George Stanley, New Star, 96 pages



*After Desire* is poetry devoted to thought, age and observation. The collection takes root in everyday life – a hip downtown Vancouver neighbourhood, bar banter, the abstracts of desire. Several poems act as meditations on desire and its aftermath, including: "Memories of Desire; Loss of Desire; After Desire; and Desire of

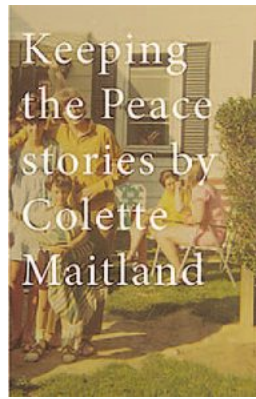
the Self," where Stanley instructs: "Laugh in surprise at beauty./ Laugh at your freedom from desire."

Stanley's eighth collection of poetry features three lost poems from 1971, "Notes for Poets Involved in Trying to Write the Detective Poem," "The White Hawthorn" and "For Robert Duncan."

In "The White Hawthorn," he writes of invitation: "We would enter the House of Life as we would/ the House of Poetry. The furnishings for each/ picked out to be enjoyed, to be admired." With a nostalgic scope that evolves into a panoramic contemporary view, there is conversational subtlety to the poet's work. When he commands language, it's with broadening confidence. In a concise poem, "Yawn," he writes "Don't gaze into the abyss./ Gaze out."

Whether Stanley's relaying common place experiences, such as the poem *The Vacuum Cleaner*, or exploring *The Past*, his inquisitive nature and ability to rouse curiosity hooks readers. *The Phantoms Have Gone Away* is a poem that stayed with me days later. The space created, and left for beauty, both haunted and enchants. He writes, "This is that moment./ Visions of beauty/ in an unfamiliar stillness." ☞

**Keeping the Peace** by Colette Maitland, Biblioasis, 240 pages



I once dated someone from a small town in northern Ontario. As we drove through the town, he pointed out a particular motel where people specifically went to have affairs. It was an open secret around town.

Coming from Toronto, I take anonymity for granted: In a big city, what you have to work for is being known. In her debut short story

collection *Keeping the Peace*, Colette Maitland suggests it is just as hard to be truly known in a small town.

Small-town Ontario is a ripe setting for short fiction because, like a good short story, there is a lot going on in a tiny space. The landscape is layered and complicated. In *Keeping the Peace*, Maitland plays with the texture of everydayness. She sensitively and skillfully explores what's behind the facade of daily life, and what's left unsaid to keep the façade intact. Her characters are motivated by duty and knotty love, and often feel compelled to tuck their objections away and smooth over their pain. "Act like this is normal," Judith tells herself in "The Plan."

But normal is shaky and fragile. Pain always finds a way to leak out. In "Spark," Lynette steals things to manage the unmanageable grief of losing her son. In "Until Death Do Us Part," Martha's husband is a sinister parallel with a neighbour who killed his girlfriend. And in "Faith and Joy," Faith is a new mother struggling with postpartum depression; her mother and husband insist she's better, but she knows she isn't.

Keeping up appearances is a limited solution, Maitland reminds us. Sooner or later, the mask slips. ☞

## New Brunswick's reading

### Hardcover, fiction

- The Rosie Project** by Graeme Simsion (HarperCollins)
- And the Mountain Echoed** by Khaled Hosseini (Penguin)
- Inferno** by Dan Brown (Random House)
- A Delicate Truth** by John le Carré (Penguin)
- Caught** by Lisa Moore (Anansi)

### Paperback, fiction

- The 100-Year-Old Man Who Climbed out the Window and Disappeared** by Jonas Jonasson (HarperCollins)
- Shoemaker's Wife** by Adriana Trigiani (HarperCollins)
- Entwined with You** by Sylvia Day (Penguin)
- 1356** by Bernard Cornwell (HarperCollins)
- Never Saw It Coming** by Linwood Barclay (Random House)

### Hardcover, non-fiction

- Nocturne** by Helen Humphreys

(HarperCollins)

- The Autistic Brain** by Temple Grandin (Thomas Allen)
- It's All Good** by Gwyneth Paltrow (Hachette)
- Henri, le Chat Noir** by William Braden (Random House)
- The Ballad of Jacob Peck** by Debra Komar (Goose Lane)

### Paperback, non-fiction

- Sheffield Memories** by Barbara Jamieson (Barbara Jamieson)
- Historic Saint John Streets** by David Goss and Harold Wright (Nimbus)
- Glorious Light** by John Leroux (Gaspereau)
- Waterfalls of New Brunswick: A guide** by Nicholas Guitard (Goose Lane)
- Wheat Belly** by William Davis (HarperCollins)

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