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The Waterman Saga: Jacques Poulin’s Books about Books

Jacques Poulin has been described as the most North American of the contemporary francophone writers from Québec. In his 1984 classic *Volkswagen Blues* and three more recent works all featuring novelist Jack Waterman, *La Traduction est une histoire d’amour* (2006), *L’Anglais n’est pas une langue magique* (2009) and *L’Homme de la Saskatchewan* (2011), protagonists adopt and collaborate in a multitude of roles in relation to books. Whether ghost writer, reader, listener or translator, all of Poulin’s main characters gravitate around Waterman and join him in his pursuit of the novelist’s craft and his exploration of the survival of the French presence in North America.

Beginning with a consideration of the mise-en-abyme of the birth of a book within the novel *L’Homme de la Saskatchewan*, this presentation will trace Poulin’s continuing reflection on the act of writing. Centered around the intersection of the themes of quest, writing and healing, this paper will examine the way the characters’ relationships to the text (as writer, translator, reader or listener) and to each other (as parent/child surrogate, brother or friend) evolve and converge to bring about healing of the other and the self.