Canadian Literature / Littérature *canadienne*

A Quarterly of Criticism and Review
Number 228/229, Spring/Summer 2016, Emerging Scholars 2
Published by The University of British Columbia, Vancouver
Editor: Laura Moss
Associate Editors: Nicholas Bradley (Reviews), Stephen Collis (Poetry), Glenn Deer (Reviews), Kathryn Grafton (CanLit Guides)
Assistant Editor: Sarah Henzi (Francophone Writing)

Past Editors: George Woodcock (1959-1977), W. H. New (1977-1995), Eva-Marie Kröller (1995-2003), Laurie Ricou (2003-2007), Margery Fee (2007-2015)

Editorial

Laura Moss
Notes from a CanLit Killjoy *6*

Articles

Lucia Lorenzi
"Am I not OK?": Negotiating and Re-Defining Traumatic Experience in Emma Donoghue's *Room* *19*

Melissa Li Sheung Ying
"Liv[ing] Poetically upon the Earth": The Bioregional Child and Conservation in Monique Proulx's *Wildlives* *35*

Articles, *continued*

Shaun A. Stevenson
Sacred and Sacrificial Landscapes: Reading and Resisting Settler Canadian Environmental Discourse in M. T. Kelly's *A Dream Like Mine* and the Navigation Protection Act *53*

Shane Neilson
Claire's Head and Pain: Beyond the Sign of the Weapon *73*

Sharlee Cranston-Reimer
"It is life you must write about": Fixity and Refraction in Dionne Brand's *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging* *93*

Kate Siklosi
"the absolute / of water": The Submarine Poetic of M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!* *111*

Jessica McDonald
Beyond Generic Hybridity: Nalo Hopkinson and the Politics of Science Fiction *133*

Jeff Fedoruk
Plotting "Nowhere": Towards a Theory of Urban Folklore on Vancouver's Gentrifying Frontier *151*

Brenna Clarke Gray
Border Studies in the Gutter: Canadian Comics and Structural Borders *170*

Janie Beriault
The Sublime and Picturesque Aesthetics in John Richardson's *Wacousta* *189*

Paul Barrett
Paraphrasing the Paraphrase OR What I Learned from Reading Every Issue of *Canadian Literature / Littérature canadienne* and *Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature canadienne* *208*

Poems

Jean-Paul Daoust 18
Bill Howell 34
Cyril Dabydeen 52
Ruby Turok-Squire 72
Alexandra Dexel 91
Erinn Beth Langille 110
Tom Wayman 131
Pearl Pirie 150
Amanda Charlotte Earl 168
Sam Weselowski 188
Maleea Acker 206
Shazia Hafiz Ramji 226

Books in Review

Forthcoming book reviews are available at canlit.ca/reviews

Authors Reviewed

Tappan Adney 227
Samuel Archibald 228
C. Ted Behne 227
Juliane Okot Bitek 230
George Bowering 232
Rebecca Bromwich 234
Nicole Brossard 235
François Caillat 237
Angela Carr 235
Monique Marie DeJong 234
Dina Del Bucchia 238
Mark Dickinson 264
Stan Dragland 239
OmiSoore H. Dryden 241
Marilyn Dumont 243
Raoul Fernandes 245
Sheila Fischman 228
Don Gillmor 232
David Theo Goldberg 260
Jon Gordon 246
Daniel Grenier 248
Helen Hajnoczky 245
Susan Holbrook 249
David Homel 237
Smaro Kamboureli 255
Michael Keren 251
Dennis Lee 243
Suzanne Lenon 241
Astrid Lohöfer 249
James Long 253
Bryden MacDonald 253
Lee Maracle 255
Nicole Markotić 230
Neal McLeod 256
Edmund Metatawabin 259
Kathryn Mockler 238
Rick Monture 259
Mareike Neuhaus 256
Morris Panych 253
Liza Piper 246
Anna Poletti 260
Julie Rak 260
Rachel Rose 263
Michael L. Ross 241
Alexandra Shimo 259
Carolyn Smart 263
Patrik Svensson 260
Lisa Szabo-Jones 246
Larry Tremblay 228
Sheryda Warrener 230
Tom Wayman 232
Gillian Whitlock 251
Donald Winkler 228
Kathleen Winter 239
Brent Wood 264
Showey Yazdanian 266
Marcus Youssef 253
Daniel Zomparelli 238
Jan Zwicky 235

Reviewers

Dan Adleman 238
Lourdes Arciniega 234
Myra Bloom 235
Misao Dean 227

Jeff Fedoruk	239	*Anne Marie Miraglia*	228
Susan Gingell	255	*Saghar Najafi*	266
Julian Gunn	241	*Nazeer Patel*	256
Crystal Hurdle	230	*Neil Querengesser*	243
Suzanne James	259	*Michael Roberson*	249
Daniel Laforest	248	*Asma Sayed*	251
Lucia Lorenzi	246	*Shelley Scott*	253
Andrea MacPherson	263	*Justin Shaw*	260
Joel Martineau	232	*Paul Watkins*	264
Philip Miletic	245	*Carl Watts*	238

Canadian Literature, a peer-reviewed journal, welcomes original, unpublished submissions of articles, interviews, and other commentaries relating to writers and writing in Canada and of previously unpublished poems by Canadian writers. The journal does not publish fiction.

Articles—6,000-7,000 words (including Notes and Works Cited), double-spaced, and in 12-point font size—should be submitted online through the Open Journal Systems (OJS). Please go to canlit.ca/submit to register and submit. Submissions must be in Rich Text Format (.rtf) or Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx). Submissions should include a brief biographical note (50-100 words) and an abstract (150 words). Articles should follow MLA guidelines for bibliographic format.

Littérature canadienne est une revue avec comité de lecture. Elle publie des articles, des entrevues et des commentaires originaux sur les écrivains et l'écriture au Canada, ainsi que de la poésie canadienne pour publication initiale. La revue ne publie pas de fiction.

Les articles—6000-7000 mots (notes et références bibliographiques comprises), à double interligne, taille de la police 12—peuvent être soumis en ligne sur canlit.ca/submit, où vous serez automatiquement redirigé vers notre nouvelle plateforme OJS (Open Journal Systems). Les soumissions doivent être en format de texte enrichi (.rtf) ou Microsoft Word (.doc ou .docx) et doivent comprendre une brève note biographique (50-100 mots) et un résumé (150 mots). Les articles doivent respecter le style de citation MLA.

***Canadian Literature* online (canlit.ca):**

Archives (canlit.ca/issues)
Issues #1 to 207 are freely available online as are all editorials and pre-print book reviews, including unpublished upcoming reviews, from issue #208 onwards.

CanLit Guides (canlitguides.ca)
A modular learning resource that introduces students to reading and writing at a university level.

Open Journal Systems (canlit.ca/submit)
Submit articles, poetry, and book reviews online.

GST R108161779

Publication of *Canadian Literature* is assisted by The University of British Columbia, the Faculty of Arts (UBC), and SSHRC.

Canadian Literature is indexed in *Canadian Periodical Index*, *Canadian Magazine Index*, *Humanities International Complete*, and the *MLA International Bibliography*, among numerous others. The journal is indexed and abstracted by EBSCO, PROQUEST, and ABES. Full text of articles and reviews from 1997 onwards is available from PROQUEST, GALE, and EBSCO Publishing. The journal is available in microfilm from University Microfilm International.

Publications Mail Agreement
NO. 40592543
Registration NO. 08647

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO
Canadian Literature
The University of British Columbia
ANSO Building, Room 8
6303 NW Marine Drive
Vancouver, BC
Canada V6T 1Z1

TELEPHONE: (604) 822-2780
EMAIL: Can.Lit@ubc.ca
canlit.ca
canlit.ca/submit

2016 SUBSCRIPTION
CANADA (GST INCLUDED): INDIVIDUAL $60; INSTITUTION $231
OUTSIDE CANADA (SHIPPING INCLUDED): INDIVIDUAL $90 USD; INSTITUTION $261 USD

ISSN 0008-4360

Managing Editor: Donna Chin
Donna.Chin@ubc.ca
Production Staff: Mary Chen, Christy Fong, Josephine Lee, Brendan McCormack, Beth Veitch
Design: George Vaitkunas
Illustrations: George Kuthan
Printing: Hignell Printing Limited
Paper: recycled and acid-free

We acknowledge that we are on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓-speaking Musqueam people.

Editorial

Notes from a CanLit Killjoy[1]

Laura Moss

I have nothing soothing to tell you . . .
—Dionne Brand, *Inventory*

i hate canada: because "canada" is the most powerful ideological tool deployed historically and still deployed in the interests of a settler colony's colonial project.
—peter kulchyski, "bush/writing"

To be involved in political activism is thus to be involved in a struggle against happiness. . . . Our activist archives are thus unhappy archives. Even if we are struggling for different things, even if we have different worlds we want to create, we might share what we come up against.
—Sara Ahmed, "Feminist Killjoys (And Other Willful Subjects)"

Although demonstrations and assemblies are often not enough to produce radical change, they do alter our perceptions about who *the people* are, and they assert fundamental freedoms that belong to bodies in their plurality. . . . Only a broad-based mobilization—a form of embodied and transnational courage, we might say—will successfully defeat xenophobic nationalism and the various alibis that now threaten democracy.
—Judith Butler, "Reflections on Trump"

1. I recently finished reading the breakout book of 2016, *Notes from a Feminist Killjoy*: *Essays on Everyday Life* by Erin Wunker. Full disclosure: I am in the book's acknowledgements as one of the author's "mentors, friends, inspirations" (207). Erin and I worked together on the Board of Directors for Canadian Women in the Literary Arts (CWILA) and we have remained

friends. Wunker dedicates a chapter to women's friendship and the necessity of engaged mentorship and community building. In *Notes*, Wunker also writes eloquently about issues as disparate as rape culture and motherhood, as well as contemporary popular and civic culture in North America and beyond. Importantly, she writes about intersectional feminism and about the need to acknowledge privilege in its various forms. What draws me to this text here and now, however, is her introduction of the concept of the feminist killjoy into Canadian cultural conversations. I am interested in what the feminist killjoy brings to Canadian literary criticism.

Wunker takes up Sara Ahmed's notion of the feminist killjoy—"that irreverent figure who lights a match and joyfully flicks it into the dry hull of patriarchal culture" (15)—and runs with it. Ahmed writes that "the figure of the feminist killjoy makes sense if we place her in the context of feminist critiques of happiness, of how happiness is used to justify social norms as social goods" (n. pag.). For Wunker, as for Ahmed, the feminist killjoy is a "positive figure" who "is not okay with the status quo" (46). She resists "restrictive categories of gender or gender performance" and "[s]he will not tolerate casual instances of racism or classism. She won't keep quiet to maintain the smooth dinner conversation. Oh, no. The feminist killjoy is one who understands that to be a world maker and to make space for herself in the world she must disrupt the complacency that the happiness imperative demands" (46). That final phrase is so relevant and so powerful. Each generation of CanLit scholars and writers seems to have thrived on a new form of space-making pyromania.

With Wunker, I recognize that "it is complicated to be a hopeful feminist killjoy, complicated and necessary" (34). Her intersectional feminism "takes into account the ways in which different oppressive conditions—sexism, ableism, homophobia, racism, transphobia, classism, and so on—are interconnected" (38). This ask is a big one, and potentially so all-encompassing as to be unmanageable. Further, not all people (killjoys come in all genders) have the same access to being a killjoy. For some, it is unsafe to stand up to power. For people who are already marginalized (by virtue of race, religious belief, class positioning, history, sexuality, or gender identification, for example, or by institutional precarity), resistance might be met with censure, aggression, or even violence.[2] The scope of possible resistance varies for each person. Here, I am using killjoy as a term that highlights the practice of resistance, as a term that says *No!* with intent, and as a term that functions as a starting point for individual and/or communal protest.[3]

2. In the pages of a journal whose name implies a cultural nationalist mandate, given the current political climate, it is important to consider what is done in the name of nationalism, to scrutinize exclusionary, and often dangerous, paradigms, and to think about what role Canadian writers and critics have had and continue to have in resistance, protest, and activism. How have they been killjoys? Much of what I try to do as a CanLit scholar is intersectional literary critique that disrupts the complacency demanded by the happiness imperative. Historically, a variety of constituencies (in government, public institutions, and the media) have turned to CanLit to justify versions of Canadian culture as a social good. Over the decades, what constitutes the social good has changed shape, but the perception of communal happiness has remained remarkably consistent. It is a truism to say that the CanLit community has never been a singular harmonious group, but it is also true to say that it has sometimes been seen as such. The thing is, as many critics have pointed out, such a fashioning of cultural cohesion has often overlooked the naysayers and those who have been excluded in the cultural imaginary of the day. In fact, I would argue that Canadian writers—both critical and creative—who resist have been vocal for decades, even centuries. The question is whether they have been heard. This brings me to the three recurring questions that I seem to infinitely rehearse: Who speaks? Who listens? Who profits?

3. In an article published in *The Walrus* in November 2016 entitled "The CanLit Firestorm," Simon Lewsen argues that "[f]rom the '70s until about two weeks ago, CanLit seemed to operate under a broadly progressive consensus. The community wasn't perfectly cohesive, but it was about as cohesive as any national literary movement could be. . . . Along with David Suzuki and the NDP, CanLit was the moral conscience of the nation" (n. pag.). Lewsen concludes, however, that this cohesion was destroyed in the controversy around the dismissal of the Chair of the UBC Creative Writing Program, Steven Galloway. As a faculty member at UBC, I can't say much about the details of the Galloway case. I bring it up here to consider how the case opened public fissures in the CanLit community. Eighty-eight writers—many of whom were well established (Joseph Boyden, Michael Ondaatje, Susan Swann, Margaret Atwood, and Madeleine Thien, among them)—signed the original "UBC Accountable" Open Letter in support of more transparency around Galloway's suspension from academic duties and eventual dismissal from his position. Another 547 people signed the

Open Counter-Letter petition that was spearheaded by University of Alberta professor Julie Rak and inaugurated by a group of "Canadian literature and littérature québécoise scholars, writers, cultural workers and allies" (n. pag.). The Counter-Letter is an excellent example of what can be seen as a collective act of CanLit killjoy-dom. The response letter argued for a recognition of the rights of the students whose voices were overlooked in the original Open Letter—those who had made complaints against the Chair of their program and those who remain in the program. The Counter-Letter also argued the need to contextualize this controversy in larger cultural discussions about sexual assault and the right to privacy. Finally, the Counter-Letter advocated "transparent and fair process for all parties involved, not just those with recognizable names" (Rak n. pag.). In short, the Counter-Letter implied the need for everyone to be a sharper reader and to consider the implications of what was said and what remained silent. So many emotions swirled publicly around this event in the fall of 2016: anger, betrayal, bitterness, sadness, frustration, pain, disbelief, disappointment, disdain, even fury. As scholars of CanLit, we have become familiar with literary criticism that draws on the equation "X author challenges Y convention or retrograde belief." Yet, clearly, not all authors are "social justice warriors" at all times. Some writers—again both creative and critical—have more power and cultural capital than others. Some have more imperative to be a killjoy than others, as well. What the Galloway controversy did was destabilize the specious positioning of the author as a moral arbiter or the field of CanLit as the "moral conscience of the nation" in the public mind (Lewsen n. pag.).

4. In the fall of 2016, Donald J. Trump was elected President of the United States of America, having campaigned on a platform to "Make America Great Again." On January 20, 2017, he was inaugurated in front of a small crowd of supporters as he cried "America First! America First!" The next day an estimated two million unhappy people marched in cities across the continent and around the world protesting his politics. They held signs that said "Love Trumps Hate"; "*The Handmaid's Tale* Is Not An Instruction Manual"; "My Body! My Choice!"; "I can't believe we still have to protest this shit"; "Injury to One is Injury to All"; "Trump and Brexit are the Same Movement"; "WTF America?"; "Injustice Anywhere is a Threat to Justice Everywhere"; and "We the People Unite / Stop Islamophobia!"[4] In his first week in office, Trump passed Executive Orders that worked to weaken

women's reproductive rights, to curtail the rights of refugees and those marginalized by war, to push pipelines that disregarded Indigenous rights (DAPL), to limit the rights of members of the LGBTQ community, to silence the rights of the environment, and even to mock the right to free speech and journalistic integrity. At the end of that week, Trump issued an Executive Order that effectively banned people from seven predominantly Muslim nations from entering America. On January 28, more people took to the streets in opposition to the ban. On January 29, a white gunman went into the Centre Culturel Islamique de Québec and opened fire. Six Muslim men who were at prayer were killed and over a dozen others were injured in one of the largest mass murders in Canadian history. The twenty-seven-year-old arrested for the shooting had shown support on social media for Trump, Marine Le Pen of the French far-right, and a right-wing nationalist Québécois organization. In the first week of February 2017 alone, approximately two dozen people walked across a frozen field in Emerson, Manitoba, to seek refugee status in Canada, risking life and limb, literally, to reach safety. The events are all connected, of course, and not just through simultaneity. The actions in one nation can have repercussions elsewhere.

5. In response to Trump's travel ban, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau tweeted an image of himself welcoming a young Syrian refugee child in 2015 together with the words "To those fleeing persecution, terror & war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith. Diversity is our strength #WelcomeToCanada." In the familiar Canadian move of definition by negation, Trudeau shows what Canada is by reactively showing how it is not America. The problem with this feel-good tweet—retweeted at least half a million times—is that Canada has not yet followed up with specific actions. The government has not yet increased the number of refugees allowed in or rescinded the Safe Third Country Agreement. It has not commented directly on the ban or reaffirmed its position as a signatory of the Geneva Convention on Refugees, nor has it taken on the overt racism of politicians or radio talk show hosts who pander to nationalist fears. Following the shootings in Quebec, there have been more tweets but not a lot more action by the federal government. As Martin Lukacs notes, "many desperate and endangered people will not be able to come to Canada, despite there being groups ready to welcome and host them. Sparkling in his symbolism, Trudeau has been desultory in his deeds" (n. pag.). The

happiness imperative that politicians peddle by configuring Canada as a deeply welcoming nation needs to be met with killjoy incredulity to keep it grounded.

6. Since the first anniversary of Canada becoming a self-governing dominion in 1867, July 1 has been set aside as a day to celebrate the nation, first as Dominion Day and, since 1983, as Canada Day. While July 1 is a day of national celebration, it is on July 2, the day after Canada Day, that the stories of community, inclusion, peace, and patriotism are published. A *Globe and Mail* article from July 2, 1998 follows standard format, with a killjoy twist. Under the headline "Canadians new and old mark July 1" and beside a collage of photos of a parade of people carrying a banner saying "Keep Canada United," beside two separate images of children with face-painted flags, and beside a picture of a smiling new Canadian displaying her citizenship certificate, journalist Kim Honey quotes a member of the Iranian Women's Organization of Ontario saying "[n]o matter what part of the world we come from, once we're in Canada, we are one" (A10). Honey also, however, gently resists the happiness of the pat Canada Day narrative by also telling the story of "stateless Palestinians" who were refused entry to Canada and who have sought sanctuary in a church. Honey unsettles the joy of the photographs and the interview with the story of those refused by Canada. Here, the creative juxtaposition of image and story—of harsh bureaucratic exclusion—effectively undermines the inclusion narrative, even in its July 2 frame. What happens after July 2? That is when I think Canadian critics, writers, poets, playwrights, and journalists step in and resist a single story.

7. Lest Canada's sesquicentennial in 2017—with all of the *Canada 150* celebrations planned—turn into a year-long July 2, CanLit killjoys will need to be out in full force, pointing to gaps, highlighting exclusions, and telling "untold stories" occluded by the celebratory narratives of the nation.[5] T-shirts reading "Colonialism 150" are already for sale.

8. Recently, in conversation over coffee, Simon Fraser University professor Hannah McGregor succinctly asked me, what happens if you do not want to be part of the community you have been imagined into? Who gets to do the imagining? In reference to the Galloway case, Lucia Lorenzi posed similar questions of the "imagined community that is CanLit," drawing on Benedict

Anderson's definition of the nation as "imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail . . . the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (qtd. in Lorenzi n. pag.). "How," Lorenzi asks, "is the 'deep, horizontal comradeship' constructed and upheld, and by whom? How far are we willing—or are forced—to go in order to defend it or suffer for it?" (n. pag.). Such questions, I would argue, have animated Canadian literary scholarship for years. In fact, for me these questions are at the heart of being a CanLit killjoy. Canadian criticism is filled with those who have resisted the joys of cohesion and who have imagined new futures, different pasts, and disparate social goods.

I think that critics are particularly good at killing joy, productively. As critics, we are trained to be skeptical of history, of texts, and of our own institutions. Sarah Brouillette, for example, examines how universities are involved in labour markets as she critiques the easy assumption that the privileges we are accorded in academia are warranted and justified because we are socially useful. Further, her work rails against inattention to the material grounds of expression and reception. Really, any list of CanLit criticism prepared for a doctoral comprehensive examination could be filled with critics who have resisted orthodoxies. Consider Smaro Kamboureli's whole TransCanada project, Daniel Coleman critiquing white civility, Roy Miki arguing for redress, Fred Wah playing with hybridity, Warren Cariou creatively using bitumen in his petrographs, Diana Brydon advocating planetarity, or Arun Mukherjee holding CanLit to task for its whiteness and elitism. Think of the work of Carole Gerson on women's writing, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson on decolonization, Pauline Wakeham on reconciliation, Kit Dobson on transnationalism, Jo-Ann Episkenew on healing, or Bart Vautour on Canadian involvement in the Spanish Civil War. Each critic's project began, I suspect, with a recognition that the gaps in narratives of a happy Canada had to be addressed.

9. While resistance is not new in Canadian letters, neither is complacency. And yet, Canadian literature is full of killjoys who have pointed to the pitfalls of self-satisfaction. There is a long history of writers who have said *No*. "Here's a bomb to blast complacency" wrote F. R. Scott on the cover of *The Blasted Pine* in 1957. "I Accuse Us" ranted Earle Birney in response to Canadian non-opposition to the Vietnam War less than a decade later. Mordecai Richler distrusted nationalism and his fellow writers, in similar

parts.[6] Whether we turn to Dorothy Livesay's "Day and Night," E. Pauline Johnson's "A Strong Race Opinion," Jeannette Armstrong's "History Lesson," or Sui Sin Far's "A Plea for the Chinaman," we see examples of writers driven to unsettle orthodoxies, criticize inequality and discrimination, and offer dissent from expectation.

10. The morning after the shooting at the mosque in Quebec, University of Toronto professor Karina Vernon asked the following on her Facebook feed: "Colleagues in CanLit: what will you be teaching this week? I'm thinking of scrapping what I had planned and teaching Wayde Compton's 'Illegalese: Floodgate Dub.'" Erin Wunker responded with a comment about how she planned to teach 1930s labour movement poetry around issues of immigration, enfranchisement, race, and gender. Farah Moosa quoted from *Obasan* as particularly pertinent: "What is done, Aunt Emily, is done, is it not? And no doubt it will all happen again, over and over with different faces and names, variations on the same theme" (219). I replied that I would be talking about "alternative facts" and the Monsanto/Percy Schmeiser patent infringement case as depicted in Annabel Soutar's docudrama *Seeds*. Wayde Compton noted that if he were teaching a literature class at the moment, he would teach *Cosmophilia*, by Rahat Kurd.

Following Karina Vernon's lead, I asked my own Facebook community "for examples of CanLit that resists," referencing the figure of the CanLit killjoy and giving examples of Earle Birney, Dionne Brand, Marilyn Dumont, and the Enpipe Line collective.[7] Within seconds came the suggestions of "Speak White" by Michèle Lalonde and "Borders" by Thomas King. These were quickly followed by Shane Rhodes' *X*, Soraya Peerbaye's *Tell*, "Trickster Beyond 1992: Our Relationship" by Lenore Keeshig-Tobias, "The Crows Cope" by Diane Tucker, Makeda Silvera's "Caribbean Chameleon," Sharon Pollock's *The Komagata Maru Incident,* Souvankham Thammavongsa's *Small Arguments*, Cecily Nicholson's *Triage*, and "The Uses of Poetry" by Di Brandt. Sonnet L'Abbé pointed out that "there is resistance in simply asserting and reasserting that brown Canadian, Black Canadian, [and] Aboriginal stories are Canadian stories," and noted her forthcoming anthology with Véhicule Press, tentatively titled "Resisting Canada: Poems for Post-Multicultural Times." Others listed work by Phinder Dulai, Marvin Francis, Brian Fawcett, Sachiko Murakami, Anahita Jamali Rad, Renée Sarojini Saklikar, Vivek Shraya, Anthony Stewart, and Moez Surani.

The suggestions kept coming. The diversity and range of writers and texts, of genres and generations, was striking. There were as many versions of "writing that resists" as there were postings. A lively conversation sprang up around the work of M. NourbeSe Philip and of Lee Maracle. Larissa Lai's suggestion of Marie Clements' work, "all of it but especially *Burning Vision* and *The Edward Curtis Project,*" sparked discussion too. Karis Shearer noted that lately she's been thinking about Leonard Cohen's *Flowers for Hitler* "and his examination of culpability, responsibility, and the banality of evil." Others urged us to go beyond creative works to think about the resisting work of nonfiction as well. Janice Williamson recommended books that deal with Islamophobia by Monia Mazigh and Sheema Khan, as well as the poetry and fiction in the collection she edited, *Omar Khadr, Oh Canada*. More people piled on with names of writers who resist: Rob Budde, George Elliott Clarke, Jen Currin, Mercedes Eng, Liz Howard, Ray Hsu, Wanda John-Kehewin, Lisa Robertson, Gregory Scofield, Nancy Shaw, Catriona Strang, and Katherena Vermette. Hannah McGregor and Tanis MacDonald provided the passages I have used as epigraphs by Peter Kulchyski and Dionne Brand, respectively. Others wanted to historicize by reminding us of the work of Betsy Warland, Dorothy Livesay, E. Pauline Johnson, Maria Campbell, and F. R. Scott. I am not sure that all of these writers would appreciate being placed under the heading of CanLit killjoy, but I suspect that most would be on board with the notion that their writing resists. It seems to me that the compilation of this list, on a social media site, was the academic version of marching with placards—with brief signals of shared and expandable community and with CanLit in oscillating circles of concern. We came together to think constructively about the conjunction of politics and art. In a moment of grief and fear, we turned to the power of writing that resists, that says no, that interrupts and disrupts.

What happens if we join the "interruptive immediacy of naysaying" of the *No!* Conference with disrupting the "complacency that the happiness imperative demands" of the feminist killjoy? I think it takes us to a moment replete with CanLit killjoys, or at least people who refuse to be silent or silenced. I am ultimately an optimistic interruptive killjoy, mainly because I agree with a statement purportedly said by Noam Chomsky: "Optimism is a strategy for making a better future. Because unless you believe that the future can be better, you are unlikely to step up and take responsibility for making it so."

***

I end with a return to *Notes from a Feminist Killjoy* where Wunker quotes Ahmed once again: "[t]he future is both a question mark and a mark of questioning. The question of the future is an affective one; it is a question of hope for what we might be as well as what we might become" (qtd. in Wunker 97). With such hope, I turn to this Emerging Scholars 2 issue. We received so many strong papers in response to our original call for work by new and emerging scholars in 2015 that after we published *Canadian Literature* 226, the first Emerging Scholars issue, we decided to follow up with a second issue, and to make it a double. The articles in this issue exemplify a new generation of those who sometimes cultivate killjoy criticism in their engagement with Canadian writing. The articles range in topic from sexual violence to environmental policy, from the body in pain in the medical humanities to the CanLit corpus in digital humanities. Often this new generation of scholars says no to orthodoxies within their own work. The work of an issue like this is to initiate a space for the voices of scholars emerging into the field today to be heard.

NOTES

1 Huge thanks to Brendan McCormack, Mary Chen, and Margery Fee for weighing in on drafts of this editorial.

2 In an article entitled "I'm not an alarmist — but as a Muslim woman I am genuinely alarmed," posted on the CBC website February 1, 2017, Arij Elmi explains how it is dangerous to be a Muslim woman in Canada today: "Many [Muslim] women have stopped taking the subway. Others have quit their jobs or don hats instead of hijabs. These were all choices they have had to make to remain safe in a country that is touted as being one of the safest in the world" (n. pag.).

3 A recent call for papers for a conference on "The Big No!" being held by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee focuses on the "interruptive immediacy of naysaying" and beautifully summarizes the range of possibilities that "No" can hold: "'No' can be a language of protest and overcoming. Its power operates across lines of disciplines and ideology, across modes of writing and the refusal to write. Negation can resist or avoid authority, or can identify and highlight forces which insist on forms of complicity and agreement. The lines between different forms—the conservative 'no,' the creative 'no,' the 'no' of the striker or dissident—deny the clarity of lines of ideology or identity. 'No' also brings about its own failures and dangers: of inaction, of regret, of retribution" (n. pag.).

4 Some members of Black Lives Matter (BLM), for instance, chose not to participate in the 2017 March on Washington (held in numerous cities) because of a lack of acknowledgement of the August 7, 1963 "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedoms," a pivotal march for civil and economic rights for African Americans, and because of a lack of consultation with current members of BLM. Where, some people asked, were the masses of marchers during earlier BLM marches?

5 See, for example, the "Canada 150: Untold Stories of the Past 150 Years" Conference to be held in Dublin at University College Dublin in April 2017.

6 In 2001 Mordecai Richler published an article in *The National Post* entitled "Don't Look to Writers for Morality Lessons." He acerbically writes, "I must speak the truth, even at the risk of being ostracized by my fellow scribblers. In fact, anticipating their rage, I have already applied for a place in the Canada Council's witness-protection program. This because, much as it pains me to turn on my kind, I fear the time has come to admit that far too many celebrated writers were outrageous liars, philanderers, drunks, druggies, unsuitable babysitters, plagiarists, psychopaths, parasites, cowards, indifferent dads or moms and bad credit risks."

7 Thanks to the following colleagues for jumping in with examples of Canadian writing that resists: Jennifer Andrews, Veronica Austen, John Ball, Juliane Okot Bitek, Lily Cho, Stephen Collis, Marc André Fortin, Anna Guttman, Manina Jones, Sonnet L'Abbé, Larissa Lai, Christine Leclerc, Judith Leggatt, Tanis MacDonald, Sophie McCall, Hannah McGregor, Julie Rak, Deanna Reder, Duffy Roberts, Gillian Roberts, Karis Shearer, Heather Smyth, Rhea Tregebov, Karina Vernon, Janice Williamson, Erin Wunker, and Lorraine York. Thank you also to Sarah Brouillette for answering my question about what she rails against.

WORKS CITED

Ahmed, Sara. "Feminist Killjoys (And Other Willful Subjects)." *S&F Online* 8.3 (2010). 5 Dec. 2016. Web. 5 Dec. 2016.

"The Big No." *Conference*. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Center for 21st Century Studies, n.d. 14 Feb. 2017. Web. 20 Jan. 2017.

Brand, Dionne. *Inventory*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2006. Print.

Butler, Judith. "Reflections on Trump." *Cultural Anthropology*. 18 Jan. 2017. Web. 18 Jan. 2017.

Elmi, Arij. "I'm not an alarmist — but as a Muslim woman I am genuinely alarmed." *Opinion*. CBC. 1 Feb. 2017. Web. 1 Feb. 2017.

Honey, Kim. "Canadians new and old mark July 1." *Globe and Mail*. July 2, 1998. A10. Web. 2 July 2005.

Kogawa, Joy. *Obasan*. Toronto: Penguin, 1981. Print.

Kulchyski, Peter. "bush/writing: embodied deconstruction, traces of community, and writing against the state in indigenous acts of inscription." *Shifting the Ground of Canadian Literary Studies*. Ed. Smaro Kamboureli and Robert Zacharias. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2012. 249-67. Print.

Lewsen, Simon. "The CanLit Firestorm: After the Steven Galloway Controversy, Canadian Literature May Never Be the Same." *The Walrus*. 24 Nov. 2016. Web. 25 Nov. 2016.

Lorenzi, Lucia. "#CanLit at the Crossroads: Violence is Nothing New; How We Deal With It Might Be." *Blog*. Empathy Warrior. 25 Nov. 2016. Web. 25 Nov. 2016.

Lukacs, Martin. "Justin Trudeau's Tweets Won't Make Canada a Refugee Haven—But Popular Pressure Can." *The Guardian*. 31 Jan. 2017. Web. 1 Feb. 2017.

Moss, Laura. "CanLit Folks." *Facebook*. 30 Jan. 2017. Web. 30 Jan. 2017.

Rak, Julie. "Open Counter-Letter About the Steven Galloway Case at UBC." *Change.org*. 17 Nov. 2016. Web. 30 Nov. 2016.

Richler, Mordecai. "Don't Look to Writers for Morality Lessons." *The National Post.* 5 May 2001. Web. 14 Feb. 2017.

Scott, F. R. and A.J.M. Smith, eds. *The Blasted Pine*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1957. Print.
Trudeau, Justin (@JustinTrudeau). "To those fleeing persecution, terror & war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith. Diversity is our strength #WelcomeToCanada." 28 Jan. 2017, 12:20 p.m. Tweet.
UBC Accountable. "An Open Letter To UBC: Steven Galloway's Right To Due Process." *Open Letter to UBC*. UBC Accountable. 14 Nov. 2016. Web. 15 Nov. 2016.
Vernon, Karina. "Colleagues in CanLit." *Facebook*. 30 Jan. 2017. Web. 30 Jan. 2017.
Wunker, Erin. *Notes from a Feminist Killjoy*: *Essays on Everyday Life*. Toronto: BookThug, 2016. Print.

Jean-Paul Daoust

Ébène

L'ébène de ses yeux sculpte la lumière
Ses mains virtuoses font chanter mon corps
Et quand sa bouche aux lèvres pharaoniques m'embrase
Un vent tiède balaie mon cœur
Ses longs cheveux d'un noir absolu tombent sur ses épaules
Tel un Niagara de soie sauvage
Son corps brandit un vibrant obélisque
Où fier il affronte le monde
Il en veut il l'obtient et il en redemande
Puis l'aube couvre la nuit
Collé contre lui je défie la vieillesse et la mort

Ebony

His ebony eyes sculpt the light
His virtuoso hands make my body sing
And when his mouth's pharaonic lips kiss me
A warming breeze caresses my heart
His long, jet-black hair tumbles down to his shoulders
Like a Niagara Falls of raw silk
His body brandishes a live obelisk
With which he proudly takes on the world
He gets what he wants and asks for more
Then dawn veils the night
Clinging to him I defy old age and death

Translated by Norman Cornett

Lucia Lorenzi

"Am I not OK?"
Negotiating and Re-Defining Traumatic Experience in Emma Donoghue's *Room*

At the end of Emma Donoghue's *Room*, a novel that explores both the horror of life in captivity and the uneasy transition back into the world after escape, five-year-old Jack and his mother return to the site of their imprisonment—a garden shed Jack has only known as Room—for one last look around. Donoghue's novel gives equal attention to life during and after captivity: indeed, much of the book's tension revolves around the complexities of a young woman who attempts to parent her young son born as a result of rape—as normally as possible given the circumstances—both in captivity and following their escape and transition back into non-captive life.

For Jack, who was born and raised within the confines of Room, the return to the place he once unflinchingly considered his home (and the entirety of his world) is marked by a distinct sense of unfamiliarity. Jack observes: "We step in through Door and it's all wrong. Smaller than Room and it smells weird" (413). While Jack reflects that he "[guesses] this really was Room one time" (414), the novel ultimately ends with an ambivalent statement about both the physical space of Room as well as Jack's perspective on the events that led to Ma's imprisonment, his birth, and their eventual re-emergence into the world: "I look back one more time. It's like a crater, a hole where something happened" (414).

While it is tempting to read this final scene of Donoghue's novel along the theoretical lines that posit traumatic experience as an aporia or a site of belatedness, as a moment where Jack cannot "register the wound to [his] psyche because the ordinary mechanisms of awareness and cognition are destroyed" (Leys 2), I argue that this closing vignette illustrates one of

the complexities that is negotiated throughout the novel, namely that Jack does not experience Room in the same way as Ma, and not necessarily as traumatic at all. Indeed, the major narrative shift of the novel—Ma's realization that she must convince her son to play an active part in their plan to escape from Room—is complicated precisely by the fact that Jack does not seem to experience his life or his environment as fundamentally traumatizing, and must therefore be convinced of the urgency of the situation. While theorists such as Cathy Caruth note that a traumatic event "may or may not be catastrophic, and may not traumatize everyone equally" (4), I suggest that *Room* goes one step further in its theorization of trauma, asking readers to consider if it is in fact the *external framing* of Jack's experiences in Room that is traumatic for him, rather than his experiences in and of themselves. In contrasting his experience of captivity and freedom with that of Ma, and in exploring how Ma struggles to convey the seriousness of their experiences while also protecting Jack from pathologization, I argue that *Room* calls attention to the ways in which traumatic experiences are shaped by and in conversation with the very definitions of trauma that we have constructed. In doing so, I propose that *Room* offers a critical intervention into contemporary theorizations of trauma not only in terms of the strategies that Donoghue employs to represent traumatic experience, but also in the ways it complicates the very notion of how trauma is determined.

Central to the novel's attempts to complicate the binary of "ordinary" versus "traumatic" experiences is Donoghue's choice to narrate the story from the perspective of a five-year-old boy. While Donoghue admits that her decision to do so was in part a means of making "such a horrifying premise original, involving, but also more bearable," and that "[Jack's] innocence would at least partly shield the reader on their descent into the abyss" ("On 'Room'" n. pag.), she also acknowledges that her choice of narrative voice pushes back against the numerous tropes that have become part and parcel of how mainstream crime stories are told. When asked by a reader if she had ever even considered including different perspectives in the novel, Donoghue categorically responded that she had not:

> No . . . I didn't. [John Fowles' *The Collector*] does such a good job of capturing the mindset of a capturer, and also that's become a banal trope of every second crime novel: the weirdo, fetishistic watcher/stalker/kidnapper/kidnapper of women or children. So I never wanted to give Old Nick that much prominence in my novel; just as Ma does, I chose to keep him at arm's length, not letting him set the terms of the story. And as for telling it from Ma's point of view, I can't imagine how to do that without the novel degenerating into a tearjerker, because at every

> point Ma knows all the reasons to be sad. Nor did I think any of the experts or other adults (such as Grandma) needed their own narration; I thought I could put their sense of Ma and Jack across through reported dialogue. So no, I held to my conviction that *Room* would either have the virtue of originality through being Jack's tale, or it shouldn't be told at all. (qtd. in Halford n. pag.)

Donoghue's concern about engaging either side of the victim/perpetrator binary as a choice for narrative perspective resonates with the work of contemporary feminist theorists such as Sorcha Gunne and Zoë Brigley Thompson, who identify an increasing need for "literary rape narratives that refuse voyeurism and exploitation" (3). Gunne and Thompson do not merely advocate for literary representations of rape that move away from explicit descriptions of violence towards something less gratuitous, but rather, point out the need for "radical readings of rape narratives [that] confront the uncomfortable and shocking nature of sexual violence in [ways] that are themselves shocking and uncomfortable and break the mould of the victim/perpetrator binary" (3). In her interview responses, Donoghue powerfully articulates the dilemma faced by authors if they choose to dispense with a third-person omniscient narrator in favour of one that is more intimately connected with a particular character. Often, scenes of assault may feature only two characters in a particular instance of trauma—the victim and the perpetrator—both of whose perspectives come with particular biases, strengths, and narrative consequences. As Donoghue notes of her refusal to let Old Nick "set the terms of the story," voicing stories of rape and captivity from the perspective of the perpetrator risks mirroring, in narrative terms, the violent control that perpetrators maintain over their victims' bodies as well as their subjectivities.

However, as Laura Tanner observes, readers might find themselves usefully unsettled when they are "located in discomforting proximity to the violator, pressured toward a subject position that he or she finds repugnant and frightening" (10). As with first-person narratives of trauma such as those found in works of life-writing, voicing stories from the perspective of the victim risks inciting a form of affective appropriation of a particular subject position, causing the reader to either over-identify or misidentify with a character's experience of violence. Yet, as Tanner argues, this choice may also productively affect readers who are otherwise reluctant to engage with depictions of the suffering body; by pushing a reader into "a position of discomforting proximity to the victim's vulnerable body" (10), such narratives may be able to "collapse the distance between a disembodied reader and a victim defined by embodiment" (10). No matter which narrative choice is made in telling a story about sexual violence, authors such as

Donoghue are taking significant risks. They must consider questions about the perceived credibility of a narrator, as well as the ways in which either a perpetrator's violent control or a victim's traumatized experience might simply be viewed with the same gaze: one that sees sexualized and gendered violence as both easy and pleasurable to consume. By foregrounding Jack's perspective, which is that of a limited observer to the victim/perpetrator dynamic between his mother and Old Nick, Donoghue offers a critique of the fraught positions of both witness and victim (as well as victims who may not realize they are victims), unsettles her readers by making the act of textual interpretation significantly more complicated, and, ultimately, also subverts readers' expectations of narrative and visual pleasure.

A number of reviews of Donoghue's novel discuss not only the uniqueness of her young narrator, but also his credibility. Anita Shreve writes that Jack is an "entirely credible, endearing little boy" (qtd. in Donoghue i), and Stephen Amidon declares that Jack's narration "gives the novel its startling authenticity" (n. pag.). While such statements may seem to be innocuous commentaries on the novelty of Jack's character, or praise for Donoghue's method of creating such a convincing childhood voice,[1] they miss capturing the possibilities of a more critical reading of Jack's voice, one that reflects what Gunne and Thompson declare as a necessary intervention into the genre of rape/abuse narratives: a voice that is neither simplistically that of the victim or the perpetrator. While Jack is obviously connected to Ma's traumatic experiences within Room, and certainly shows a very real fear of Old Nick (because Old Nick hurts his mother), Jack often functions as a witness to traumatic interactions, one whose voice is used to report events back to the implied reader. Because Jack is a child, his witnessing of the violence between Old Nick and Ma (as well as Ma's ongoing symptoms of trauma) does not necessarily project the same kinds of interpretive framework onto these experiences as those that might be conveyed by an adult narrator, by an older child narrator, or by a child narrator who was not always already in Room.

However, Jack is far from being a *tabula rasa*. As the novel opens, readers become privy to the ways in which life in captivity has undeniably shaped Jack's perspective of the world, including his sense of reality. In a telling passage, Jack has difficulty understanding the relationship between his own existence and those of the people he sees on television:

> Mountains are too big to be real, I saw one in TV that has a woman hanging on it by ropes. Women aren't real like Ma is, and girls and boys not either. Men aren't real except Old Nick, and I'm not actually sure if he's real for real. Maybe half? He brings groceries and Sundaytreat and disappears the trash, but he's not human

like us. He only happens in the night, like bats. Maybe Door makes him up with a *beep beep* and the air changes. I think Ma doesn't like to talk about him in case he gets realer. (23)

What stands out in this passage are the ways in which Jack's seemingly "uninformed" or "naive" observations mirror the difficulties of experience and representation that constrain the consumption of many forms of media and narrative, including but not limited to those about trauma. Moreover, Jack's suggestion that Old Nick is "maybe half" real suggests a form of partial perspective—what Donna Haraway might call a form of "situated knowledge," one that rejects the possibility of singular modes of objective knowledge-formation—that can and should be validated, particularly because Jack is a child narrator. After all, Jack is fully aware of the profound impact that Old Nick has on his mother. Even though Jack's direct knowledge of Old Nick is limited to what "happens in the night," he nevertheless makes the keen observation of Ma's reluctance to talk about him "in case he gets realer." He notices details about his mother's pain—"Ma's sitting in her chair holding her face, that means hurting" (56)—and after an incident during which Old Nick strangles Ma, Jack realizes that the physical violence has escalated: "I see her neck again, the marks that he put on her, I'm all done giggling" (68). Resonating throughout Jack's descriptions of acts he witnesses is a strong sense of Old Nick's malevolence, yet Jack does not sensationalize or graphically describe the crimes that Old Nick commits. Even early in the passage that questions whether or not Old Nick is "real for real," Old Nick is not described as monstrous or foreboding: rather, he is simply described as "not human like us" (23). Jack's characterization of Old Nick is thus encoded, like so many of Jack's observations, with a double meaning for the reader: for Jack, Old Nick's inhumanity is a reflection of a relationship to Jack's visual field (since Ma keeps Jack out of sight in Wardrobe when Old Nick is around); for us, he is not human because of the ways his crimes square with our ideas about perpetrators and what it means to be "humane."

Both Donoghue's re-imagining of narrative perspective and her refusal to represent trauma within a traditional or singular framework are particularly evident in one of the novel's most haunting scenes: Old Nick's rape of Ma. While it is already understood that the rapes are a frequent occurrence, Donoghue nevertheless gives her reader insights into how Jack actually perceives sexual violence:

Lamp goes off *snap*, that makes me jump. I don't mind dark but I don't like when it surprises me. I lie down under Blanket and I wait.

When Old Nick creaks Bed, I listen and count fives on my fingers, tonight it's

> 217 creaks. I always have to count till he makes that gaspy sound and stops. I don't know what would happen if I didn't count, because I always do.
>
> What about the nights I'm asleep?
>
> I don't know, maybe Ma does the counting.
>
> After the 217 it's all quiet. (48)

Unlike narratives of sexual assault that employ graphic and obvious descriptions of sexual violence, Jack's interpretation of the event requires a significant amount of interpretive work on the part of the readers, who cannot simply be passive consumers of a rape scene, but rather, must make the devastating connection between Jack's description of Old Nick's 217 creaks of Bed, his "gaspy sound," and the physical realities of the assault on Ma. While Jack does not understand the relationship of these details to sexual violence, the reader certainly does—if not immediately, then fairly quickly. For Ma, this experience is clearly that of *rape* as we understand it; for Jack, it is something else that operates only within his limited experience, knowledge, visual field, and vocabulary.

Laura Tanner argues that one of the most problematic aspects of rape narratives is the manner in which textuality can cause the reader to "access the fictional world by abandoning the body that anchors him or her to a material universe and [enter] imaginatively into a fictional scene" (9). Furthermore, Tanner cautions that "even as representations of violation invoke and revise the reader's understanding of the way in which actual violence works, they do so through the manipulation of words, images, and literary forms that often function to efface rather than to unveil the materiality of the victimized body" (9). Strictly speaking, Jack's description of Ma's rape is, on the surface, a form of effacement or silencing of the violence she must endure. From the perspective of the reader, however, it is anything but. By forcing readers to do an act of textual-to-physical translation from Jack's literal interpretation of the sounds he hears, Donoghue makes visible the materiality of the victimized body. Readers must consider how and why they understand what could otherwise be interpreted by a child as the sounds of consensual sex—a creaking bed, the vocalizations of orgasm—as the sounds of sexual violence. In doing so, the embodied (rather than the legal) line between consensual sex and rape becomes narrowed: Jack's viewpoint is no longer simple or uncomplicated, but rather one that forces readers to acknowledge the complexities of sexual violence, namely that it does not always look (or sound) the way we imagine sexual violence to be.

Haraway's framework of situated knowledges resonates here not only in terms of the problems of spectacle and the privileging of vision that often

arises in cases of sexualized or gendered violence (or, as feminist film critic Laura Mulvey has noted, in terms of the construction of the female body in film and visual culture more generally), but also in terms of the ways in which it opens up space for other forms of knowing; and indeed, for forms of knowing that are more partial and fragmentary. Too often, we approach children's knowledge as lacking when compared to adults' frames of reference. Yet, as Donoghue's novel illustrates, children's perspectives constitute nuanced understandings of the world. Children are often the ones who pick up on phenomena or language that adults might otherwise miss.

While Jack is not physically abused in the novel—since Ma goes to great lengths to shield him from Old Nick—there is no doubt that after he and Ma escape from Room, doctors and interviewers alike imply that his experiences, his memory, and his perception have all been deeply and negatively affected by the conditions of his upbringing. In the section of *Room* entitled "After," when Ma and Jack have escaped and are being evaluated and treated in a hospital, Dr. Clay tells Ma that Jack is

> like a newborn in many ways, despite his remarkably accelerated literacy and numeracy . . . As well as immune issues, there are likely to be challenges in the area of, let's see, social adjustment, obviously, sensory modulation—filtering and sorting all the stimuli barraging him—plus difficulties with spatial perception. (182)

Just a page later in the scene, Donoghue features an interaction between Jack and Dr. Clay that, in my reading, straddles the line between an accurate depiction of rightful concerns on the part of mental health professionals and a criticism of the techniques of persuasive or leading questioning of children:

> "I'm going to ask a question," says Dr. Clay, "but you don't have to answer it unless you want to. OK?"
>
> I look at him then back at the pictures. Old Nick's stuck in the numbers and he can't get out.
>
> "Did this man ever do anything you didn't like?"
>
> I nod.
>
> "Can you tell me what he did?"
>
> "He cutted off the power so the vegetables went slimy."
>
> "Right. Did he ever hurt you?"
>
> Ma says, "Don't—"
>
> Dr. Clay puts his hand up. "Nobody's doubting your word," he tells her. "But think of all the nights you were asleep. I wouldn't be doing my job if I didn't ask Jack himself, now, would I?" (235)

On the one hand, Dr. Clay, who questions Jack despite Ma's reassurances that Old Nick did not harm him, perceives him as a credible witness capable

of relaying his own story; on the other hand, Jack is seen as a blank slate upon which new information can be imprinted. In another discussion, Dr. Clay tells Ma that the "very best thing you did was, you got him out early . . . At five, they're still plastic" (268). From Dr. Clay's perspective, Jack is a traumatized young boy who is still young enough for traumatic symptoms not to manifest themselves in the same ways as they would for Ma or for an older child. Jack, who is listening to this interaction, has a telling reaction. Thinking quietly to himself, Jack reasons: "but I'm not plastic, I'm a real boy" (268). Because Jack situates himself as a "real boy" and not merely "plastic," readers are asked to consider whether or not the impact of Jack's experiences in Room can be taken at his word (or Ma's) alone, and more importantly, whether or not Jack needs to undergo a process of psychological plasticity in order to "recover." Certainly, Jack has experienced physical consequences of his time in Room that necessitate medical intervention (e.g., vaccinations, a mask to protect his immune system while he adjusts to new environments), but such precautions do not necessarily correlate to the need for psychological or emotional interventions. While Dr. Clay suggests that Jack will probably forget his time in Room, and that such forgetting "will be a mercy" (269), Jack himself expresses doubts—even bordering on defiance—about this external framing of his experiences:

> "Dr. Clay said I was made of plastic and I'd forget."
> "Ah," says Ma. "He figures, soon you won't remember Room anymore."
> "I will too." I stare at her. "Am I meant to forget?"
> "I don't know." (270)

Outside of Room, not only does Jack begin to express newfound uncertainty about his experiences, but Ma also begins to question whether or not Jack is or is not traumatized or permanently negatively affected by his experiences. As Dr. Clay lists the various issues Jack might face—"social adjustment, obviously, sensory modulation" (233)—Ma begins to express doubt about whether or not Jack is all right: "Ma's got her head in her hands. 'I thought he was OK. More or less'" (233). As he observes the exchange between Dr. Clay and Ma, Jack poses himself a crucial question: "Am I not OK?" (233). Jack's querying of whether or not he is OK appears to be a question directed not only internally (one that provokes self-doubt), but also directed externally (either to the reader, or to Dr. Clay and Ma), a questioning of whose measures would be used to gauge whether or not he is OK.

While Jack is the primary character around whom the complexities of defining traumatic experiences circulate, Ma is not exempt from struggling to

narrate her experiences without external impositions. Although she encounters the frustrations of having traumatic narratives imposed on her during her consultations with Dr. Clay, the trauma of having her story constantly framed and reframed through the most extreme terms of trauma culminates in the interview scene that takes place between Ma and the journalist who has secured an exclusive interview with her. Insistent upon accompanying his mother to the interview, Jack sits quietly and observes. As a witness who prioritizes and pays attention to his mother's discomfort during the interview, he is obviously not a purely objective witness. Yet, the details that he notices in his mother's reactions to the interviewer's questioning, combined with the dialogue that he reports, function to further illustrate the ways in which the media's insistent framing of traumatic narratives is, in many ways, precisely that which creates or compounds an individual's trauma.

Mere moments into the interview, after a series of problematic questions and trite statements, the journalist knowingly and deliberately provokes an emotional reaction in Ma by mentioning the stillbirth that Ma experienced prior to Jack's birth. Her affective response to the interviewer's ambush is palpable: "Ma's hands are shaking, she puts them under her legs" (299). With what appears to be clear knowledge of her tactics' effects on Ma, the interviewer nevertheless presses forward, framing her manipulative practices not as a predatory technique, but rather as a form of assistance to Ma: "'Believe me,' the woman is saying to Ma, 'we're just trying to help *you* tell *your* story to the world'" (299). As the conversation continues, Ma defiantly challenges the interviewer's framing of her experiences, articulating that she is becoming "irritated, actually" (303). For Ma, it is important to consider trauma both as part of a spectrum of lived experiences, as well as something that is deeply embedded within the "ordinary" or daily experiences of large portions of the population, particularly within certain historical and political contexts:

> "I wish people would stop treating us like we're the only ones who ever lived through something terrible. I've been finding stuff on the Internet you wouldn't believe."
>
> "Other cases like yours?"
>
> "Yeah but not just—I mean, of course when I woke up in that shed, I thought nobody'd ever had it as bad as me. But the thing is, slavery's not a new invention. And solitary confinement—did you know, in America we've got more than twenty-five thousand prisoners in isolation cells? Some of them for more than twenty years?" (304)

Far from minimizing or denying the severity of her own experiences, Ma locates them instead within a framework that acknowledges trauma

as a sociopolitical (rather than a merely individual or psychological) phenomenon, as well as one that, in both historical and contemporary contexts, has resulted in certain events often not being viewed as "traumatic" at all. Ma's commentary thus serves to re-articulate the ways in which the distinctions between "ordinary" and "traumatic" experiences are not globally or historically consistent, but rather are determined by structures of power that at various times and spaces seek to either deny or validate oppression. My analysis echoes the work of feminist theorists such as Laura S. Brown, who noted in 1995 that the first iteration of the PTSD diagnosis in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* of the American Psychiatric Association asserted that a traumatic event had to be "an event outside the range of human experience" (qtd. in Brown 100). Citing her work with an incest survivor whose experience of trauma was refuted by a defense attorney on the grounds that incest was "relatively common" (101), Brown asks: "How could such an event which happens so often to women, so often in the life of one woman, be outside the range of human experience?" (101). As Brown later points out, the very definition of trauma was built primarily on the experiences of those who hold the most power:

> The dominant, after all, writes the diagnostic manuals and informs the public discourse, on which we have built our images of "real" trauma. "Real" trauma is often only that form of trauma in which the dominant group can participate as a victim rather than as the perpetrator or etiologist of the trauma. The private, secret, insidious traumas to which a feminist analysis draws attention are more often than not those events in which the dominant culture and its forms and institutions are perpetuated. Feminist analysis also asks us to understand how the constant presence and threat of trauma in the lives of girls and women of all colours, men of colour in the United States, lesbian and gay people, people in poverty, and people with disabilities has shaped our society, a continuing background noise rather than an unusual event. (102-03)

Ma does not perceive her trauma as operating completely outside of the spectrum of "quotidian" trauma that many people experience, and in turn, also suggests that Jack's experience is no more or less traumatic than the suffering that many people undergo. When directly asked by the interviewer whether or not she thinks Jack has "been shaped—damaged—by his ordeal," Ma clearly articulates that "it wasn't an ordeal to Jack, it was just how things were. And yeah, maybe, but everybody's damaged by something" (304).

Not content with Ma's appraisal of her experiences (or with Ma's commentaries on trauma more generally), the interviewer swiftly moves in to once again reinforce the idea that Jack was unable to experience a

"normal" childhood, going so far as to question whether or not Ma should have asked Old Nick to take Jack away so that he "could have had a normal, happy childhood with a loving family" (306). The more the interviewer imposes conventional notions of trauma onto Ma's and Jack's experiences, the more Ma becomes agitated, as reported through Jack's observations: at various points, Ma's "eyes go even tighter" (301), her "voice [gets] loud again" (303), she "nearly snarls" a response (305), and by the end of the interview, her "voice is all hoarse" (306). The last few lines of the scene illustrate the stark contrast between the interviewer's seeming pleasure and Ma's own profound physical discomfort at the forced framing of her narrative: "The woman does a little laugh. Ma's got tears coming down her face, she puts up her hands to catch them" (306). By the end of the scene, it becomes clear that it is not necessarily Ma's trauma that pushes her to the point of emotional breakdown, but rather the trauma induced by the interviewer's violent attempts to shape, control, and manipulate Ma's narrative. As Donoghue's novel makes clear in this scene in particular, it is not only perpetrators or perpetrator narratives that can enact violence against victims' stories and subjectivities, but also those who have other forms of narrative control and power, such as the media who enact a kind of public violence.

That violence is inextricable from its circulation as both public experience and public cultural object is, of course, not a new theoretical position. In *Public Rape: Representing Violation in Fiction and Film* (2004), Tanya Horeck argues that rape has achieved a public status. After pointing out that "at first glance, the term [public rape] seems paradoxical" (4), Horeck argues that "cultural images of rape serve as a means of forging social bonds, and of mapping out public space. It is a crime that has a pervasive effect on the life of the community and the workings of the body politic. And it is a crime that dominates public fantasies regarding sexual and social difference" (4). Horeck's argument is crucial in understanding the dual nature of sexual violence, experienced on the one hand as an intimate and psychologically private event, and on the other, as that which is embedded in public discourses and policies, ranging from aesthetic representations to awareness campaigns. I want to unpack the various parts of Horeck's argument here, and link them to the similar kinds of theorizing in which Donoghue's novel engages. Certainly, Ma's abduction and repeated sexual assaults create fissures in the social fabric, not only in terms of her relationship to her parents, but also in her relationship to Jack, particularly on days when she is "Gone," that is to say, dissociated, quiet, and disengaged with him.

Moreover, the type of sexual violence she experiences—an abduction and repeated rapes—reinforces numerous mythologies about where in social and physical space such assaults occur. The threat of sexual violence perpetrated by strangers that pervades the life of many individuals (particularly girls and women) is one that generally reinforces the notion that sexual violence is a public threat that then goes on to affect private lives in the form of psychic trauma. Rather, as Horeck and others point out, when it comes to violence, there is a mutual flow between public and private spheres, not only in terms of by whom and where violence is committed (generally by individuals known to the victims) but also in terms of the discourses used to speak about violence.

What makes *Room* so compelling for thinking through trauma in literature is precisely the attention it pays to both public and private spheres, and the ways in which the experiences of Jack and Ma are reshaped once they and their stories are no longer contained within an 11' x 11' space. The moment of their escape from Room occurs almost precisely at the midway point of the novel: equal attention is given to exploring both the private experience of captivity and the public reception of that private experience. Indeed, this rupture between private and public events is reflected in the names Donoghue gives to the various sections of her novel. The first, "Presents" (perhaps a nod to its homonym "presence" as well as a reference to "Sundaytreat"), focuses very much on Room as a distinctly private sphere, particularly for Jack. Jack is happy and engaged, and while he expresses fear about Old Nick, he is thoroughly content with the boundaries of his small world (which he perceives as his/the entire world). In "Unlying," Ma is forced to convey to Jack that there is an Outside to Room, and that it is indeed as real as Room is. At first, Jack believes that it is a trick, but Ma later tells him that he "[has] to let her tell this story" (120). At the very end of "Unlying," Jack begins to realize not only that there may be an outside/public world that informs his own, but also that his life in Room is no longer as innocuous as he once thought: "My tummy creaks really loud and I figure it out, why Ma's telling me the whole story. She's telling me that we're going" (125). It is after this line that the section "Dying" begins, which indicates not only the fact that Jack will have to pretend to be dead in order to facilitate an escape for Ma and himself, but also that his abrupt entrance into both the physical world at large as well as a world in which his experiences are no longer "normal" will be a kind of symbolic death, one similar to that faced by Ma.

"Dying" is immediately followed not by "Living" (the novel's final section), as might be expected, but by "After," a word which at once represents the reality of moving past imprisonment, but that also indicates the possibility to disrupt the often simplistic binaries of death/life, trauma/ordinary life, tragedy/happiness. "After" is a space of complexity and paradox, wherein Ma, rather than Jack, ends up being the person who has the most difficulty adjusting to life outside of Room. In presenting the complicated aftermath of traumatic events (rather than simply ending the novel on a point of elation at the point of escape), Donoghue also contravenes popular mythologies that may frame traumatic recovery as a more or less linear process. While Ma expresses fear that she and Jack might be killed while in Room, it is only after their escape that she comes close to death, in the form of a suicide attempt: "we got out, I saved her, only then she didn't want to be alive anymore" (336), Jack reflects. This attempt not only nearly fulfills her greatest fear while in captivity—dying—but also forces her for the first time ever to be apart from Jack while she recovers. Both death and separation from her son seem like wholly unpredictable and undesirable outcomes for Ma after she has struggled for seven years to keep herself and her son together and alive. Yet, Donoghue's inclusion of these events does further work to subvert the notion that trauma follows any sort of ordinary logic or pattern of predictability. Cathy Caruth, in an effort to gain "insight into the enigmatic relation between trauma and survival" (9), cites Sigmund Freud's work on the death drive and the ways in which the state of war became a "traumatic imposition of life" for many in the wake of World War I. While it is seemingly paradoxical that one should want to die after one has escaped death, a significant facet of trauma is that "for those who undergo [it], it is not only the moment of the event, but of the passing out of it that is traumatic; that *survival itself*, in other words, *can be a crisis*" (Caruth 9; emphasis original). Although survival does prove to reach a crisis point for Ma (in the form of a suicide attempt), Donoghue makes clear that as in Jack's case, Ma's struggles are not necessarily operating within a traumatic binary that locates her experiences in total opposition to "ordinary" life. In "Living," when Ma bemoans the fact that her newfound dislike of company is "not how I remember myself" (405), Dr. Clay attempts to frame her emergent social anxiety within the language of trauma, suggesting that she "had to change to survive" (405). Yet, Noreen (a nurse) points out, "Don't forget, you'd have changed anyway. Moving into your twenties, having a child—you wouldn't have stayed the same" (406). Living, after all, keeps happening whether one is out in the world or confined in a small garden shed.

In ending this analysis of *Room*, I return to where I started: with the closing moments of the novel. Shortly before the farewell visit to Room, Jack queries whether or not Old Nick is an anomaly, echoing discussions about whether or not trauma—and those who perpetrate trauma against others—exists, as previous clinical terminology has declared, "outside the range" of human experience:

> "Grandma says there's more of him."
> "What?"
> "Persons like him, in the world."
> "Ah," says Ma.
> "Is it true?"
> "Yeah. But the tricky thing is, there's far more people in the middle."
> "Where?"
> Ma's staring out the window but I don't know at what. "Somewhere between good and bad," she says. "Bits of both stuck together." (409)

While Ma understandably perceives Old Nick as a monstrous individual who she wishes were dead because of his actions towards her, she nevertheless acknowledges that people's capacities for cruelty (much like her own experiences of trauma, and much like Jack's upbringing in Room) require a much more complex theoretical model than the simple binary of good or bad. Ultimately, *Room* demonstrates that trauma is not only steeped in complexity—and at times, even paradox—but that it is also part of a series of organizing principles that need to be fundamentally interrogated for the various mythologies and assumptions that they bring to and sometimes impose upon individual experiences of violence. "Trauma," over-determined as it is by numerous layers of psychological and sociopolitical discourses, may not always be the best term available, may not always resonate with any given individual at any given time, and indeed may not fit traditional psychiatric or psychoanalytic frameworks or diagnoses. However, Donoghue's novel does not dispense with the notion of trauma entirely, nor does it suggest that trauma is not a potentially useful framework for thinking through experiences of violence. Jack's ambivalent statement at the end of the novel—that Room is "a hole where something happened" (414)—does not mean that there is not the capacity for the memory of Room to later become a source of deep distress and despair: after all, a key component of trauma is precisely its belatedness. Donoghue is not asking her readers to determine whether Jack *is* or *is not* traumatized, but rather, to consider that traumatization, as it is clinically understood, is merely one possible outcome of his experience. As such, a rigorous engagement with individuals'

witnessing or experiencing of violence not only requires a dynamic and shifting approach to the idea of trauma, but the expansion of possibilities for complex, individual, and alternative experiences of the world.

NOTES

1 In an interview with *The New Yorker*, Donoghue describes the process by which she created Jack's voice. She explains: "I didn't draft Jack's thoughts in Adult and then translate them into Kid, because no adult would have those thoughts in that order. Writing in Kid from the start (once I had figured out exactly what peculiar dialect of age-five-but-hyper-educated Kid he would start) was what helped me invent not only what thoughts would occur to Jack but what their zigzag sequence of association would be" (Halford n. pag.). Central to Donoghue's process was also the creation of a dictionary of Jack's particular vocabulary and verbal mannerisms: "Just as in previous novels I put together a mini-dictionary of how people spoke in 1788 or 1864, this time I made myself a dictionary of my son's kid-English, then narrowed it down to some classic errors and grammatical oddities that would not seriously confuse readers" (Halford n. pag.).

WORKS CITED

Amidon, Stephen. "Room enough." Rev. of *Room*, by Emma Donoghue. *Globe and Mail* 10 Sept. 2010. Web. 22 Sept. 2015.

Brown, Laura S. "Not Outside the Range: One Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma." *Trauma: Explorations in Memory.* Ed. Cathy Caruth. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995. 100-12. Print.

Caruth, Cathy. "Trauma and Experience: Introduction." *Trauma: Explorations in Memory.* Ed. Caruth. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995. 3-12. Print.

Donoghue, Emma. *Room*. Toronto: HarperCollins, 2010. Print.

Gunne, Sorcha, and Zoë Brigley Thompson, eds. *Feminism, Literature and Rape Narratives: Violence and Violation*. New York: Routledge, 2010. Print.

Halford, Macy. "Emma Donoghue Chats About *Room*." *New Yorker*. 21 Jan. 2011. Web. 8 July 2015.

Haraway, Donna. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 14.3 (1988): 575-99. Print.

Horeck, Tanya. *Public Rape: Representing Violation in Fiction and Film*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.

Leys, Ruth. *Trauma: A Genealogy.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2000. Print.

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings.* 7th ed. Ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. London: Oxford UP, 2009. 833-44. Print.

"On 'Room': The Q&A: Emma Donoghue, author." *The Economist* 17 Nov. 2010. Web. 10 July 2015.

Tanner, Laura E. "Introduction." *Intimate Violence: Reading Rape and Torture in Twentieth-Century Fiction.* Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994. 3-16. Print.

Bill Howell

Across Water

Canoeing to fetch briquettes, you rest
your paddle on the gunwales,
a small hollow clunk.

Listening still
as the lake locks glances with
its bank.

Across the water, almost
a mile off there, your neighbour's screen door
slaps shut.

Melissa Li Sheung Ying

"Liv[ing] Poetically upon the Earth"[1]

The Bioregional Child and Conservation in Monique Proulx's *Wildlives*

"Solutions are in our nature"

During the back-to-school season of fall 2015, the David Suzuki Foundation issued the Superhero Challenge. Rooted within Suzuki's own childhood experience of exploring the outdoors with his father and fuelled in the present by his concerns over what "the future will hold for [his] grandchildren" (Suzuki and Johal n. pag.), the Challenge's goal was to encourage children and youth to get outside, learn about environmental issues, and make a "superhero"-sized difference as the next generation of leaders. The emphasis on a relationship between the development of "a nature habit" ("Get Back" n. pag.) and the influential childhood memories created from such experiences can be seen within the Foundation's motto, "Solutions are in our nature." It is a doubly charged statement that asks individuals not only to recognize their own potential as creative problem-solvers in the mission to help the environment, but also to see nature as a place where inspiration, healing, and creative stimulation can be found.

We might also extend such thoughts to literature and ask how contemporary Canadian writers are actively adding their own voices to the child-nature movement in the twenty-first century. This essay will explore how one author in particular, Québécoise writer Monique Proulx, unites childhood with the natural environment in order to create a place for growth, exploration, and self-discovery during the coming-of-age process in her 2009 novel, *Wildlives*. In focusing on Proulx's young protagonist, Jérémie Delisle, and the formative moments that make up his childhood environmental experience in nature, we will see how the personal change and self-revelation he undergoes deeply inform the role he will be inspired

to take up as an adult: to become a caretaker of nature through the act(ion) of conservation. The concerns expressed by Proulx's novel in raising the next generation of ecocitizens are not unlike those of Suzuki; and while childhood becomes associated with a state in which ecological morality is yet to be determined, the child-nature relationship in *Wildlives* is also more complex than equating the prelapsarian nature of childhood to becoming a "better" adult. However, before discussing how Proulx acknowledges these issues while upholding the significance of the child's experience in nature as linked to future environmental act(ion)s, it is useful to first look at the wider role of youth and nature in Canadian literature and some of the definitions that shape this essay's discussion.

The Child and Nature in a Canadian Context

In her introduction to the 1979 anthology *Childhood and Youth in Canadian Literature*, M. G. Hesse reflected that while the theme of childhood and youth is a universal one "occurring throughout the world in every period" (1), it holds a rich and diverse place within Canadian literature. From the struggles of growing up in small-town Ontario (Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women* [1971]) and the cruel and kind experiences of girlhood friendships (Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye* [1988]), to negotiating the hyphen that links "Chinese" and "Canadian" together (Wayson Choy's *The Jade Peony* [1995]) and navigating the mean streets of Montreal alone (Heather O'Neill's *Lullabies for Little Criminals* [2006]), Canadian child figures continue to grow in complexity, while maintaining a value on "their perception of the human experience" (Hesse 1). Equally so, Québécois literature holds its own in the exploration of the childhood experience with writers across its history such as Gabrielle Roy (*Rue Deschambault* [1955]), Mordecai Richler (*The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* [1959]), Marie-Claire Blais (*Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel* [1965]), Gaétan Soucy (*La petite fille qui aimait trop les allumettes* [1998]), and Élise Turcotte (*The Body's Place* [2003]).

Although Hesse wrote about childhood in the 1970s, her argument still resonates today. Our fascination with the theme of childhood and youth, she argues—and I concur—allows us to "discover a kinship with writers who share memories of enchantment and disillusionment with us. Their memories induce us to reflect on our own childhood and youth [and they become] a means of discovering truths about the nature of ourselves and others" (1). The themes Hesse touches upon—self-discovery, identity, imagination, and the movement from innocence to experience—are only a few of the

characteristics found in a "novel of youth," a genre with its own long-standing tradition that carries with it the structures of the *Bildungsroman* and *roman de formation*. Strongly valuing the individual's process of development, learning, and education, the novel of youth is a coming-of-age narrative that initiates young protagonists through a journey riddled with tribulations and obstacles (both physical and psychological) meant to help them emerge as more mature individuals capable of, for example, contributing to society or upholding their rightful places in the adult world.

When nature—as a setting or thematic interest—has a significant influence on the child's coming-of-age process, another deep tradition of literary representation is evoked. According to Sidney I. Dobrin and Kenneth B. Kidd, the relationship between children and nature is historically twofold at its most general level. Children, on the one hand, were seen through Jean-Jacques Rousseau's romantic philosophy, which presumed children had "a privileged relationship with nature, thanks largely to the legacy of romantic and Victorian literature" that emphasized "the child's proximity to the natural world and consequent purity" (6). On the other hand, the child "as positively pastoral in the Anglo-American literary tradition" (6) has been challenged by an empiricist tradition emerging from philosophers such as John Locke, who argue that the child's relationship with nature is founded on the task taken by adults "to educate young people into nature appreciation and analysis" (6).

While Dobrin and Kidd emphasize the American literary tradition in their collection *Wild Things: Children's Culture and Ecocriticism*, the nuances of their observations can be applied to the Canadian context. According to Elizabeth Galway, "landscape and environment have always had an important impact on the Canadian psyche" (147), and the relationship between children and nature can be traced to some of the earliest writings in Canadian literature. Although a Canadian collection of criticism comparable to that of Dobrin and Kidd has yet to emerge, critics such as Galway have noted that the child-nature relationship has fuelled Canadians' "aware[ness] of the diversity of their environment" (148). She argues that "children [can] play a significant role in changing and shaping the image of, and attitudes towards, the nation" (151) and its regional landscapes as stories probe "expressions of various notions of Canadian nationhood, independence, and national identity" (2). The Canadian child's connection to nature began as a way to articulate "a multitude of symbolic representations of the natural environment" (152): as a land of opportunity "for the thrill-seeker

and adventurer who can test his own power in a bid to conquer the unruly wilderness"; as a celebration of the natural beauty of the landscape, "seeing it as something to cherish and preserve"; and as a landscape that can be both dangerous and foreboding (152).

The second of the symbolic representations Galway lists is of particular interest when we link early works of Canadian literature with more contemporary writing—the celebration of nature is still dominant today, but with a slight twist. During the nineteenth century, in an era of exploration and the formation of a national identity, Canada's natural environment became a central, unifying point of identification, with children holding roles in the nation's future as workers and leaders (for boys) and mothers (for girls) (Galway 8, 11). While we still celebrate the natural environment today, our "clamour to be 'green'" (Ricou 3) turns our attention more towards a view of nature that values children as future caretakers and responsible ecocitizens.

Proulx's Tribute to Nature and Some Working Definitions

In contemporary Canadian novels that feature a child-nature relationship, a noticeable emphasis can be seen in the link between the early development of a positive attitude towards the environment and future moments of activism that usually take place in adulthood. Proulx's *Wildlives* and her vision of the child's relationship with nature is one example which showcases how Canadian authors are choosing to bring attention not only to the deep regional diversity that continues to inspire "a nuanced sense of place" (Raglon and Scholtmeijer 134), but also to what they believe will influence "a deeper—or at least different—[environmental] awareness" (Dobrin and Kidd 7).

Originally published in 2008 under the title *Champagne* (from the Old French for "countryside"), *Wildlives* (translated into English by David Homel and Fred A. Reed in 2009) is considered "one of [Proulx's] first forays into nature writing" (Rogers and Dufault 65). Described as "moody and thick, at times melancholy and angry" (n. pag.) by Carla Lucchetta in her review for *The Globe and Mail*, *Wildlives* unites a small community of troubled individuals who ultimately turn towards the surrounding Laurentian wilderness to help them physically, emotionally, and psychologically confront and overcome the private traumas which haunt them.[2] Part of the beauty and complexity of *Wildlives* as a text comes from the individual stories that eventually mirror nature in their interconnectedness and interdependence in the creation of a "great family of wildlives" (Proulx 273). As Luccetta aptly notes, "[t]he wilderness is camouflage and refuge . . .

Its cloying and relentless presence, full of abundant beauty but hidden dangers, is stirring enough to instigate connection where isolation might have been the goal. Ultimately, this encompassing extra character changes every person" (n. pag.). And indeed, the fictional peak of Mont Diamant, together with its three interconnected lakes (Goose, Sage, and Campeau), gives nature a dominant role in human lives that is both restorative and—as Proulx expresses in an interview with the *French Review*—a source of inspiration: "Si je n'avais pas eu un endroit à la campagne . . . je n'aurais pas eu envie d'écrire" (qtd. in Santoro, McPherson, and Bascom 629).[3] Having her *Wildlives* characters "très connectés à la nature" (628)[4] also supports her belief that the natural environment is an important and vibrant place for today's individuals: "Je trouve qu'on est dans une période de détresse collective, pas seulement au Québec, et ce milieu-là [la forêt], pour moi, est un lieu de guérison et d'émerveillement" (qtd. in Desmeules n. pag.).[5]

The natural world as an inspiring, healing, and creatively stimulating *place* brings us in the novel to Goose Lake and the surrounding forest—the focal setting for Jérémie's coming of age in nature. Place, as Lawrence Buell defines it, is a "space that is bounded and marked as humanly meaningful through personal attachment, social relations, and physiographic distinctiveness [while also being] co-constituted environmentally, socially, and phenomenologically through acts of perception" (*Future* 145). This definition, as we will see in the next section, becomes important for Jérémie as he discovers and learns from the environment around him under the guidance of Lila Szach—an adult who not only holds the matriarchal and guide-to-nature roles in Jérémie's growth, but who also owns the lake and its surrounding forest. Lila's care and affection for Goose Lake and its forest ultimately protect the area from becoming like the other two lakes in the surrounding area: overrun by tourism, neat houses, trimmed lawns, and ubiquitous motorboats (Campeau Lake), or completely abandoned due to a lack of bounty and inaccessibility (Sage Lake).

With Goose Lake sitting comfortably between lakes Campeau and Sage as its extreme opposites, Proulx introduces a nature/human dichotomy that acknowledges both a positive envisioning of the natural environment and regional space, and the more unpleasant challenges that nature attracts from humans. The balance between a picturesque Québécois landscape and the hunters and developers lying in wait just beyond its boundaries is fittingly echoed within Reed and Homel's English title for the novel, as author and reviewer Mary Soderstrom notes in the *Montreal Review of Books*: "Their

title *Wildlives* plays with the inherent wildness of nature which no human can control, and with the unpredictability of human life" (n. pag.). The nature/human binary additionally extends to Jérémie, as the prominent child figure of *Wildlives*, through the idea of an urban-rural polarity. Sent to visit his Uncle Simon just short of the end of his school year, Jérémie begins as a boy hailing from the "noisy solidarity of the city" (Proulx 19) who now finds himself in the Laurentian wilderness for the first time. The clash of the urban and rural worlds, with Jérémie acting as the hyphen between the two, constantly creates a push-pull effect or fluctuation that challenges his initial sense of self and knowledge of place.

Notably, Jérémie exhibits an acute awareness and sensitivity towards the natural environment despite having never previously visited Goose Lake. As this awareness continues to deepen under the nurturing tutelage of Lila, Jérémie's initial perception additionally permits him to undergo a bioregional initiation—the "opening up [of] the human senses and sensibilities to the surrounding landscape" which leads to the cultivation of an ecological consciousness and communal identity (McGinnis 8). The concept of bioregional initiation stems from the movement of bioregionalism itself, which "calls for human society to be more closely related to nature (hence, bio), and to be more conscious of its locale, or region, or life-place (therefore, region)" (Andruss et al. 2). The bioregional initiation Jérémie undergoes ultimately transforms the environment into his childhood place of nature (a place where formative moments of growing up occur and which can be returned to, physically or psychologically, in adulthood for reflection, inspiring action, and so on) and provides one reason behind his adult act(ion) of conservation—his chosen way at the close of the novel to express a sense of responsibility towards the environment of his youth. Defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as the "action of keeping intact or unharmed" ("Conservation" def. n. 1e), conservation inherently motivates an activeness in its very definition of preserving, protecting, and "seek[ing] the proper use of nature" ("Conservation vs Preservation" n. pag.) to ensure its continuity.

A City Boy's First Wilderness: Jérémie's Coming of Age in Nature

When we are first introduced to young Jérémie, we quickly learn three things: he has a lively imagination; his city life becomes a reference point for the foreignness of Goose Lake; and, as a result, he has yet to fully understand what the natural environment may offer him in terms of overcoming the personal trauma that has initially brought him to the Laurentian

wilderness and his Uncle Simon. The urban-rural dynamic is something Proulx consistently revisits throughout Jérémie's development and his transformation of an unfamiliar setting into his own childhood place of nature. Its fluctuating effect captures Jérémie's internal struggle to negotiate between the initial knowledge he has of one place (the city) and what his new awareness of the other (nature) eventually does to that knowledge by the time he becomes an adult.

Proulx immediately foreshadows Jérémie's future struggle with that boundary by having the medicinal pot his uncle grows among the weeds be the first plant he specifically recognizes in his new environment. For Jérémie, the pot is a reminder not just of city life, but also of his "immature father" who dabbles in this "dreary adult business" (9) and exists in a time and space apart from where he currently stands—at the opening of what he imaginatively dubs the Forbidden Forest's trail. The reference to *Harry Potter* in this introductory section, as well as its continued usage throughout the narrative of Jérémie's childhood, emphasizes his reliance on an energetic imagination that uses a specific lens to make the Laurentian environment an identifiable place for him to safely explore. Ultimately, however, the *Harry Potter* fantasy can only go so far in protecting him from the haunting memories of accidentally setting fire to his divorcing parents' home and of nearly dying in the process. The ugly burn that covers part of his face serves as a relentless physical reminder of the incident; and as he summons up "Jerry Potter," Jérémie attempts to hide his insecurities by giving himself the power to transform the surrounding nature into a fantastic place full of hidden enchantments and magical creatures to be battled.

As Jérémie walks through the forest, his wand—a "slender but solid" dead branch paid for by an "invisible gold doubloon" (11)—gives him the confidence to move further along the well-marked but shadowy trail; it also opens his eyes to the more intimate details of his surroundings. His first "battle" with nature marks that realization:

> Then something made him jump and stumble. Stretched out full length, he brandished his knife in front of him, but his assailant was just a thick root on which his foot had caught. *Just a root*, don't make me laugh. A root was a living thing because it was part of a tree, and many trees were bewitched and malevolent creatures. Jérémie followed the root with his eyes: it belonged to one pine or another, or maybe to that huge leafy tree straight ahead of him, or to this one . . . how could he possibly tell? It wasn't the only one, the whole trail was built on roots covered by moss and pine needles like the taut skin of a drum. Jérémie felt a shiver of fear. EVERYTHING here was alive . . . (11)

The feeling Jérémie experiences as his eyes try, and fail, to find a beginning and an end to the root's origins is captured in Proulx's emphatic capitalization of "EVERYTHING"—it is at once overwhelming and deeply encompassing. According to Dobrin and Kidd, "childhood experiences in, of, and with the natural world are often deeply formative" (5); and while the character undoubtedly senses some internal change in perception and consciousness towards his surrounding environment, his return to the wizarding world soon after this moment accentuates his current inability to see more. Jérémie's ability to either embrace or negate his potential growth in nature at this early stage is additionally brought to our attention as Proulx has him continue to "mov[e] forward easily among the trees, as if the forest was shrinking or he was growing, so that he seemed to *occupy* its territory and *command* its mysteries" (15, emphasis mine). The words *occupy* and *command* carry with them possessive and superior colonial connotations that at once turn Jérémie's easy, innocent movements through the forest into ones that are almost threatening and invasive towards the natural world, as well as to any positive relationship between the child and his environment.

Yet, Jérémie's most extreme expression of this fluctuating position occurs when he encounters an ant colony. Mesmerized at first by the way in which the ants' metallic bodies form a continuous ribbon between their tree stump and the surrounding undergrowth, he experimentally crushes one just to see what would happen. As the other ants keep moving, their reaction piques his curiosity: "What were they waiting for? Why didn't they attack him? Didn't they see how huge he was? What could have been more threatening than him on the trail they trod like so many blind soldiers, like zombies?" (17). The questions Jérémie poses to himself reveal a true struggle to understand "the bond between the human and the nonhuman" (Buell, *Environmental* 218) within the larger complexities of the bioregion. The struggle is not unlike the earlier feeling of awe he experiences when observing the network of trees. Nevertheless, the difference here lies in the element of anger that not only builds with each question, but which also culminates in a physical act of destruction:

> Systematically, he started crushing every ant within reach. . . . An insatiable hunger, a thirst for power swept over him. He did not spare the valiant ants who were carrying their wounded and their dead back to the stump, . . . nor did he spare the kamikazes who clambered up his legs to bite him . . . Soon, when his potential victims had disappeared from the trail, he attacked the stump itself. He disemboweled it with fierce blows of his magic wand, and when the wand broke he picked up a sturdier branch to continue his work, and the ants began to stream out of their ruined house by the dozens, the hundreds, in a clear state of panic . . . (Proulx 17-18)

Once again, Proulx's description both reflects Jérémie's imposing state over nature and challenges preconceived notions about the pastoral inclinations of children: he is systematic in his violence, possesses a voracious appetite for power, shows no mercy to any of the distressed ants, and cruelly eviscerates their home. Even the magic of *Harry Potter* cannot help Jérémie as it had previously; and it is significant that his broken wand's replacement is anything but the marker of an intimate relationship with nature. The passing satisfaction he receives from this destructive moment—"to know he was the source of that panic, to know at last that he was recognized and feared" (18)—can be read as a desire for a sense of control, which he lacks in regards to the personal trauma of his parents' impending separation, but feels he can possess by exerting dominance over something else (nature, in this case). Furthermore, Jérémie's "anthropomorphic attitudes," argue Rogers and Dufault, "actually allow him to begin to understand his connection with nature and to commence his apprenticeship as a caretaker of nature" (69). While I agree that Jérémie's bestowal of anthropomorphic qualities creates a way in which he can begin to identify with and make sense of his environment, his moment of violence, I would also argue, establishes that his ecological morality is yet to be determined. As such, I believe that it is his first meeting with Lila Szach that allows him to enter into an apprenticeship and, eventually, a more positive reflection and action towards his bioregion.

Described as a "great tree trunk" that "unfold[s] her limbs slowly, interminably, the way a tree trunk would if tree trunks were allowed to bend and stretch" (19), Lila's inaugural appearance to Jérémie is a powerful one. On one level, it metaphorically captures Lila's own relationship with nature—an embodiment of her "intense love of nature, especially for her own land" (Rogers and Dufault 72). On another level, Jérémie's ability to momentarily see Lila as a part of his surrounding environment accentuates his potential for developing deeper insight into nature and a human's place within it. Nevertheless, Jérémie does not stay in this frame of mind for long; and in revisiting the idea that his ecological morality is yet to be determined, Jérémie's reversion to *Harry Potter* once again reveals a form of escapism that does not necessarily hinder his bioregional initiation, but does greatly influence the lens through which he constructs nature, place, and now, people: "[Lila's] was the kind of voice that *petrifixes* you, turns you to stone before you even have a chance. . . . She surely had a witch's name that she would reveal to him in due time, when they became closer" (Proulx 19-20). When he attempts to impress her by proudly revealing that he has "just killed one thousand three hundred ants" (20),

Jérémie's boastful exaggeration not only fails to win him the admiration he seeks from Szach the Sorceress—he also becomes surprised by her question of how he will make amends for his actions.

Jérémie's first step to appeasing the Sorceress is to undertake an assignment that will ultimately carry him through to the end of his summer visit: "to digest the encyclopedia of insects [Lila] instruct[s] him to learn by heart before daring to show up at her doorstep again" (Proulx 44). But just as he begins to immerse himself in this new knowledge-based exploration of the forest's insects and what it means to focus on nature with a different—albeit still magically imaginative—perspective, his father Marco comes for a visit from Montreal.[6] The disruption is, once more, an incessant reminder for Jérémie of the urban-rural binary he negotiates and that continues to seep into his developing feelings about nature:

> Jérémie's nose was in the grass and his chin was resting on his hands. . . . not one of the clandestine comings and goings of the arthropods could escape him . . . [H]e'd scrambled under a large-leaved bush close to the little cabin so as not to miss a word of what Laurie and Marco were saying as he carried out his investigations, but Laurie caught him in the act. *You get up right now! You're going to get all dirty!* To which Marco immediately replied, *Let him play! He's just a kid!* To keep from taking sides, Jérémie moved farther away to continue his work. (111-12)

With the urban world represented by his parents as cacophonous and somewhat violent, Jérémie bonds even closer to the natural world, which offers the potential for a more peaceful and meditative state. This connection is marked by Jérémie not only taking physical action and moving away to continue his environmental observations, but also simply turning to the Laurentian wilderness for comfort when the "silly little bug stories" he tells his parents noticeably fall "into empty eyes and [die] there, without the slightest effect" (113): "Laurie and Marco were open to nothing, since they needed all their energy to ruminate in silent hostility, so Jérémie's arthropods were welcome, for they kept the outside walls of the house they shared standing, though all the rest had collapsed" (113).

The sense of solace Jérémie begins to feel as he spends more time outside and apart from what his city parents represent for him shapes the natural environment into an even more powerful childhood place of nature where formative moments in his growth can continue to be anchored. Markedly, Jérémie's perception and awareness undergo a significant change as he becomes more intimate with, and knowledgeable of, the world around him through Lila's book and, by extension, Lila herself (who, while not always

present with Jérémie, does keep her eye on how he is achieving a maturity rooted within the bioregion that is also nurturing him). While he does not completely exchange the *Harry Potter* fantasy for the empirical epistemology of his scientific textbook, Jérémie's act of reading does progressively influence his outlook on nature, which Proulx gestures towards through her own increased use of scientific vocabulary just short of halfway through the novel. Furthermore, Jérémie's new stage of internal evolution is emphasized when he finds an ant entangled in a spider's web outside of his uncle's cabin. In feeling both sympathetic and powerless towards the ant, Jérémie attempts to rescue it before abruptly stopping himself, "concerned with maintaining a prudent neutrality" (119). He earnestly reasons that "he'[s] already alienated the *Formicidae*, and he wasn't about to get on the wrong side of the *Arachnida*" (119), signalling that he has come a long way from the anger-induced ant demolition incident and is now beginning to link a "geographical terrain [with] a terrain of consciousness" that, according to Peter Berg and Raymond Dasmann, is the very essence of what a bioregion is when there are humans involved (36).

Not surprisingly, Jérémie's concept of home—and of who he is within the place he perceives he belongs—also begins to change under the influence of his engagement with the forest and its wilderness. In discussion with Lila (as Sorceress Szach) about exchanging magical incantations, Jérémie reveals that his is "[m]ay the month of August never come" (128). It is a phrase he relentlessly repeats to himself in order to postpone the inevitable time when his parents' divorce will be finalized and he must return to the city with only his mother. The phrase visibly affects Lila, whose growing love and affection for Jérémie parallels her own deep love of nature; yet her response, "[a]nd then you'll go home" (Proulx 129), is interesting, as while the adult sees "home" as the domestic space found in an urban setting, the child attributes it to the bioregion:

> Home. It was true, he felt like he was home as soon as he went down the hill and turned onto the trail that led to the little wooden bridge, as soon as the forest surrounded him with its scent-papered walls. Home. Since it was home, why should he have to leave? *May the month of August* . . . (129)

The decisiveness with which Jérémie calls his childhood place of nature "home"—a word usually reserved to describe an emotional attachment to place or dwelling—highlights an emergent desire to maintain an identity in and through a non-human nature. Moreover, "home," with its "scent-papered walls" (129), adds a noteworthy layer of complexity to the child's relationship

with nature, as Jérémie's visualization of the forest in a domestic way mirrors his previous thoughts of the arthropods keeping the outside walls of his parents' cabin standing while everything else has collapsed. In this way, home-as-nature not only recognizes the transformation of the environment into Jérémie's childhood place of nature—a safe and nurturing space for childhood growth—once again, but that his wilderness experience thus far has become what Gary Paul Nabhan and Stephen Trimble argue in *The Geography of Children* is "a basic human need . . . Children *do* need wildness" (xiii).

Of Butterflies and Broken Legs: The Final Tests of Jérémie's Ecological Morality

The final moments of Jérémie's coming-of-age process in nature are marked by two interrelated events: the rise and fall of his monarch butterfly, and a broken leg that takes him away and brings him back to Lila, Simon, and the forest in September to recuperate. Symbolically, the caterpillar-turned-butterfly (named "the King") is a bundle of opposing forces itself; and running parallel to the moment the King transforms from caterpillar to chrysalis, Jérémie's fears of separation are confirmed over a phone conversation with Marco. As "a mean, unhappy upsurge boil[s] up from inside" him (186), Jérémie's anger towards Marco briefly—albeit disturbingly—shifts towards the King, quivering and defenceless, in its jar.

Jérémie's desire "to grab what the caterpillar had become and deliberately crush it" (186-87) not only turns his initial intrigue with the King into disgust, but also marks a dangerous and potential return to his previous ant-crushing self, which, if acted upon, would undo the progress he has achieved thus far in his maturation and developing awareness and relationship with nature. Ultimately, however, Jérémie does not crush the King, as he is halted by a vision of "the austere face of SS [Sorcerer Szach] loom[ing] up in his mind like a dire warning" (187). Hers is an image that "in the best, most powerful sense" (Rogers and Dufault 72) reminds Jérémie of the power he possesses in the mediation between the human and the non-human.

Jérémie continues to grow closer to Lila, accompanying her as they forage in the woods for their dinners, and eventually they share the personal traumas that have led them to seek a nurturing strength from the surrounding environment and the humans who have chosen to become a part of it. Young Jérémie perceives Lila (and by extension, the natural world) as a safe place to release his feelings about the fire, his parents, and

his near-death experience. Lila, conversely, indicates that she feels similarly by responding to an innocent but startling observation Jérémie makes after seeing a photo of her deceased husband (194-96). Proulx, however, does not let her readers become lulled into assuming that Jérémie has finally achieved the idyllic state in nature that promotes the "child as innocence as well as nature embodied" (Dobrin and Kidd 6). Rather, with a startling dream that sends Jérémie running through the forest at dawn towards the jarred butterfly he has forgotten at Simon's cabin during his stay with Lila, Proulx has her young protagonist fall into a deep crevice and break his leg.

For all the "celebrations of nature's largesse" (Soderstrom n. pag.) between child and environment, Jérémie's predicament demonstrates that nature is also fundamentally indifferent to humans and their affairs. The view of nature as harsh and oppressive, expressed by Margaret Atwood in *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* over four decades ago, was commonly found in Canadian prose and poetry as a predominant theme and a central distinguishing feature of the nation's literature. But, as Dobrin and Kidd aptly state, "close contact with nature can be dangerous, but so, too, can our evasion and denial of it" (2). Scared and injured by a nature he has been learning to be more empathetic towards, Jérémie has one final chance to abandon his apprenticeship as a future caretaker of nature—to see nature as an unforgiving and hostile place—or to maintain the idea that nature is a constructive place of balance between both literal and metaphoric growth and decay. Proulx ultimately chooses the latter for her character, with positive results: Jérémie's accident not only rejuvenates his relationship with Marco,[7] but protects him from viewing himself as a victim.

Jérémie's Final Act: Conservation

While the end of August finds Jérémie in a city hospital bed, September brings him back on crutches to Lila, Simon, and Goose Lake to mend. While it is implied that, in his return, Jérémie's coming of age through nature will continue to positively influence his attitude towards self and place, it is the coda—which is set in the distant future—that fully confirms the successful completion of his apprenticeship and the results of a child educated into a deeper and different awareness of nature.

Now a content and fulfilled adult who shares his childhood place of nature with his wife, children, and friends, Jérémie is able to reflect not only upon a childhood that has benefited from an adult's (Lila's) cultivating guidance, but also on what he can do for the environment now that he has achieved

the knowledge and empathy needed to enact responsible change. Making his way up alone to the top of the cliff that Lila used to frequent before her death, Jérémie recounts how lucky he was to have "come upon good fortune at an early age" (314), especially now with news of "[t]he world . . . going badly . . . slicing down like the blade of an apocalyptic guillotine" (314). He attempts to do his part—"to compensate" for the torment he feels towards the current state of the environment by giving back "to the world" (314)—and his decision to make Melissa Clémont of Sustainable Development[8] the next caretaker of the land Lila has left him upon her death becomes the pinnacle act(ion) of conservation in his mature role as a caretaker of nature.

While Jérémie's desire to transform Goose Lake into an officially protected park is selfless (as it was for years with Lila, Jérémie receives dazzling monetary offers for the land), it can also be said that there is a yearning to additionally conserve his childhood self and place of nature in as pristine a way as possible. The troubling fact about the act of conservation is that, while it is meant to be a positive way to protect the environment, it is also—in some ways—dependent on subjective ideas about the nature to be protected. For Jérémie, it is his childhood place of nature with "real wild animals that fled instead of beg[ged] for food, plants so healthy they were green in their banality, century-old pines threatened only by insects or lightning, [and] a crystalline lake that had never seen an algae bloom" (Proulx 316). The fleeting figure of a child Jérémie thinks he sees just before reaching the summit once more plays with the view of childhood nature through adult eyes as a prelapsarian time and place that haunts, but also valuably reminds one of their responsibility within the caretaker role.

Conclusion

Jérémie's journey from learning to be a child of nature to becoming a responsible, empathetic adult shapes not only his sense of self, but also what Ursula Heise describes as a "sense of place and sense of planet" (3) within a contemporary time. Proulx's comment that "[c]hildhood is a cold room in which are stored the seeds of all that will eventually sprout and spread leaves" (71) is, in one sense, an idyllic one in its equation of prelapsarian nature (the stored "seeds") in childhood with a positively charged, environmentally active adult life (the "leaves"). However, Proulx also uses Jérémie to challenge that ideal through the urban/rural and nature/human binaries, which complicate an early determination of his ecological morality.

Applying a bioregional lens to both Jérémie and the regional landscape he explores creates an evolving perspective on the character's formative experiences: he not only becomes increasingly aware and thoughtful of the Laurentian wilderness around him, but he is also allowed to continually rethink how he fits within the bioregion as a "life-place" (Thayer 3). In an echo of Suzuki's "[s]olutions are in our nature," Proulx demonstrates that the Canadian child figure can be and is a crucial part and reflection of a greater need to empower environmental change.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the editors, anonymous reviewers, Glenn Willmott, and Petra Fachinger for their valuable suggestions and encouragement; and to Kevin Pat Fong for being a second set of eyes on the translations.

NOTES

1 Proulx uses the following lines from Friedrich Hölderlin as an epigraph to *Wildlives*: "Though deserving, / man must live poetically / upon the earth."
2 Besides the child characters, the adults also have their own encounters with the environment, which opens *Wildlives* to a wider examination of the representation of nature in Québécois literature. See Stephanie Posthumus and Élise Salaün's "'Mon pays, ce n'est pas un pays, c'est l'hiver': Literary Representations of Nature and Ecocritical Thought in Quebec" for an analysis of Québécois ecocritical thought and broader literary movement.
3 "If I did not have a place in the countryside . . . I would not have the desire to write." Translation mine.
4 "very connected to nature." Translation mine.
5 "I find that we are in a period of collective distress, not only in Quebec, and this place [the forest], for me, is a place of healing and wonder." Translation mine.
6 Marco's encounter with the Laurentian wilderness upon his arrival reveals that his sensibilities with respect to nature are the opposite of Lila and Simon's (81).
7 In Jérémie's eyes, Marco makes a complete transformation during the rescue into a Superman/Spider-Man figure as he ingeniously throws together a hoist (despite knowing nothing about slings and ropes) and makes his way down into the hole (251-53). It is a complete contrast to an earlier scene between them where Jérémie assumes the adult role of saviour and comforter when Marco, scared of a bat that gets trapped in his room, becomes hysterical (87-89).
8 As the daughter and granddaughter of men who endlessly pursued Lila to sell them Goose Lake in order to make it one of the biggest recreation centres in the Laurentians, Melissa Clémont and her work in sustainable development allow her to fall within the same category as Jérémie in terms of the effect one's youth in nature has upon future environmental acts. However, while Proulx does not give us much on Melissa's personal life, she does hint through Jérémie that Melissa's eagerness for the land is to be taken with some unease (317).

WORKS CITED

Andruss, Van, Christopher Plant, Judith Plant, and Eleanor Wright. "What Is Bioregionalism?" *Home! A Bioregional Reader*. Ed. Andruss, Plant, Plant, and Wright. Philadelphia: New Society, 1990. 2-3. Print.

Atwood, Margaret. *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*. Toronto: Anansi, 1972. Print.

Berg, Peter, and Raymond Dasmann. "Reinhabiting California." *The Ecologist* 7.10 (1977): 399-401. Rpt. in Andruss et al., 35-38. Print.

Buell, Lawrence. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. Cambridge: Belknap, 1995. Print.

—. *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*. Malden: Blackwell, 2005. Print.

"Conservation." Def. n. 1e. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. OED Online. 2016. Web. 22 Mar. 2016.

"Conservation vs Preservation." *National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior*. Web. 1 July 2016.

Desmeules, Christian. "Entretien — La vraie nature de Monique Proulx." *Le Devoir* 15 Mar. 2008. Web. 20 Mar. 2016.

Dobrin, Sidney I., and Kenneth B. Kidd. "Introduction: Into the Wild." *Wild Things: Children's Culture and Ecocriticism*. Ed. Dobrin and Kidd. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2004. 1-15. Print.

Galway, Elizabeth. *From Nursery Rhymes to Nationhood: Children's Literature and the Construction of Canadian Identity*. New York: Routledge, 2008. Print.

"Get Back Outside." *The David Suzuki Foundation*. n.d. Web. 22 Mar. 2016.

Heise, Ursula K. *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global*. New York: Oxford UP, 2008. Print.

Hesse, M. G., ed. *Childhood and Youth in Canadian Literature*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1979. Print.

Lucchetta, Carla. "A Forgiving and Beautiful Landscape." Rev. of *Wildlives* by Monique Proulx. *Globe and Mail* 7 July 2009. Web. 20 Mar. 2016.

McGinnis, Michael Vincent. "A Rehearsal to Bioregionalism." *Bioregionalism*. Ed. McGinnis. London: Routledge, 1999. 1-9. Print.

Nabhan, Gary Paul, and Stephen Trimble. *The Geography of Childhood: Why Children Need Wild Places*. Boston: Beacon, 1994. Print.

Posthumus, Stephanie, and Élise Salaün. "'Mon pays, ce n'est pas un pays, c'est l'hiver': Literary Representations of Nature and Ecocritical Thought in Quebec." *Greening the Maple: Canadian Ecocriticism in Context*. Ed. Ella Soper and Nicholas Bradley. Calgary: U of Calgary P, 2013. 297-327. Print.

Proulx, Monique. *Champagne*. Montréal: Boréal, 2008. Print.

—. *Wildlives*. Trans. David Homel and Fred A. Reed. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2009. Print.

Raglon, Rebecca, and Marian Scholtmeijer. "Canadian Environmental Writing." *Literature of Nature: An International Sourcebook*. Ed. Patrick D. Murphy. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1998. 130-39. Print.

Ricou, Laurie. "So Big About Green." Editorial. *Canadian Literature* 130 (1991): 3-6. Print.

Rogers, Juliette, and Roseanna Dufault. "Recent Nature Writing, Relinquishment, and

Rhizomes in Monique Proulx's *Champagne*." *Québec Studies* 54 (Fall 2012/Winter 2013): 65-76. Print.
Santoro, Miléna, Karen McPherson, and Galen Bascomb. "Entretien avec Monique Proulx." *French Review* 83.3 (2010): 624-36. Print.
Soderstrom, Mary. Rev. of *Wildlives*, by Monique Proulx. *Montreal Review of Books* 12.3 (Summer 2009): n.pag. Web. 20 Mar. 2016.
Suzuki, David, and Harpreet Johal. "Will Generation Z give us superheroes for the planet?" *David Suzuki Foundation*. 17 Sept. 2015. Web. 22 Mar. 2016.
Thayer, Robert L., Jr. *LifePlace: Bioregional Thought and Practice*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2003. Print.

Cyril Dabydeen

Poem at Large

An anonymous space I claim—
You claim

Being who we are—
As we traverse together

What keeps unfolding—
Not denying or changing

Leaves falling to the ground—
What conspires against us

The mercury level rising—
A simple text's message

To behold or admire—
What I will bear up to

With each new image—
What I hope to summon

Unheralded again—
Being who we really are

Since the beginning—
Anonymous I tell you

Sotto voce

Shaun A. Stevenson

Sacred and Sacrificial Landscapes

Reading and Resisting Settler Canadian Environmental Discourse in M. T. Kelly's *A Dream Like Mine* and the Navigation Protection Act

In this article, I explore settler articulations of liberal environmentalism through both contemporary settler literature and early so-called environmental policy. More specifically, I interrogate the settler "structures of feeling," to use Mark Rifkin's term, expressed through liberal environmentalism in M. T. Kelly's novel *A Dream Like Mine* and the recently amended Navigation Protection Act. These two distinct textual forms illustrate how structures of feeling build on early settler logics of possession, as well as progressive and fluid conceptions of liberal politics. Rifkin encourages us to understand settlement as that which is enacted through settler structures of feeling. Reckoning with settler structures of feeling "entails asking how emotions, sensations, and psychic life take part in the (ongoing) process of exerting non-Native authority over Indigenous peoples, governance, and territoriality" (342). More pointedly, Eva Mackey asks, "on what grounds, do settlers feel entitled, settled and certain about their right to own and control territory" (8)? Like Rifkin and Mackey, I am interested in both the affective modes of naturalizing settler presence on Indigenous lands, and the material consequences of such affective structures. In what follows, I look to how settler Canadian structures of feeling work as organizing principles that naturalize "particular forms of land tenure and governance" through the enactment of settler liberalism within environmental discourse (343).

Jennifer Henderson describes a kind of settler liberalism that affectively and materially disembeds historical wrongdoing from the broader context and frameworks of Canadian settler colonialism; in so doing, liberal discourses of progress and improvement supersede the material conditions that might

lead to the "restitution of powers, the jurisdictions, the lands necessary for the Indigenous to live as distinct peoples" (31). Through "the subtle and mobile powers of liberal inclusionary forms of national imagining and national culture," to draw again from Mackey, settler liberalism thus mobilizes liberal forms of governmentality toward the disavowal of ongoing processes of settler colonialism (5). It is in the context of settler liberalism, and liberal environmentalism more specifically—through its mobile and fluid assertions of power, enacted through seemingly progressive and inclusionary politics—where I locate the structures of feeling expressed in Kelly's *A Dream Like Mine* and the Navigation Protection Act. In particular, I explore how settler liberal structures of feeling are articulated through two interrelated processes of colonialism, which together form affective, social, and subjective identities in relation to Canadian land tenure and the environment. Specifically, I address the processes of what I will refer to as settler sanctification and sacrifice of landscapes in order to trace the cultural meanings and values that have structured and continue to structure settler Canadians' relationships to land, belonging, and the Indigenous communities that have proceeded them.

Sacred and Sacrificial Landscapes

In *Petrolia*, Brian Black explores the relationship between sacred and sacrificial landscapes and the environment. First, Black mobilizes the concept of the "sacrificial landscape" in relation to the late-nineteenth-century oil boom in northwestern Pennsylvania. He explains how certain landscapes achieve a mythic status developed through the interwoven narratives of divine economic and nationalist progress, and how such landscapes and communities have been sacrificed toward these idealized economic ends (81). Correspondingly, landscapes once sacrificed toward such ends could later become imbued with deeper cultural significance and made "sacred." Of sacred landscapes, Black writes, "[t]heir sacredness derives from one's ability to stand in the locale and reflect upon the action that took place there; however, it also grows out of the power of hindsight and one's ability to consider additionally all the related issues and ideas that have transpired throughout the nation" (170). Thus, according to Black, the sacrificial and the sacred landscape work relationally; landscapes must die, be sacrificed, so that the nation's progress may flourish, and, in turn, become sacred, so that the nation can subsume past violence, sanctifying landscapes within an ever-progressing national narrative. Nuancing Black's notion of the sacred and sacrificial, I contend that within the context of settler colonialism, sanctification of certain

landscapes pre-empts and creates the conditions for the sacrifice of others.

Examples of the sacrificial landscape in Canada range from Alberta's oilsands extraction and Kinder Morgan's attempted drilling on Burnaby Mountain, to the Park Amendment Act (2014), opening parks in British Columbia to energy exploration, and the overhaul of the Navigable Waters Protection Act under federal Bill C-45 (2012). It seems that the sacrificial landscape is almost everywhere in Canada as the sacrificial status is situated on sites previously imbued with just the opposite—a kind of sacred status. As such, I probe the temporal connections between the sacred and the sacrificial in the settler Canadian context. I ask, what are the ways in which the territories of Indigenous peoples, in particular, continue to be disproportionately sacrificed, despite supposed commitments to reconciliation and growing concerns over the nation's environmental record? How does the sanctification of certain landscapes allow for the sacrifice of others, and how is this dual process perpetuated through liberal environmentalism? Ultimately, I argue that attention to the structures of feeling formed and expressed through the settler sanctification and sacrifice of the landscape helps to shed light on both the subjective investments and the material stakes of settler Canadians' engagements with the environment and their place within it.

In *Locations of the Sacred,* William Closson James expands the conception of the sacred beyond traditional religious connotations to include "whatever is of foundational value, what is distinguished from the profane, and what brings order of chaos" (6). I contend that the liberal settler subject is premised on a particular kind of sanctification—the instilling of nature and the land with qualities of the sacred, which in turn instills the settler with a kind of sacred presence on and right to the land. Settler sanctification of the landscape thus functions as a pre-emptive move to project settler values onto the landscape, ordering the chaotic environment of a "New World," and centring settler presence in relation to the reverence and justification of entitlement to land. This sanctification of unquestionable rights to land ensures that settlers are naturalized in place as an ordering presence within the unruly landscape. Through this process of sanctification, countless other landscapes not deemed sacred can be sacrificed to serve the progress of the burgeoning nation. Such sanctification of settler landscapes can be understood as a structure of feeling, as settler presence itself is deemed sacred. Embedded within this process is a complex manoeuvre whereby the dispossession of Indigenous peoples is replaced with the acknowledged and revered "sacrifice" of the

so-called pioneer. While this process of sanctification and sacrifice works through a number of obvious landscapes, from national parks and sites of national heritage to the northern landscape, I explore its operation through two discursive sites: a fictionalized First Nations community in northern Ontario and Canadian environmental legislation.

I read the dual process of settler sanctification and sacrifice first through a literary representation in M. T. Kelly's 1987 novel, *A Dream Like Mine,* before carrying the complexity that this reading draws out to an analysis of Canadian environmental policy. Specifically, I explore the operation of contemporary settler liberal environmentalism in Kelly's self-conscious settler narrative, and the pre-emptive sanctification of the landscape present in Canada's oldest piece of environmental legislation, the recently amended Navigation Protection Act (2012). My reading of these two seemingly disparate texts aims to illustrate that a particular kind of sanctification of the landscape has structured settler Canadian engagement with the environment from the very inception of official Canadian environmental discourse and thus created the conditions for the landscapes' inevitable sacrifice. Further, my comparative reading suggests that this settler sanctification persists through a contemporary liberal environmentalism that continues to see some landscapes as sacrificial through the sanctification of others.

I read policy in conjunction with fiction because literature, along with its ability to critique, complicate, or imagine alternatives, can also figure what is often implicit about legislation. More specifically, in its condensation, its ambiguity, its dramatization of a well-meaning settler consciousness, Kelly's novel helps to illuminate what has made policy seem adequate or progressive. In reading policy documents alongside literary representations of settler Canada, I ground my comparative analysis in the material implications that can be read across various Canadian discursive forms; literature is not a metaphor of something like policy, but is rather another material ordering practice that organizes the nation-state around particular values, motifs, and ideologies. The Navigation Protection Act further serves as a kind of historical anecdote in this way, one that usefully opens up questions about sacrificed and sacred landscapes and their temporal politics. My aim is to intervene in the fields of Canadian literature and politics through a focus on critical comparative analysis that treats environmental discourse as that which emerges and must be understood through its various ideological, aesthetic, and affective formations. Thus, through this comparative reading, I argue that Canadian environmental

discourse—its historical and contemporary material, social, and subjective manifestations—is ordered and articulated through settler liberal structures of feeling and their sanctification and sacrifice of the landscape.

Self-conscious Settler Writing and the Limits of Liberal Sanctification

In M. T. Kelly's 1987 novel, *A Dream Like Mine*, the Canadian sacrificial landscape is represented with violent complexity through a journalist's surreal experiences in an Ontario Ojibway community suffering the effects of mercury pollution in its waterway. The novel has received relatively little scholarly attention, despite winning the Governor General's Award for fiction and being adapted for the 1991 film *Clearcut*. Exile Editions republished the novel in 2009 with an introduction by Daniel David Moses. Between Moses, critical readings of the text by Jessica Langston and J. A. Wainwright, and an unsympathetic review on the heels of its initial publication by Terry Goldie, the reception of *A Dream Like Mine* has been fairly disparate. The novel has been read as appropriative and reductive (Goldie, "The Impossible"), complex and resistive (Langston; Wainwright), and even as anticipating Indigenous struggles to come (Moses). There is consensus, however, on the novel's disorienting narrative, its frustrating, if not poor, execution, and, most importantly, the ways that it seems to resist stable readings of its unsettling characters and unruly political stance.

A Dream Like Mine is no doubt problematic in its representations of Indigenous peoples and cultures, at times reducing them to sentimental elders, or to violent and unstable activists. Reserves, if not romanticized, and strangely absent of people, are portrayed in a state of squalor. This is not to mention the almost nonappearance of Indigenous women, or any women for that matter. Given some of its limitations, we may indeed follow Goldie in reading the novel as "an interesting example of what happens when a white author obsessed with 'getting it right' tries to write right himself" ("The Impossible" 30). Yet, like Moses, I also read *A Dream Like Mine* as an "undeniable return of the repressed" (vii). For all of its flaws, in its best moments, and even in its worst, the novel serves as a complicated confrontation with the liberal sensibilities of settler Canadians and their relationship to Indigenous peoples and the environment—to the sanctified and sacrificial landscape.

The novel's unnamed Ojibway reserve is clearly based on the Grassy Narrows (Asubpeeschoseewagong First Nation) and White Dog (Wabaseemoong Independent Nations) communities in northwestern Ontario, both of which suffered the effects of mercury poisoning when

Dryden Chemical Ltd. dumped ten tonnes of mercury into the English-Wabigoon River system between 1962 and 1970. Despite the obvious political situating of the text, Kelly's narrative is unwieldy. At times, it appears to offer a self-conscious articulation of the limitations of liberal settler sensibilities in relation to Indigenous communities, politics, and environment. In other moments, the novel has little control over its own problematic representation of Indigenous peoples, reinforcing the kind of settler sanctification and sacrifice I interrogate. As such, *A Dream Like Mine* serves as an apt, if complicated, example of the type of settler liberalism that organizes settler relationships to the environment. Kelly's settler subject sanctifies his own presence through limited notions of environmental justice and a perceived waning of Indigenous culture, while perpetuating sacrifice of the environment itself and the Indigenous peoples who inhabit it. The ambiguous nature of Kelly's narrative—its openness to being read as either resisting or reinscribing settler colonial structures of feeling—situates it within this complex terrain of settler liberalism.

Kelly's narrative offers a complicated telling of how Canada's mythicized Indigenous landscapes and corresponding communities are sacrificed in the name of nationalist interests and a seemingly divine sense of progress. Where Black's framework suggests that the sacred landscape will follow in the midst of this sacrificed Indigenous community, Kelly resists reading the landscape as ultimately sacred, illustrating instead how within the settler liberal context, a pre-emptive perception of the landscape's sacredness is what legitimizes the community's sacrifice in the first place. The novel's unnamed narrator represents this pre-emptive move, imbuing Indigenous peoples, culture, and lands with liberal settler sacredness toward the regeneration of his own settler subjectivity. Early on, the narrator reflects on his romanticized notions of indigeneity: "[M]y fascination with Indian culture[ ] was both an obsession and an escape, the equivalent of some people's addiction to science fiction, or fantasy, or mystery novels;" he continues, "[b]ut behind it there was a search for a way out, a different way of life" (44). Through this language of romanticization, the narrator figures a process through which Indigenous peoples, culture, and lands are framed in mythical and sacred terms by a settler modernity that requires an Indigenous Other in order to persist. More specifically, the narrator's perceptions can be read as an attempt to sanctify the Indigenous community, instilling it with romantic and essentialist notions of tradition, cultural practice, and ceremony, in turn, sacrificing the actual politics and lived experiences

of its people within a polluted landscape so that his own liberal sense of environmental justice may prevail. From the very beginning of the novel, he perceives the Indigenous community as a "living myth" (21), with the Indigenous people he encounters expected to reflect his own desires for pristine landscapes and a "sense of the past" that he no longer has access to (22). From the opening chapters, the narrator's liberal stance is presented with derision, inviting a reading of his sanctification of the landscape ultimately as complicit in the sacrificing of the Indigenous community.

In his introduction, Moses writes: "A white man from Toronto, an Indian from northern Ontario, and someone who seems to be a Métis from out west go into the northern wilderness together to fish, and it's not the set-up for a joke" (vii). Far from humorous, Kelly's narrative is often disturbing and unsettling. The novel's unnamed narrator finds himself on an Ojibway reserve somewhere near Kenora, Ontario, tasked with writing a "tight and bright" piece on traditional Indigenous healing approaches to alcoholism (2). Meeting with an elder from the community, Wilf, and a disconcerting Métis outsider, Arthur, the narrator is ultimately asked not to write the story, given some of the sensitive politics of the community. Content to spend his time in the North satisfying his romantic consumption of Indigenous culture, the narrator agrees. His idealized views of Indigenous peoples, however, are shaken to the core, as he must shift his focus from the all-too-familiar trope of the victimized Indigenous person—the notion of "Aboriginal wounded subjectivity," in Dian Million's words (6)—to another trope, that of the violent Indigenous political activist.[1]

The transition in the narrator's sensibilities is embodied, however problematically, through Arthur, and his political will to seek retribution for the pollution inflicted on the Ojibway community's waterway by the local Dryden paper mill. First described as unfriendly and menacing, and later as a psychopath, Arthur is the antithesis of everything that the white liberal narrator desires from Indigenous culture. Upon meeting Arthur, and hearing his proclamation that the businessmen behind the paper mill's pollution are "scum" and "human shit" (18), the narrator's stereotyped notion of indigeneity is unsettled, as Arthur's impassioned political stance is contrasted with the quiet understanding that the narrator has come to expect from his Indigenous hosts. Following this unpleasant introduction, the narrator is once again confronted by Arthur's crassness as he embarks on a fishing trip up the reserve's waterways, on what the narrator imagined would be a traditional tour of the sacred Indigenous landscape by the elder Wilf. As

the narrator probes Arthur on where he's from and his inability to speak an Indigenous language, and thus challenging his authenticity as an Indigenous person, Arthur responds,

> You wanna know where I'm from? I'm from where little wee kids have impetigo and cooties and where their teeth are rotten in the goddamn day-care because they eat nothing but pop and candy at home where the old lady's always out on a party. Where lots of kids under twelve get fucked and have clap. (26)

Both the narrator's romantic sensibilities and affective liberal response are shattered by Arthur's frankness and unlikeability, as the narrator's desired version of indigeneity is confronted by the lived realities of a complicated, politicized Indigenous subject. Here, Arthur insists on the inseparability of social conditions from so-called environmental ones, refusing the abstraction of people from the environment—an abstraction that is integral to the narrator's sacred conception of the landscape.

Arthur quickly becomes the narrative's violent antagonist, abruptly kidnapping both the narrator and the manager of the company responsible for the polluted waterway, Bud Rickets. Resisting the narrator's pleas for moderation, Arthur asserts, "We're through with reports and opinions and the oh so reassuring experts who let it happen and happen and happen. . . . I'm going to kidnap and kill the manager of Spruce Lands Paper unless they stop the pollution RIGHT NOW!" (49-50). The narrative descends into an unnerving, strange, and violent journey as Arthur takes the narrator and Rickets into the wilderness along the polluted waterway through a landscape sacrificed on behalf of the region's pulp and paper industry. The narrator is repeatedly beaten, Mounties are callously shot and killed, and Rickets is tortured, his eye almost gouged out and his Achilles tendon filleted by Arthur. All the while, the narrator pleads with Arthur to seek recourse for the sacrificed landscape through law, at once reinforcing both his own liberal sense of justice and the sovereign state's authority that perpetuates, and prospers from, the sacrifice of the landscape and Indigenous community.

It is difficult not to view the torture of Rickets as an allusion to Jean de Brébeuf, given Arthur's antagonistic retelling of Brébeuf's death early in the narrative. When asked if he knew about "Father Brébeuf," the narrator recalls Brébeuf's grave at Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons and says that he has heard "the Jesuit relations are the basis, or backdrop, for most of our literature" (37). Arthur responds by deriding white Canadian literature, suggesting instead that Brébeuf was killed in Mississippi by the Sioux, and for the crime of "what he was doing to young girls" (37). While it remains

unclear whether Arthur believes in his own retelling, his narrative refuses the popular version of romantic martyrdom of Brébeuf, which resolutely situates his torture by the Haudenosaunee as a sacrifice, both literally and figuratively. Such sacrifice, according to the romantic myth, leads to Brébeuf's sanctification, to sainthood, and, through its retelling within a tradition of Canadian literature, provides the affective structures to sanctify settler presence. In turn, it is used to justify the continued sacrifice of Indigenous peoples and the lands they inhabit. As such, Brébeuf's story often becomes a powerful source of the affective structures that organize and uphold settler presence. Rickets' torture forces the question of whether he will endure the same bloody sacrifice that Arthur treats with so much skepticism; but to sacrifice Rickets would risk making a martyr out of him, sanctifying settler presence in a similar fashion to Brébeuf. Instead, Arthur only toys with the idea, once again refusing the sanctification of this presence, embodied here by Rickets and enterprising liberal ideologies.

In his criticism of Joseph Boyden's *The Orenda*, a novel that also heavily references the torture of Brébeuf as portrayed through the *Jesuit Relations*, Ojibwe scholar Hayden King suggests that familiar tellings of Brébeuf's martyrdom situate Indigenous peoples as "a menace, lurking in the dark forest, waiting to torture or cannibalize" (n. pag.). Further, King argues that such neat tellings—those which I read as illustrative of processes of sacrifice and sanctification—work as a moral alibi for colonialism. In Kelly's novel, Arthur's actions almost caricature the implication of stories like Brébeuf's. His violence and torture are read as meaningless by the narrator, while his refusal to ultimately make a martyr out of Rickets complicates the sanctify-sacrifice process, undermining the settler structures of feeling that might work to naturalize settler presence through preordained narratives of consecration and tired tropes of savage Indians. Arthur's telling renders Brébeuf's story meaningless as complicit in settler structures of feeling, while also ensuring that his torture of Rickets does not serve as a moral alibi for continued processes of colonialism. The historical torture and the contemporary one are denied meaning within settler structures of feeling, and must instead be read as responses by Indigenous peoples for very specific colonial and capitalist incursions.

While the narrative risks reducing the politics of this semi-fictionalized Ojibway community to the violent actions of one potentially unwell and ambiguously identified Indigenous outsider, I read *A Dream Like Mine* less for what it is able to articulate about Indigenous experience—which is

arguably very little—and instead for what this self-conscious settler text articulates about settler colonialism in relation to Canadian environmental discourse in the latter half of the twentieth century. The narrative offers countless moments where the narrator's romanticism and so-called good intentions return to haunt him, upended and denied sublimation. As they journey down the river, Arthur proclaims to his captives, "I'm going to take you on a traditional trip, and we'll have a traditional shore lunch, the kind Indians always make for tourists, with a mess of mercury ripe fish, except Indians have to eat the fish all the time, not just on trips" (70). The narrator's earlier desire for his traditional canoe trip with Wilf is mimicked and inverted to reflect the reality of that which is negated through settler consumption of Indigenous traditions. Further, Wilf, whom the narrator had previously misread as his wise elder ally, fully supports Arthur on his violent journey, seeing it as the only means to right the wrongs done to his community. Through Arthur's derision and Wilf's abrupt change in character, Kelly suggests that it is the settler-narrator's attempted sanctification of a romanticized Indigenous culture that makes him complicit in the sacrifice of the community—a process that trades in a long history of affective structures of sacrifice and sanctification, perpetuated and naturalized through stories like that of Brébeuf.

The novel presents the settler desire for a sacred landscape, one comprised of Indigenous wilderness, traditional canoe trips, and sweat ceremonies, and then refuses it, illustrating the manner in which this desire for the sacred itself becomes complicit in the sacrificing of the Indigenous landscape and community. The narrator represents this denied desire, with his liberal sensibilities persistently under attack and presented as part of the root cause of the violence done to the landscape. In an attempt to sympathize with Arthur's motives, the narrator says: "Look, I'm not unsympathetic. I'm on your side. Pollution may have killed children of mine. My wife has had two miscarriages, for no reason . . . Do you know how many women are having miscarriages now? . . . Everyone's affected" (49). Arthur responds with derision: "Oh a real family man eh . . . . Yeah. I'm sure you have the right opinion. Well we're through with opinions" (49). And then, in a mocking tone that the narrator identifies as the "clichéd, effeminate tone people use when they say things like bleeding-heart liberal," Arthur says, "We're through with 'pollution'" (49). Words like "sympathy," "opinions," and "pollution" are part of so many empty liberal catch-alls for Arthur, marking only the negation of a people and their particular place-based politics. Further, the narrator's concerns express a desire for a futurity, one that Arthur views as an

entitlement to a future that has been denied to the Indigenous community. Thus, the narrator's inclusion on Arthur's journey illustrates how the sacrificing of the landscape must be understood as part of a dense network of political actors and actions, initiated first through its sanctification, and disavowed by a limiting liberal sense of justice. The narrator's liberal sentiment, that which flattens out oppression and structural inequalities, and which effectively makes space for cultural difference within liberal pluralism, but only "without rupturing the core frameworks of liberal justice" (26), to draw from Elizabeth A. Povinelli, becomes complicit in the sacrificing of the Indigenous landscape and community. Through the narrator's sanctification of the landscape and its people, the actual Indigenous community has been hollowed out, made absent, with space only for limited forms of cultural recognition left in its place. The settler sanctification of the landscape becomes a move to vacate a real landscape and its real inhabitants, imbuing the land instead with a clichéd and empty sanctity toward the ends of settler regeneration and national progress.

Nancy Fraser suggests that liberal politics are sustained through affirmative, rather than transformative, models of redistribution, which "strive to alter or modify the second-order effects of first-order root causes" (qtd. in Coulthard 19). Within the Canadian colonial context, Glen Coulthard argues, a liberal politics of recognition makes it impossible to address the "generative material conditions" (19) that maintain the status quo and allow the sacrificial landscape to persist. The narrator of Kelly's novel represents this mode of liberal environmentalism, as his interests and sympathies lie not in addressing the unjust distribution of power and resources that would see some communities sacrificed for the sake of others, but in his desperate attempt to suggest how the second-hand effects are experienced by all of us—how pollution, for example, is something that we can all relate to. The narrator's goal is to highlight how we experience all of these effects equally, and thus to mark Arthur's actions as irrational and unjust within his liberal sense of justice.

While the narrator views many of Arthur's actions and the journey down the river as deplorable, by the narrative's conclusion there is a sense that everything that has happened has taken place in order to further the settler narrator's political awareness, as if by prophecy. Wilf tells the narrator, "[t]his man Arthur, he had to come. There were two, before. They drowned, and called him up from deep water" (140). Even more pointedly, when confronted about his actions in the final moments before his death, Arthur tells the

narrator, "I did it because you wanted me to . . . That's what you expected" (146). The narrator responds with a simple "[y]es," "realizing he was right" (148). Arthur's actions are thus situated, ultimately, as necessary, and as the fulfillment of settler liberal desire. Where the narrator's liberal critiques are presented with constant derision, his ultimate wish for a violent response to past wrongdoings is fulfilled by Arthur, the Indigenous political activist. While Arthur's return to the water completes the prophecy outlined by Wilf, the novel's conclusion reads more accurately as a prophecy of white liberal regeneration and a purification of liberal politics. Arthur facilitates the narrator's movement beyond his comfortable liberal modes of critique, allowing for the enactment of violence on the crass manifestation of his politics, embodied in the character of Rickets. Once these actions have taken place, Arthur returns to the water from whence he came, sacrificed so that the narrator can learn something important about the limits of his former political position.

Kelly's narrative is not a straightforward one. While its self-conscious articulations of settler liberal desire work to resist, or at least call attention to, the settler structures of feeling that perpetuate a dual process of sanctification and sacrifice of both Indigenous lands and peoples, as well as of settler presence, the novel's narrative structure also reinscribes certain problematic tropes in its representations of Indigenous peoples. Indeed, the text mobilizes shallow notions of indigeneity in order to call attention to affective settler processes, once again incorporating Indigenous peoples as the necessary Other for the articulation of settler Canadian identities. To quote Goldie, the image of "them" once again becomes "ours" ("Semiotic" 192). As such, *A Dream Like Mine* must be read with caution. It serves as a rich text for interrogating how settler social and subjective identities become formed and articulated, even as the text itself becomes implicated in such formations. Further, it provides a complicated articulation of the affective structure of liberal Canadian environmentalism—a structure which trades in relationship between settler sacrifice and sanctification. In what follows, I contend that Canadian environmental policy also performs this unwieldy and complicated kind of articulation; what might be taken for a progressive stance on environmental policy can in fact produce the complex conditions for the exploitation of the environment. Next, I explore how Canada's oldest piece of environmental legislation is illustrative of the temporal tensions between the settler sanctification and sacrifice of the landscape, similar to those expressed in Kelly's narrative, and how this temporal process has structured, and continues to structure, settler Canadian environmental discourse.

The Navigation Protection Act and the Ordering of Settler Subjectivity

I shift from literary narrative to environmental policy here because literature figures the inseparability of social conditions from environmental ones with a narrative depth that is often absent in policy. As such, moving from literature to policy aids in identifying the affective structures that shape and order government legislation in ways that might not be readily apparent. Having traced settler sanctification and sacrifice of the landscape through fictive action and character in Kelly's novel, I will demonstrate how such processes are also evident in so-called environmental policy, which in its very construction and articulation works to abstract people from environment, thus eliding the affective manifestations and structuring of such policy. Indeed, the self-conscious settler character is absent in policy; and yet, I hope to show how a long history of Canadian environmental policy is what orders and becomes manifest in complex and contradictory articulations of settler subjectivity, such as those expressed through Kelly's characters and narrative. More specifically, in this section I show how, rather than gesturing to a comprehensive and progressive protection of Canada's waterways, from its very inception the legislative measures put forth through the Navigable Waters Protection Act worked through a similar process of sanctification as discussed above; correspondingly, in both Kelly's text and environmental policy, settler sanctification creates the conditions for the wholesale sacrifice of the landscape.

More than a century of government legislation has fostered relationships that abstract Canadians from the environment. Arguably, however, none has been so abrupt or sweeping as recent legislative measures enacted under the former Conservative government's omnibus Bill C-45 and the changes made to the Navigation Protection Act, formerly known as the Navigable Waters Protection Act (NWPA). The NWPA, first enacted in 1882, has been understood as Canada's first piece of environmental legislation.[2] While its primary purpose was to protect the public's right to navigation within Canadian waters, the law has been understood as the single most integral piece of legislation in the protection of Canada's lakes and rivers from obstruction and pollution related to the activities of industry (Winegardner, Hodgson, and Davidson 602-03).[3] While the definition of what constituted a "navigable water" was relatively ambiguous within the Act, the Supreme Court of Canada adopted the "floating canoe" test in 1906, suggesting that any water in which one could float a canoe was within the scope of the Act (Attorney General v. Fraser). A conservative estimate suggests that

this definition of navigable waters pertained to at least 31,752 lakes larger than three square kilometres (Canada, "Atlas" n. pag.). When smaller lakes and rivers are taken into account, the "floating canoe" interpretation covered bodies of water estimated in the millions. Indeed, the conception of waters included under the previous NWPA was immense, suggesting that environmental protections were integral to Canada's development and sustainability as a nation.

With the ushering in of the Navigation Protection Act under Bill C-45 in 2012, the NWPA was renamed and amended to include a schedule that lists only those navigable waters for which regulatory approval is required. The protections of the Act now pertain only to "the busiest navigable waters in Canada," a definition limited to ninety-seven lakes, sixty-two rivers, and three oceans (Canada "Navigation Protection Act" n. pag.). In a press release in May of 2009, then-Transport Minister, John Baird, announced, "[o]ur government, led by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, is cutting red tape to address today's economic needs and reflect current realities" (Canada, "Federal Government" n. pag.). The 2009 amendment signalled a shift in the meaning of "protection" under the Act, from one grounded in wide-reaching, albeit ambiguous, environmental protections, to a focus on the exclusive protection of economic growth and navigation safety. Baird's statements, which would set the stage for the larger amendments of the Act under Bill C-45, encapsulate the Harper government's approach to water and environmental legislation as one rooted almost exclusively in revenue generation and the facilitation of resource development. Such an approach seems to sacrifice Canada's waterways for unobstructed access to capital accumulation.

The changes made to the NWPA under Bill C-45 have been widely criticized by opposition parties, environmental groups, and First Nations. The Conservative government's position was that the NWPA was never intended to protect the environment, but rather to ensure that waterways were safe for navigation (Paris n. pag.). Yet, while the former Harper government's environmental stance is problematic, so too are views that position the former NWPA as representative of an ideal national relationship with the environment, now fractured following Bill C-45. Indeed, extensive environmental damage had been done in the 130-plus years that the NWPA was in place. The mercury poisoning of the Wabigoon River highlighted in *A Dream Like Mine*, for example, occurred unabated for almost a decade, and half a century before the amendments made under Bill C-45. Indeed, the various common law cases—the communal push to ensure that the NWPA

included environmental protections over the past century—do gesture toward, at the very least, a desire to legislate a relation to the environment that considered its significance in a way that has since been foreclosed upon through the amended legislation of the Navigation Protection Act; however, the separation of people from environment perpetuated through the amended Act was already well established in the former NWPA. From its very inception, the legislative measures put forth through the NWPA worked through a process of settler sanctification similar to the one discussed above in Kelly's novel. Correspondingly, such sanctification has engendered, and I would even argue created, the conditions for the wholesale sacrifice of the landscape under the more recent Navigation Protection Act.

The Conservative government's assertion that the NWPA was never intended as protection of the environment encapsulates the kind of rhetoric that this piece of environmental legislation was always meant to delineate—that is, that the Act is, first and foremost, about the settlers' right to navigation. It is the presumed right to the navigation of Canada's waterways where the settler sanctification of the landscape is situated. While ensuing court cases sought to broaden the Act's scope to focus on environmental protections, its primary function was always to make way for and protect the building of settler infrastructure on this land's waterways. Through such legislative measures, settler Canadians were given a sacred right to navigation through the adoption of one of the nation's earliest laws governing the environment. This kind of legislation is of course double-edged, at once ensuring order to the inevitable development of the settled waterways, while simultaneously ensuring that said waterways were indeed developed. What remains constant within the NWPA is the sanctification of a vast and unruly network of water that works to centre the settler right to build on and move through these corridors.

In the introduction to *Capitalism and the Web of Life,* Jason W. Moore suggests that a conceptual binary between nature and society is fundamental to understanding capitalism and its role in environmental degradation. Moore argues that "'Society' and 'Nature' are part of the problem, intellectually and politically; the binary Nature/Society is directly implicated in the colossal violence, inequality, and oppression of the modern world; and that the view of Nature as external is a fundamental condition of capital accumulation" (2). While Moore is certainly not the first thinker to highlight the implications of the Cartesian binary that would situate nature and society as two mutually exclusive categories, his intervention at the level of

historical materialism lends itself to understanding the sanctification of the landscape through policy such as the NWPA. In historical materialist terms, the NWPA produces space—that of the new nation's waterways—in the image of its own relations of production. As such, the institution of the Act reflects settlers' relationship to the landscape they inhabit, ensuring that their rights are what structure and order the landscape in congruence with the social relations of production brought with them from Europe. Where settler subjects are centred in relation to the environment, their rights take on a kind of sacred status, sanctifying the landscape toward the capitalist ends of settler colonialism, as colonial ordering practices abstract settlers from the environment to allow for the landscape's eventual sacrifice.

In the context of this paper, it is difficult to discuss the NWPA without thinking of Arthur and his captives canoeing down the polluted waters of Kelly's fictive community. The same operation of settler sanctification that allowed for the sacrifice of the Indigenous community and landscape in Kelly's narrative is at work in the rhetoric of the NWPA. Where the unnamed narrator sanctifies the Indigenous community, reifying Indigenous peoples' perceived "mythic" relationship to the land so that actual Indigenous peoples and politics may be sacrificed, environmental policy such as the NWPA has worked to construct and reinforce an affective settler subjectivity wherein the settlers' right to navigation has been reified and treated as sacred. While these processes of sanctification may appear different—one a liberal kind of sanctification enacted through misguided notions of good intentions, and the other a settler-centred right to unmitigated land access—they work through similar structures of feeling that take part in what Mark Rifkin calls "the (ongoing) process of exerting non-Native authority over Indigenous peoples, governance, and territoriality" (342). In both instances, settler sanctification functions as a pre-emptive move to project settler values onto the landscape in an attempt to order the perceived chaotic environment and organize settler presence toward the reverence and justification of settler entitlement to land. Kelly's narrative demonstrates a contemporary process whereby a settler subject sanctifies the Indigenous landscape with all of his liberal desires, thus sacrificing actual Indigenous presence on the land and reasserting his own sense of entitlement to a long-gone pristine landscape; but his narrator must be understood as enacting a settler subjectivity that has been formed through long-standing relationships of abstraction from and entitlement to land. Put another way, where environmental policy often appears subjectless, seeking to represent the ordering of processes that are to be viewed as

inevitable, settler literature helps to illustrate the complex and contradictory social and subjective manifestations of long-standing environmental discourse wherein the settler subject is always already abstracted from the environment through hollow discourses of rights and entitlement.

Conclusion: Resisting Settler Sanctified and Sacrificed Landscapes

I do not intend to undercut the necessary environmental protections fought for and articulated through some government legislation, nor do I wish to give a pass to the abhorrent neoliberal policies enacted under the omnibus bills of the Conservative government under Stephen Harper that would see the Canadian landscape sacrificed as never before. I would, however, like to stave off any conception of the sacrificial landscape that locates it within a kind of liberal temporality, making it impossible for us to understand the kinds of root causes that allow such sacrifice to persist. Indeed, it could be suggested that the sacrificial landscape in Canada is no longer simply relegated to Indigenous communities, which have faced attempted sacrifice almost since the moment of contact, but that it now extends outwards, as communities and landscapes previously unscathed are sacrificed in the name of the economy and a singular conception of national progress. To be sure, when some of the nation's most precious landscapes—its national parks, or pristine bodies of water—are sacrificed toward the ever-expanding extraction of resources, it would seem that the sacrificial landscape has become indiscriminate. This tendency, however, to view this sacrifice as an expansion, a profaning of the sacred, is part of the same nexus of complicit liberal justice seen in Kelly's *A Dream Like Mine* and in the Navigation Protection Act.

From its inception, Canadian environmental engagement can be understood through a dual process of settler sanctification and sacrifice of the landscape. This paper has shown how this process works through both more contemporary liberal environmental discourse, as represented in Kelly's self-conscious settler text, as well as how it has long been ingrained in Canadian environmental policy. This dual process of sanctification and sacrifice can be understood to work at both the level of affective settler experience, as well as through national institutionalized structures with their corresponding material consequences. Something as important and oft-celebrated as Canadian liberal environmentalism has not, and does not, escape the complex work of settler colonialism, and the ongoing formation of social and subjective identities that allow this colonialism to persist as natural and normative. These structures are mobilized and felt in myriad

ways, with the process of settler sanctification and sacrifice serving as one illustrative lens through which to explore their operation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to acknowledge the continued insight and support of his supervisors, Jennifer Henderson and Eva Mackey, who helped him work through various iterations of this paper. He acknowledges the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and thanks the reviewers and editors of *Canadian Literature* for their significant feedback.

NOTES

1 See for example, Thomas King's *The Inconvenient Indian* and Daniel Francis' *The Imaginary Indian*.

2 Between 1882 and 1886, the scope of the Act broadened coverage from bridges and dams to "wharves, docks, piers, and other structures" (*Revised Statutes 1886*). In 1886, it became known as "An Act respecting certain works constructed in or over Navigable Waters," eventually becoming commonly known as the Navigable Waters Protection Act. While the Act was never intended as protection for the environment, its focus on navigable waters has been interpreted in various common law cases and even ensuing government legislation to have protection of waters built into its legislation. The amendment of the Act, even by its title, removes the focus of water to that solely of navigation. For more information, see Winegardner, Hodgson, and Davidson as well as Kirchhoff, Gardner, and Tsuji.

3 In Friends of the Oldman River Society v. Canada (Minister of Transport), it was ruled that the Navigable Waters Protection Act "has a more expansive environmental dimension, given the common law context in which it was enacted." Further, as Winegardner, Hodgson, and Davidson point out, "during the creation of environmental legislation in the 1990s, the NWPA was linked to that goal [of providing environmental protections]" (602).

WORKS CITED

"An Act Respecting Certain Works Constructed in or Over Navigable Waters." *The Revised Statutes of Canada*. Vol. 1. Ottawa: Brown Chamberlin, 1887. 1243-44. Print.

Attorney General of Quebec v. Fraser / Attorney General of Quebec v. Adams. 37 SCR 577. Supreme Court of Canada. 1906. *The Canadian Legal Information Institute*. Federation of Law Societies of Canada, n.d. Web. 30 Nov. 2015.

Black, Brian. *Petrolia: The Landscape of America's First Oil Boom*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2000. Print.

Canada. "The Atlas of Canada." *Natural Resources Canada*. 31 Aug. 2016. Web. 1 Dec. 2015.

—. "Federal Government Moves Toward Modernizing Navigable Waters Protection Act." *Transport Canada*. 8 May 2009. Web. 30 Nov. 2015.

—. "Harper Government Announces Plan for Responsible Resource Development." *Natural Resources Canada*. 17 Apr. 2012. Web. 30 Nov. 2015.

—. "Navigation Protection Act." *Transport Canada*. 15 Dec. 2014. Web. 17 Aug. 2015.

Coulthard, Glen. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2014. Print.

Francis, Daniel. *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*. 1992. Arsenal Pulp, 2012. Print.

Friends of the Oldman River Society v. Canada (Minister of the Environment). 2 FCR 651. Court of Appeal. 1993. *The Canadian Legal Information Institute.* Federation of Law Societies of Canada, n.d. Web. 30 Nov. 2015.
Goldie, Terry. "The Impossible Dream." Rev. of *A Dream Like Mine*, by M. T. Kelly. *Books in Canada* 16.8 (1987): 30-31. Print.
—. "Semiotic Control: Native Peoples in Canadian Literatures in English." *Unhomely States: Theorizing English-Canadian Postcolonialism*. Ed. Cynthia Sugars. Peterborough: Broadview, 2004: 191-203. Print.
Henderson, Jennifer. "Residential Schools and Opinion-Making in the Era of Traumatized Subjects and Taxpayer-Citizens." *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études canadiennes* 49.1 (2015): 5-43. Print.
James, William Closson. *Locations of the Sacred: Essays on Religion, Literature and Canadian Culture.* Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2000. Print.
Kelly, M. T. *A Dream Like Mine.* Toronto: Stoddart, 1987. Print.
King, Hayden. "The Orenda faces tough criticism from First Nations scholar." *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.* 7 Mar. 2014. Web. 10 Jan. 2016.
King, Thomas. *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America*. Doubleday Canada, 2012. Print.
Kirchhoff, Denis, Holly L. Gardner, and Leonard J. S. Tsuji. "The Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012 and Associated Policy: Implications for Aboriginal Peoples." *International Indigenous Policy Journal* 4.3 (2013): 1-14. Web. 3 Dec. 2015.
Langston, Jessica. "'We call that treaty ground': The Representation of Aboriginal Land Disputes in Wayland Drew's *Halfway Man* and M. T. Kelly's *A Dream Like Mine*." *ESC: English Studies in Canada* 38.2 (2012): 179-97. Print.
Mackey, Eva. *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada.* Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2002. Print.
—. *Unsettled Expectations: Uncertainty, Land and Settler Decolonization*. Winnipeg: Fernwood, 2016. Print.
Million, Dian. *Therapeutic Nations: Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights*. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 2013. Print.
Moore, Jason W. *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital*. New York: Verso, 2015. Print.
Moses, Daniel David. "Introduction." *A Dream Like Mine.* By M. T. Kelly. Toronto: Exile, 2009. i-xi. Print.
Navigable Waters Act, Revised Statutes of Canada 1985, c. 92. Don Mills: De Boo, 1988. Print.
Paris, Max. "Navigable Waters Act at Committee One Last Time." *CBC News.* 7 Nov. 2012. Web. 1 Dec. 2015.
Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2011. Print.
Rifkin, Mark. "Settler States of Feeling: National Belonging and the Erasure of Native American Presence." *A Companion to American Literary Studies.* Ed. Caroline Field Levander and Robert S. Levine. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. 342-55. Print.
Wainwright, J. A. "Invention Denied: Resisting the Imaginary Indian in M. T. Kelly's *A Dream Like Mine*." *World Literature Today* 73.2 (1999): 256-60. Print.
Winegardner, Amanda K., Emma E. Hodgson, and Adrienne M. Davidson. "Reductions in Federal Oversight of Aquatic Systems in Canada: Implications of the New Navigation Protection Act." *Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences* 72.4 (2014): 602-611. Web. 12 Jan. 2016.

Ruby Turok-Squire

The Piano Strings

Once, you lifted the long roof
and bent your head
close to us; there was no notation for this.

Our stillness—stillness,
which was movement gone silent—made us
seem to listen, and so you sang to us

out loud—sang
into us, and we shook,
which made us ring, as though with sympathy.

One ringing noise
answered all your vowels.
You could be reminded of indifference.

Or the beautiful echo could be a beautiful echo.

Shane Neilson

Claire's Head and Pain
Beyond the Sign of the Weapon

> Physical pain has no voice, but when it at last finds a voice, it begins to tell a story.
> —Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain*

Defined as pain lasting for more than three months, chronic pain is common (Harstall and Ospina 1). A review in 2012 suggested that 15-29% of the Canadian population experiences chronic pain (Fischer and Argento 192). Unfortunately, the outcomes for pain management are poor (Kamper et al. 1). Medical management of chronic pain may even be worsening the problem: globally, Canada is the second-highest per-capita consumer of opioids ("Narcotic Drugs 2012" n. pag.); Ontario has seen a 250% increase in opioid-related emergency department (ED) visits from 2005 to 2011 (*The Way Forward* 4); and some First Nations in Canada have declared a community crisis owing to the prevalence of the harms associated with prescription drugs (Graveland n. pag.). The larger problem of lack of efficacy with pain management costs the Canadian economy an estimated $37 billion a year in lost productivity (Phillips and Schopflocher n. pag.). Why is Canadian society's prescription drug problem escalating? Why is the benefit experienced by patients in medical pain management regimes so modest? Part of the explanation lies in the fact that the responsibility for pain management in Canada largely rests with physicians who overwhelmingly approach illness from a biomedical perspective.

Bad backs, broken bones, burns, arthritis, earaches—as a family physician, I encounter the patient in pain every working day as a cog in the medical machine. For most patients, pain is transient, lasting as long as the average causal illness. For others, pain transforms into a chronic problem that usurps identity. I take a history because a patient's symptoms and signs must be contextualized within a patient's life; otherwise, I treat a disease and not a person. In this way, I resist the dominant Western medical model of "biomedicine" defined by Nikolas Rose in *The Politics of Life*

Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century as "technomedicine, highly dependent on sophisticated diagnostic and therapeutic equipment" that is "fractured by a complex division of labor among specialists" (11). David Morris, in his work on the culture of pain, observes that "our culture—the modern, Western, industrial, technocratic world—has succeeded in persuading us that pain is simply and entirely a medical problem. When we think about pain, we almost instantly conjure up a scene that includes doctors, drugs, ointments, surgery, hospitals, laboratories, and insurance forms" (2). Medical discourse *is* hegemonic in contemporary life, and authority over pain is firmly in the hands of physicians. I work against the dehumanizing processes of diagnostics and therapeutics by talking to patients. I follow in the wake of a small institutional shift away from biomedicine that is reflected in the rise of interdisciplinarity and the medical humanities. It is a shift owed to the recognition that biomedicine strips patients of personhood and thereby works to worsen recovery. As Judy Segal has written, "[n]arrative . . . gives meaning and texture and humanity to what might otherwise be just cases" and is the "corrective to biomedical discourse" ("Interdisciplinarity" 20).

The value of narrative in the health research and clinical arenas is now widely accepted, if not funded by granting bodies at a level even remotely close to that of traditional biomedical research. In *Narrative Medicine: Honoring the Stories of Illness* (2006), Rita Charon, director of Columbia University's Program in Narrative Medicine, writes that "[w]hen we human beings want to understand or describe singular people in particular situations that unfold over time, we reach naturally for narrative, or storytelling, to do so" (vii). Much evidence suggests that when physicians represent illness in narrative, care is improved; representation matters in a practical, measurable way for both patients and doctors (Charon, Hermann, and Devlin 345). Also facilitating the "narrative turn" is a broad engagement on the part of humanities scholars with what Anne Hawkins defines as "pathography": "a form of autobiography or biography that describes personal experiences of illness, treatment, and sometimes death" (*Reconstructing Illness* 1). Hawkins maintains that pathography "returns the voice of the patient to the world of medicine, a world where that voice is too rarely heard, and it does so in such a way as to assert the phenomenological, the subjective, and the experiential side of illness" (*Reconstructing Illness* 12). In *The Wounded Storyteller*, Canadian medical sociologist Arthur Frank describes the problem faced by the ill: "Seriously ill people are wounded

not just in body but in voice. They need to become storytellers in order to recover the voices that illness and its treatment often take away. The voice speaks the mind and expresses the spirit, but it is also a physical organ of the body" (xii). Though Frank refers here to actual patients and nonfiction narratives, his principle can be usefully applied to works of fiction in which suffering characters struggle to articulate their stories as means of asserting their identity, but also of healing—to heal that "physical organ of the body."

The editors of *Unfitting Stories: Narrative Approaches to Disease, Disability, and Trauma* acknowledge the proliferation of pathographies over the past few decades:

> Whereas there were relatively few published stories of ill health or suffering twenty-five years ago, in English or other languages, a person visiting any library or bookstore today will discover a wide range of narratives that can be divided into several categories, including accounts of disease, disability, and trauma. (3)

The editors of *Unfitting Stories* broaden their scope of analysis beyond Hawkins' "pathography" concept to include "auto/biographies of disability and trauma" (4) because, as the introduction states and the remainder of the essays make clear, "conceptualizing disease, disability, and trauma as distinct categories was not useful, or even possible, where such stories are concerned" (5), but two elements seem missing from the book: (1) pain is not investigated as a subject in itself; and (2) the genre of fiction is not considered, with the preponderance of analysis devoted to nonfiction.

Twenty-six years after Morris' landmark study, the subject of pain remains ripe for engagement by humanities scholars. Early studies include Madelaine Hron's *Translating Pain: Immigrant Suffering in Literature and Culture*, a text that includes represented body language as a communicant of pain. In addition, Judy Segal's *Health and the Rhetoric of Medicine* offers rhetorical analysis as a useful way to analyze pain (especially her chapter on migraine as disease category). Yet Segal's analysis is rooted in already-present medical rhetoric that constructs "pain" from a position of assumed critique, one based in dyadic interaction between two parties (patient and doctor). Hron and Segal reflect a growing engagement with pain by Canadian humanists.

The small number of studies is unfortunate because pain is an especially pertinent subject of analysis and needs productive intervention by non-clinical personnel. According to the protectionist pact physicians make with their profession so as to not trouble the edifice of medical omnipotence, we cannot tell patients who suffer pain that they are particularly unlucky, for of all the problems facing the human being, pain is one of the most baffling.

Despite the radical improvements made in many other fields, including oncology, cardiology, and surgery, pain medicine is a specialized branch of biomedicine with persistently poor outcomes. These poor outcomes are an intensification of the dehumanizing problems inherent to biomedicine as it meets with the peculiarity of pain experience.

The biomedical definition of pain was first codified by the International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP) in 1979 as "an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage, or described in terms of such damage" (Merskey et al. 249). A single sentence long, this abstract definition does not convey what pain actually *is*—what it *feels like*—and it is a definition that depends on destruction. Narrative is a way to escape the consequence of such a pathology-connoting definition, but because narrative definitions of pain are not generalizable, dependent as they are on the uniqueness of individual experience, medicine continues to prefer the laboratory-researchable biomedical definition of pain.

That pain can have positive elements is a minority view in Western culture, where pain is always already undesirable, a clinical experience relegated to the discipline of medicine for alleviation. In *The Culture of Pain*, Morris asserts that

> the vast cultural shift that gives the story of pain its hidden plot centers on the eradication of meaning by late nineteenth-century science. . . . We are the heirs of the transformation in medical thought whereby we think of pain as no more than an electrical impulse speeding along the nerves. (4)

The reason medicine is largely unable to provide meaning to sufferers of pain is because *pain is a narrative* and requires contextualization in words that dramatize time and space. The person in pain has hopes, desires, memories, a future, and current human relationships. A clinical perspective that pins pain down into a symptom score fails to recognize the scope and nature of the pain experience.

Because the biomedical definition is expressed in pathological terms, it is understandable that poor outcomes are the lot of patients with chronic pain. But it is not so easy to place the blame entirely on medicine. In *The Body in Pain* (1985), Elaine Scarry suggests that "[b]ecause the existing vocabulary for pain contains only a small handful of adjectives, one passes through direct descriptions very quickly and . . . almost immediately encounters an 'as if' structure: it feels as if . . . ; it is as though . . ." (15; first ellipsis mine). It is this general problem of vocabulary that leads to medical definitions that are problematic because only two kinds of metaphors appear on the other side of the ellipsis, according to Scarry. The first specifies "a weapon that is

pictured as producing the pain . . . and the second specifies bodily damage that is pictured as accompanying the pain" (15). Pain described "as if a knife cutting through the belly" is an example of the first kind, and "hurts as if the skin has been completely torn off from head to toe" is an example of the second. By focusing on metaphors of damage and weaponry, we focus on destructive metaphors with destructive consequences.

The IASP defines pain as an "experience," but the resources available for sufferers to convey pain experience are limited by the degree of their pain, the lack of vocabulary to describe pain, and their talents as narrators. How can pain experience be rendered? The process that conveys experience is *narrative*, defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "an account of a series of events, facts, etc., given in order and with the establishing of connections between them" (def. n. 2a). Narratives (including literary pain narratives) convey the multiplicity of experience by including the body's emotions, sensations, and memories. This complexity rescues the body in pain from silence and situates it in a context of comprehension. Although narrative skills can help the doctor better treat her patient, narrative competence, where the physician can interpret the story well, is difficult to obtain. Scarry presents the challenge of narrativizing pain as formidable. Pain's "resistance to language" is because of its "utter rigidity . . . essential to what it is" (5). Scarry explains this resistance as follows: "Physical pain—unlike any other state of consciousness—has no referential content. It is not of or for anything. It is precisely because it takes no object that it, more than any other phenomenon, resists objectification in language" (5). Narrative is a good fit for conveying the pain experience because pain is based in inter-human subjectivity. In "Useless Suffering," Emmanuel Levinas explains that the relationships we have with other people are often connections based on sympathy. Levinas contends that a use of pain is forming bonds with others. To know others, we can try to understand if they are in pain—we can listen to their embodied narratives (94). With a focus on the testimony of biology—biomedicine's forte—supplemented by what Mary Ann Elston describes as "a broader embodied, non-reductionist perspective grounded in our being-in-the-world: one which a medicine of the lived body, vis-à-vis a reductionist biomedicine, must actively take up and dwell within" (75), we have the beginnings of a hybrid methodology in which Levinasian ethics and literary studies can be brought to bear on fictional and nonfictional illness narratives.

The pathography genre has been studied (albeit not fully in the Canadian context, despite the ongoing work of disability studies scholars) relatively

more than illness novels that deal with pain. The editors of *Unfitting Stories* contend that the "account's form to the story told" is "important," that "the two are inseparable" because "the shape, style, and central metaphors of the narrative govern its interpretation" (28). A key difference between fiction and the nonfiction pathography comes at the level of interpretation: the novel doesn't necessarily have the "storyteller . . . constructed as a persona, and the implied reader . . . encoded as an ultimately sympathetic audience" (28). Though the novelist wishes for an audience much like the pathographist, the motivation is not the same as that formulated by Hawkins: "People write about their experience of illness because they expect to find readers. It does not matter that they do not know who the reader is and will not (in most cases) find out what his or her response was to their book—they write so that others will read what they wrote" (*Unfitting Stories* 125). If, as Helen Buss suggests, the memoir creates a "provisional and contingent subjectivity unable to buy into traditional constructions of the self" (34), the fictional case might also be as invested in creating a provisional and contingent subjectivity, albeit less referential to verifiable truth. With fiction, readers do not require a real-world referent. We can invest our imaginations in the pain experience, which is a particularly creative act that might be the missing ingredient in medicine's biomedically tethered recipes and their ostensibly verifiable truth and existence somewhere in the "real world." If memoir is a direct portal to pain representation because the condition is already part of the narrative—indeed the condition is often the impetus for the narrative—then fiction deals with pain not as "the story" but rather uses pain to tell "the story." In a pioneering paper in *Studies in Canadian Literature,* Laura Moss addresses the relative lack of engagement with fiction in discussions of narrative medicine and points out that fiction could play an important role in teaching narrative competence:

> [M]uch fiction is conditional, based on the question "what if?" . . . A fictional story provides a space to creatively probe uncertainty, to draw out the repercussions of mistakes, to work through the consequences of actions, and to imagine different ends. . . . Because stories allow for polyvocality and a plurality of outcomes, they are potent sites to engage debates about tough dilemmas in medicine. (8)

Pain is among the toughest problems medicine has to deal with. *What if* the writing (and study) of fictional narratives that consider pain could result in a reduction in the number of bodies in pain?

I use a narrative-based approach to move beyond destructive representations of pain in order to demonstrate constructive representations of pain. Yet, I

face a paucity of novels that deal explicitly with physical and mental experiences of pain in the Canadian context. Other than novels that represent torture (including Karen Connelly's *The Lizard Cage* and Ian Colford's *The Crimes of Hector Tomas*), the number of those representing chronic pain—in which characters have pain, are in relationships with others who also have pain, etc.—is small. However, one novel that stands out significantly in its representations of pain is the second edition of Catherine Bush's *Claire's Head* (2006). I argue that Bush goes beyond destructive representations by using other systems of metaphor to express pain. *Claire's Head* moves beyond the metaphors of weapon and damage described by Scarry in *The Body in Pain* as the novel invokes pain on every page and demonstrates how a novelist can write about pain without resorting to familiar "as if" formulations.

Using a narrative that focalizes on a female migraine-suffering protagonist, *Claire's Head* is the tale of Claire Barber and the search for her missing sister, Rachel. Rachel disappears in the midst of a desperate quest for relief from intense migraines. Claire, too, suffers migraines, but of less severity than those suffered by her older sister Rachel. The novel focuses on Claire while she tries to discover the whereabouts of Rachel, moving from Canada to the US, Sweden, and Italy. Claire's travels are conducted in the context of her own quite substantial pain—pain which, significantly, is not much helped by medical providers. Bush's deployment of biomedical terminology, treatment regimes, and cases could constitute a risk to aesthetics, yet the author's narrativization of the biomedical discourse is ingenious: representations of migraines engage with medical discourse around pain, including pharmacologies and imaging modalities, in order to address power relations between patients and the medical profession. By representing pain in a literary narrative that captures an imaginary human life, Bush resists the biomedical discourse's presentation of pain as a purely negative experience.

After identifying migraine as a "neurological condition" during a promotional interview, Bush admitted that one motivation behind writing the novel was to explore "the ways we use neurological models to help explain ourselves" ("Q&A" n. pag.). Bush presents the discourse around migraine in this interview as a biomedical discourse. In another venue, Bush describes *Claire's Head* as a "neurological mystery," thereby fusing medical discourse with literary genre (qtd. in Richards n. pag). Bush's adoption of biomedical discourse is signalled textually and paratextually. She engages with a broad range of writings on the subject of pain: she thanks David Morris, the cultural studies authority on representations of pain, in the

acknowledgements section; epigraphs for the novel come from famous migraine sufferer Charles Dodgson and chronic pain sufferer Alphonse Daudet; she alludes to neurologist Oliver Sacks in the text; and she utilizes anecdotes and theories from medical antiquity.

The challenge Bush faced when writing within the biomedical frame of reference is reflected in the fact that the book has two distinct versions. The hardcover version of *Claire's Head* was published in 2004, but Bush made significant revisions to the softcover, released in 2006. According to Ann Jurecic, a scholar of illness narratives, an imaginative work that tackles non-totalizing pain invites revision:

> Writers who have produced memoirs about such manifestations of pain suggest that the primary problem they face is not how to find language for pain, but rather how to make readers receptive to stories of pain. Their question is not how to find words for pain, but rather, who will listen and what will they hear? (44)

In a piece explaining her motivations for revising the novel, Bush notes that "every writer confronts the difficulty of shoehorning nonverbal experience into those neat little bootlets that we call words" ("Ever Revise" n. pag.). Faced with the difficulty of writing pain, of literally "shoehorning nonverbal experience" into words, Bush felt the first version of the book "could have gone further," that greater "emotional clarity within the characters" could be achieved. With revision, one can improve the fidelity of the rendering. The changes in the second version start on the first page, though the bulk occur in the second half of the book and, crucially, the book has a different ending: as Bush puts it, "same people in same place, different thing happens" ("Ever Revise" n. pag). In a literal sense, the narrative of *Claire's Head* differs over time just as the meaning of pain changes over time. This revision process enacts what non-totalizing pain does to human beings: the story changes as we change. I use the second edition of *Claire's Head* as a substrate for analysis because this version is more explicit about pain behaviours.

Bush exposes biomedical discourse from within by depicting bodies in pain that encounter doctors without real benefit and that ingest pharmaceuticals that provide little relief. Her characters abandon conventional medicine in favour of alternative cures, and the plot of the novel focuses on bodies in pain seeking one another rather than seeking relief from physicians in white coats. The point of encountering physicians in *Claire's Head* is not to obtain relief but rather to narrate the clinical discourse, such as the migraine pain theory (84), and to find clues about the whereabouts of Rachel. Analgesia is not the objective since the pain represented in the novel is intractable.

Clinics are presented as irrelevant rather than negative. Doctors are asked to provide a different kind of history, an account of their encounters with Rachel as a person.

Representing pain from within medical discourse resists Scarry's contention concerning the restricted language of pain that is relegated to destructive metaphors and that is inherently language-destroying. An obvious way Bush names pain is to provide a medical "name" or classification: *migraine*. In the first few pages of the book, we learn that Rachel is missing, that she was recently speaking to a medical specialist in migraines, and that the last time Claire had heard from her, she was in the grip of a migraine. The word "migraine" constitutes a disease category, but in our culture "migraine" is a familiar pain code, medical shorthand into which many symptoms and effects are packaged. But Bush resists the dehumanizing medical gaze as formulated by Michel Foucault in *The Birth of the Clinic* (1974) by creating rounded, sympathetic characters that suffer migraines. The linkages characters in pain make with one another constitute inter-human connectivity that imbues pain with meaning, but using medical names for chronic pain conditions is a valid, albeit limited, way to represent pain.

Bush also uses medical discourse to represent pain via pain behaviours. First formulated in W. E. Fordyce's influential textbook *Behavioural Methods for Chronic Pain and Illness* (1975), pain behaviours include moaning and groaning (paraverbal), grimaces and postural positions (nonverbal), and even avoidance of activity. Nonverbal signs of pain are taken up by Hron, who contends that "pain, and even socioeconomic hardships or racial discrimination, are structured as 'languages,' and as such, may be translated into the symbolic language of words" (xvi). Hron believes that one of the "pain languages" is the outward manifestation of "body signs" that constitute "nonverbal neurological, physical, and/or psychological symptoms" (40). Hron encourages literary scholars to move beyond Scarry's influential theorization of the difficulty of representing pain: "The scarcity of a direct language of pain does not mean that there is no viable mode of expression for their pain; rather, like translators, writers must engage in a variety of representational tactics to render their suffering understandable to readers" (41). Bush's solution is to use medical discourse in an aesthetically productive way but also to represent the suffering of characters as visible through behaviour. Claire's pain mannerisms recur throughout the book, providing a visible dimension to otherwise unseen pain. To quote one example from a great number within the text, "Claire pressed her fingers to the point above her right eyebrow that

ached, touched the three points across the top of her head" (265). This simple example contrasts with more complex ones in the novel, like the control rituals recounted through analepsis, in which an eight-year-old Claire

> peeled off her socks. The radiator beneath the window was sheathed in an aura of heat. She pressed her right foot against it. Her skin and muscle flinched. She persisted. She counted to ten, pulled her foot back, and examined the pink flush growing on her sole. The stinging swelled and receded. No other sensation existed as she did this. Then she tried the same with her left foot. (25)

The close details here—"skin and muscle" flinching, the chronology of counting to ten, the description of resultant damage with the "pink flush growing on her sole"—all lead to Scarry's "unmaking of the world," the obliteration of consciousness from perceiving anything other than the body. As Claire says, "no other sensation existed" during the ritual. Claire's burning behaviours (reported to be repetitive and ritualistic) are presented by the narrator as ordering, explaining that "the pain was hers, no one's but hers. She controlled when it started and when it ended, and this produced a satisfaction so deep it became exhilaration" (25). Her world is unmade, but migrainous pain is unmade also. The list of pain behaviours—both self-inflicted and not—is lengthy, including avoidant ones like environmental proscriptions and dietary restrictions.

Another obvious representation of pain behaviour in *Claire's Head* involves interactions with pharmacology. In order to get through the day, Claire uses medication: she is depicted taking pills orally; on one occasion she refers to her "vile pharmacopoeia" (207); and in one scene she receives parenteral medication (141). The use and seeking of drugs imply the presence of pain and are a representational strategy that not only signals pain but also represents an active search for relief—and thereby agency. Other pain-relief strategies also signal pain and agency in the novel, such as nonpharmacological treatments like acupuncture or massage therapy. The latter leads to Rachel's romantic relationship with a masseur named Brad Arnason. Thus, Bush complicates the ways she represents pain by tasking those methods with more than just a single function. By including positive romantic relationships as a "side effect" of a character's paramedical treatment regime, Bush suggests that desire might be a way to resist the negativity of the medical discourse.

Pharmacologies also form an image pattern within the narrative. The "medicalized" image pattern comprises pharmacological, neurochemical, and neuroanatomical terms. *Claire's Head* lists a migraine pharmacopeia of

the novel's era (drug names include propranolol, Imitrex, amitriptyline, 222's, Zomig, and Anaprox). Central neural structures are named, including the "trigeminal nerve" and "brain stem" (47). Neurotransmitters are mentioned in the midst of a doctor's oration on migraines (84). Theories behind the etiology of migraines are considered. Other medical elements include hospitals, doctors, fMRI and PET scans, the McGill Pain Questionnaire, and famous figures from medical history like Wilder Penfield (81). The frequent use of such references and allusions signals that there is underlying pain that requires recognition, if not treatment; that the bevy of meds and the famous medical pioneers form prestigious entries on a list, but no material relief.

Bush also represents pain in *Claire's Head* by directly adopting biomedical discourse at certain moments in the narrative. These moments concentrate around the character Rachel, who is often depicted as speaking as if she herself were a physician. For example, at one point Rachel tells her mother, "It's not clear what we've inherited, whether the migraines are genetic or if it's some neurological predisposition, something in your physical makeup that's been passed on, and the headaches themselves are a kind of learned behaviour, a body language" (193). If medicine cannot provide relief, then adoption of the language of medicine to describe and theorize one's own suffering is a way to obtain control and, perhaps, relief. Patient proficiency with medical discourse remediates power imbalance, a positive factor in light of medicine's relatively modest ability to ameliorate chronic pain.

Another positive factor in *Claire's Head* is a progressive notion of disability. Rachel, Claire, and Sylvia Barber are three related female characters who find themselves at the high, middle, and low ranges of a spectrum of disability. The *Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies* presents the medical definition of "disability" as "any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being" (15). Disability, the consequence of frequent, unpredictable, severe pain, is central to the medical profession's negative conception of illness. Characters who lead lives *with* and not *despite* pain make for a representational strategy of pain that moves beyond the sign of the weapon. Restriction, lack, and impairment all possess negative connotations, but *Claire's Head* resists a totalizing negative claim—Bush represents dis/ability and medical disability in productive contrast with one another.

Rachel meets the medical model's exclusive definition of disability. As a freelance writer, she has a flexible occupation that allows her to complete assignments on her own schedule. Her harrowing, daily pain is described

in detail through Claire's perspective—a pain state that worsens as the narrative progresses. Depression, a known complication of chronic pain and disability, is part of Rachel's story (15, 39), as is a former addiction to the barbiturate Fiorinal (110). Yet migraines have more than a *present* occupational impact on Rachel. Her occupational future is diminished by the onset of migraines, as it prevents her from undertaking medical studies:

> Long ago, Rachel had talked about becoming a doctor, even a neurologist—towards the end of high school and during her first two years at university. She had taken a range of science courses and done well but backed away from the idea of medical school in the end because, she said, her migraines were too disruptive. She did not think she had the stamina for it. (71)

Rachel's interest in medicine contrasts with her father, Hugh Barber's. At one point, Hugh was a medical student, but quit before graduating. Hugh's departure from medical school is ambiguously portrayed in the novel—the reasons could either be disillusionment resulting from the traumatic death of a patient or the stress of Sylvia's first pregnancy (100, 232)—but the tension this biographical fact provides is undeniable. If Hugh left school ostensibly because of Sylvia's pregnancy, then Rachel's arrival can be twisted as the "reason" for Hugh's not becoming a doctor. Yet at one point in the narrative, Rachel wants to become a doctor in part to help the family with its migraine problem, making a comment in this regard that is antagonistic to her father. Rachel asks Hugh, "Why didn't you stick it out at medical school? We could certainly have used a doctor in this family" (72). Unlike her father, who had the ability but not the desire, Rachel's frequent, recurring, severe pain episodes were too disruptive to allow her to undertake medical studies, even though she had both the interest and the aptitude. Instead, Rachel works as a popular medical writer, often writing about pain, just as the author of *Claire's Head* has done. The novel resists the institution of medicine by having its characters abandon pursuing the profession as a career; furthermore, the negative implications of the facts of disability are resisted by the positive, affirming lives of the novel's suffering characters who love one another. Rather than dysfunction, people in pain lead meaningful lives when supported by others. They go where they need to go and live largely how they wish to live, with pain.

Pain takes on an emplotment role in the novel. Bush has written paratextually that "part of the specific challenge of the novel was making the experience of headaches central to the narrative, not occasional but woven deep into the fabric of the characters' lives" ("Ever Revise" n. pag). During

an interview, she stated: "I wanted to write a novel in which migraines were not only an aspect of character but also were integral to the plot and to the actions of the characters at many levels" ("Q&A" n. pag.). To meet this challenge, *Claire's Head* tasks pain with *agency*, making it positive and productive. Pain makes things happen.

The first example of the plot-moving aspect of pain occurs at the start of the novel. Brad Arnason meets Rachel through his work and the novel is set in motion with a phone call from Brad to Claire about Rachel's disappearance. Without pain causing Rachel to seek physical relief by massage therapy, Brad would have no need to call Claire. Another important example occurs later in the novel when Claire enters Rachel's apartment to obtain clues as to her sister's whereabouts. Upon entering, Claire interrogates Rachel's environment from a pain perspective: "Her pillows lay one atop another the way she piled them when she had a headache so that she could lie with her head raised" (31). After investigating the medicine cabinet and counting its drugs, Claire decides that there might be "some premeditation—a determination, even before setting out for Montreal, not to return . . . While careless about some things, Rachel would never let herself get caught without medication" (34). The reader learns crucial information from Claire's investigation of the environment from the perspective of pain: yet another way pain is represented beyond the sign of the weapon. Rather than read how the body is hurt, we learn of the travels of the body as it survives pain.

These travels are painstakingly described. Scarry argues that pain is unshareable, but Bush's novel contests the popular understanding of Scarry's thesis through credible, convincing narrations of being in pain. The first overt description of pain comes early in the novel and does much to support Scarry's idea: "As Claire hung up the phone, the right side of her temple began to pulse. A point in the centre of her scalp. A second one at the base of the bone above and behind her right eye. Another point at the base of her skull, beneath the occipital bone, on the right" (19). Though this description of pain has precision, it is *limited.* Localization is all it attempts. Bush soon pushes past that limitation by lingering with pain, paying close attention to not only location but also character and severity. In this way, she is attuned to medical discourse as expressed by the McGill Pain Questionnaire, a powerful and widely used tool invented by Ronald Melzack and Warren Torgerson in 1975 that assists patients in describing their pain. Bush embeds her precise descriptions within narrative, thereby enhancing the descriptions of pain by providing context, ultimately crafting *pain-state narrations.* These

narrations permit a reader to move past location, character, and severity into emotional and situational contexts of the pain, thereby aestheticizing the medical discourse. Consider the following:

> Everything outside her was reduced to surface. Suitcase. Floor. Thatched roof. She didn't experience auras but there were other forms of sensory distortion. Bright objects were spiked, sunlight an anathema. Odours heaved towards her: smoke, the miasma of car exhaust. She could identify things but was incapable of providing any context for them or making their relationships clear. Heat. Sky. Stefan's back. The burning point behind her right eye. Walk to the van. Part of her remained mute. (140)

Such narrations slow time down to an excruciating, ever-present moment replete with perceptual disturbance, sensory overload, and an overmastered body. We move beyond adjectives and adverbs, beyond metaphors of weapons and damage, and into a rendered world of space, time, and motion.

Bush also writes pain on the level of the inter-human. In his essay "Useless Suffering," Emmanuel Levinas calls suffering a "passivity," "precisely an evil," and a "pure undergoing" (92). Initially proposing that suffering is "intrinsically useless" and "for nothing" (93), he then links suffering with pain. Like Scarry, Levinas prefers to focus on intolerable situations by mentioning "intolerable lumbagos" and "the tortures experienced by certain patients stricken with malignant tumours" (93). As in medical discourse, Levinas uses terminology that is negative in connotation. Pain is presented as a closed loop, a hell of pain-without-exit. Yet, Levinas does not end with the closed loop. He suggests that the actual purpose of pain is to present the "possibility of a half opening, and more precisely, the possibility that wherever a moan, a cry, a groan or a sign happen there is the original call for aid, for curative help, for help from the other ego whose alterity, whose exteriority promises salvation" (93). "The other" becomes audience, promise of relief, and chief benefactor of the call because "the other" is sought for the benefit of "the other." Levinas writes that "pure suffering, which is intrinsically senseless and condemned to itself with no way out" (93), can be remediated when "a beyond appears in the form of the inter-human" (94). When observed in another, suffering finds its real subject and empathy becomes an imperative. Pain itself becomes the "bond of human subjectivity" (94) theorized by Levinas.

Inter-human connection between characters in narrative is another way pain can be represented beyond the sign of the weapon. Characters in pain and characters who recognize the pain in others create the matrix of inter-human connection that need not be represented in destructive

metaphors, but rather in an unfolding narrative. As Rita Charon writes in Narrative Medicine: "fundamental aspects of living as recognizing self and other, connecting with traditions, finding meaning in events, celebrating relationships, and maintaining contact with others are accomplished with the benefit of narrative" (vii). Using this framework, the experience of pain need not be almost wordless, as per Scarry, but rather ready for unlimited dramatization and development.

Excepting the postmodern, most stories have an end. As Charon writes in her textbook for physicians, "[t]he plots we encounter and create in medical practice are very practically and irrevocably about their endings. They point to human ends, using their geometries to understand or to imagine the vectors of life, the plottedness of life . . . and the narrative connections among us all" (51). Bush states that pain is integrated into her plot, and plots must end or "exit" ("Ever Revise" n. pag.). Pain has an exit in the novel—it works between people outside of a framework of pure suffering and makes a bold statement at the end of the book. In both the hardcover and softcover editions, the prose changes slightly when Claire ultimately finds Rachel. But a substantial change occurs in the second edition, in which Claire observes Rachel from a distance after finally finding her: "Rachel did not seem to be in pain. She did not look anguished (no finger rubbing the skin beneath her right eye)" (317). This additional piece of data demonstrates that Claire is assessing her sister for pain behaviours, which has important implications for the "vectorless end" of the novel's second version.

At the end of the first edition, Rachel notices Claire watching her. Rachel touches Claire wordlessly, and then drives away from the retreat. This is a less satisfying ending because the lack of communication between the two sisters in this circumstance is implausible—the open ending is a thwarted one. The second edition, however, features an ending in which Claire, rather than being noticed by Rachel, simply observes her sister. Claire then makes a choice—she decides to leave Rachel in a place where Rachel seems to have found "a certain calm" (317). This ending is sanctioned by Claire's earlier identification of Rachel's pain-free state and her resultant satisfaction that Rachel is behaving pain-free. Claire, having spent the entire novel looking for her sister, can now leave her sister with a partial answer to the question, "[w]hat is the place of pain?" (169). The place of pain is not as much with Rachel anymore. The place of pain is where pain takes Claire as a result of her decision not to make contact with Rachel, the place of "a deeper sensation, as of something letting go" (318). Claire lets go, and in so doing, a different book is made.

In this circumstance, "letting go" is a wholly positive act, yet medicine's negative concept for "letting go" is palliation. The human end to this narrative is one of pain that is opened up to an unknowable future. The open (and positive) end presented by *Claire's Head* resists the negativity of medical discourse via an unresolved conclusion in the new space of the spiritual healing centre in Mexico.

Doctors inclined to read novels like Bush's will not revolutionize their understanding of the physiology of pain, but by learning that pain is a narrative, they might be better able to address the pain of patients and possibly alter physiology. For their part, patients would see themselves represented in narrative as people who live with, and in some respects transcend, negative stereotypes about disease/disability. Novelists would discover the richness of pain as theme and subject and write more narratives involving pain. Scholars might take on the many guises of pain in Canadian fiction and generate comprehensive inquiries that consider pain in terms of gender, sexuality, race, class, and faith over the course of the entire history of Canadian literature. Privileged definitions like the IASP's may change to include cultural dimensions, and, as Simon Williams has written in *Key Concepts in Medical Sociology*, "other more positive renderings of pain" could become "possible" (74). Research could then proceed with biomedical researchers and humanities scholars working collaboratively. Reshaped in this way, pain transcends negative sensation, symptom, and disability, and instead becomes a story about inter-human connection.

WORKS CITED

Bush, Catherine. *Claire's Head*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2004. Print.
—. *Claire's Head.* 2nd ed. Toronto: Emblem, 2006. Print.
—. "Ever Revise." Articles. *Catherine Bush*. n.d. Web. 27 May 2014.
—. "Q&A with Catherine Bush." Claire's Head. *Catherine Bush*. n.d. Web. 27 May 2014.
Buss, Helen M. "Authorizing the Memoir Form: Lauren Slater's Three Memoirs of Mental Illness." *Unfitting Stories: Narrative Approaches to Disease, Disability, and Trauma*. Ed. Valerie Raoul, Connie Canam, Angela D. Henderson, and Carla Paterson. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2007. 33-44. Print.
Charon, Rita. *Narrative Medicine: Honoring the Stories of Illness.* New York: Oxford UP, 2006. Print.
Charon, Rita, Nellie Hermann, and Michael J. Devlin. "Close Reading and Creative Writing in Clinical Education: Teaching Attention, Representation, and Affiliation." *Academic Medicine* 91.3 (2016): 345-50. Web. 8 Dec. 2016.
Fischer, Benedikt, and Elena Argento. "Prescription Opioid Related Misuse, Harms, Diversion and Interventions in Canada: A Review." *Pain Physician* 15.3S (2012): 191-203. Web. 8 Dec. 2016.

Fordyce, W. E. *Behavioural Methods for Chronic Pain and Illness.* St. Louis: Mosby, 1976. Print.
Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*. Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon, 1973. Print.
Frank, Arthur W. *The Wounded Storyteller*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995. Print.
Graveland, Bill. "Outside rehab clinic, 'dementors' try to lure patients back to painkiller as fentanyl crisis grips Alberta reserve." *National Post*. 28 Dec. 2015. Web. 6 Jan. 2016.
Harstall, Christa, and Maria Ospina. "How prevalent is chronic pain?" *Pain: Clinical Updates* 11.2 (2003): 1-4. Web. 8 Dec. 2016.
Hawkins, Anne Hunsaker. *Reconstructing Illness: Studies in Pathography*. West Lafayette: Purdue UP, 1999. Print.
—. "Writing About Illness: Therapy? Or Testimony?" *Unfitting Stories: Narrative Approaches to Disease, Disability, and Trauma*. Ed. Valerie Raoul, Connie Canam, Angela D. Henderson, and Carla Paterson. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2007. 113-28. Print.
Hron, Madelaine. *Translating Pain: Immigrant Suffering in Literature and Culture.* Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2009. *Scholars Portal.* Web. 3 May 2014.
Jurecic, Ann. *Illness as Narrative*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2012. Print.
Kamper, Steven, et. al. "Multidisciplinary biopsychosocial rehabilitation for chronic low back pain: Cochrane systematic review and meta-analysis." *BMJ*. 350.444 (2015): 1-209. Web. 11 Jan. 2016.
Levinas, Emmanuel. "Useless Suffering." *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*. Trans. Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav. New York: Columbia UP, 1998. 91-101. Print.
Melzack, Ron, and W. S. Torgerson. "On the Language of Pain." *Anaesthesiology* 34 (1971): 50-59. Web. 8 Dec. 2016.
Merskey, Harold, et al. "Pain Terms: A List With Definitions and Notes on Usage." *Pain* 6.3 (1979): 247-52. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 22 Apr. 2014.
Morris, David. *The Culture of Pain*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1991. Print.
Moss, Laura. "A Science of Uncertainty: Bioethics, Narrative Competence, and Turning to the 'What if' of Fiction." *Studies in Canadian Literature* 40.2 (2015): 5-24. Print.
"Narcotic Drugs 2012." *International Narcotics Control Board*. Web. 16 Jan. 2016.
"Narrative." Def. n. 2a *OED Online*. Oxford UP. Web. 7 Apr. 2014.
Phillips, Ceri J., and Donald Schopflocher. "The Economics of Chronic Pain." *Chronic Pain: A Health Policy Perspective.* Ed. Saifudin Rashiq et al. *Wiley Online Library*. 2008. Web. 6 Jan. 2016.
Raoul, Valerie, Connie Canam, Angela D. Henderson, and Carla Paterson, eds. *Unfitting Stories: Narrative Approaches to Disease, Disability, and Trauma*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2007. Print.
Richards, Linda L. "Catherine Bush." *January Magazine*. Web. 20 June 2014.
Rose, Nikolas. *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006. Print.
Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain*: *The Making and Unmaking of the World.* New York: Oxford UP, 1985. Print.
Segal, Judy Z. *Health and the Rhetoric of Medicine*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2008. Print.
—. "Interdisciplinarity and Postdisciplinarity in Health Research in Canada." *Unfitting Stories: Narrative Approaches to Disease, Disability, and Trauma*. Ed. Valerie Raoul, Connie Canam, Angela D. Henderson, and Carla Paterson. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2007. 11-24. Print.

The Way Forward: Stewardship for Prescription Narcotics in Ontario. Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Oct. 2012. Web. 6 Jan. 2016.
Watson, Nick, Alan Roulstone, and Carol Thomas, eds. *Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies.* New York: Routledge, 2012. Print.
Williams, Simon. "Embodiment." *Key Concepts in Medical Sociology.* Ed. Jonathan Gabe, Michael Bury, and Mary Ann Elston. London: SAGE, 2004. 73-76. Print.

Alexandra Dexel

dismount

can a mountain just be a mountain?
[a mountain is everything]

she moves to the river

rock hands full of trees
[good old cedars or _____
good for all sorts of ~~things~~ critters]

the water moves her

bark chips brand new garden mulch linear shining
[we eat blackberries along the way for the cost
of only a few purple fingertips]

her hands melt into pools and pebbles

knock down new wood framed building should curb touch is best
[they say this rectangular dirtpiece is a waste
of a valuable land parcel]

her fingernails fall off but this is okay

land to status maximization granite countertop potential bliss material domestic
[i say hello to every person i pass on the trail
because this is what i know]

whoops she steps into the ~~currency~~ current mudslide

location selling point for fog dripping sunday hike routine bonding you
[we conquer nobly knobby crevice with teeth showing]

she scrubs her shoe in the river but it won't come clean

fenced sunfill heart habitats for you family have it all under two million
[we step out fresh trails around mountain sprawls
and feel safe here]

she runs home dreaming barefoot and gravel

forget first national national bank home trust in numbers cannot quantify fresh air
[a sanctuary for the lonely
but rape repeats in the forest]

she wraps her muck apartment feet in honey and ivory

imprints of black carbon sole footprints marched for post-corporate pints
[we point at the eagles they know better]

she peers into the mirror and sees nothing in everything

official wisdom signs hoot moonshine reflective
[the dirt loves your ideas]

she wonders what reflection of herself she would see

what added taken and what away say you may notice some changes happening here
[the adorners of land thought she looked naked
without a tower atop her head]

if she could just look in the pools of water back on the mountain

heli tree shaved her head and secret baby eagle nests—don't tell anyone
[we call the tower a viewpoint or lookout and head up there together
while it relays some signals]

she crawls back to the mountain and it is far

the river smelted up with conveniences
[i wouldn't swim in that water or touch it he said
you don't know what's in there]

she pulls herself up the scar trail dragging her jowls

suddenly barren land stripes seen from satellite space reputation nightmare
[our eyes trace the divide we know to be a wound and understand
there is pain here that must be healed]

she finds the water and nestles into ripples

Sharlee Cranston-Reimer

"It is life you must write about"

Fixity and Refraction in Dionne Brand's *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging*

> The door, of course, is not on the continent but in the mind; not a physical place—though it is—but a space in the imagination.
> —Dionne Brand, *A Map to the Door of No Return*

A discussion of the limits of articulability is at the core of *A Map to the Door of No Return*: the epigraph draws attention to the tension between saying the door is a physical place and asserting at the same time that its metaphysicality cannot discount its physicality. It is always both and neither one exclusively, but, *Map* shows, to understand the Door of No Return only in such terms limits the expansiveness and dynamism needed to recognize the depth of its nuance and imagine its complexity. The book engages with a range of issues that are centred around the legacy and logic of colonialism and the slave trade, the continuing impact of those violences, and the dangers of strict adherence to discrete identity categories, as opposed to the importance of coalition-building across difference. The multi-genre text ranges from short narratives to map imagery to discussions of historical events to theorizations of identity and of violence. As *Map*'s title suggests, each part of the text works to map the Door of No Return—the door through which African peoples were forced onto the ships that took them to the (so-called) "New World." Because the Door of No Return must be understood as more than a physical space—it is explicitly discussed as a spiritual and psychical place as well (1)—the map Brand makes must attend to a multiplicity of registers. This is a particularly difficult task, however, because the conventions of mapping are mired in colonial logics. These logics, as Katherine McKittrick describes them, are built on colonists' desire to "inhabit, map, and control what they considered an uninhabited (read: native-occupied) space" (95).

McKittrick explains the stakes of such a persistent desire: "These historical practices, of vanishing, classifying, objectifying, relocating, and exterminating subaltern communities, and desiring, rationally mapping, and exploiting the land and resources, are ongoing, firmly interlocked with a contemporary colonial agenda, which has material consequences" (95). Given this context, how does one map a physical-spiritual-psychical space like the Door of No Return in a way that is attentive to the dangers of reinscribing these violences?[1] *Map* seems to be an attempt to answer this question. Instead of becoming mired in the colonial logics that undergird mapping as it is dominantly performed—what Brand calls "cognitive schemas" (16)—*Map* refuses them both through its content and its structure in order to build an approach that does not serve colonial interests.

While the critics who have considered Brand's *Map* have discussed the complexity of its structure, their insights have focused on other elements of the text, and their remarks on its structure have therefore been brief.[2] Most critics discuss its non-linearity, as Marlene Goldman does, for example, when she points out that the book's structure "undermines any sense of a linear journey with a tangible origin and destination" (23). As others mention, this book is not strictly a narrative, and its paratextual elements are also unconventional: it does not have chapters or a table of contents, for example, despite the presence of breaks in the text as well as drastic changes in modality. I build on Diana Brydon's statement that *Map* "overflows the category of autobiography to remodel the private/public relations that constitute identities both personal and national and their formation through history" (110). She goes on to argue that "[f]or Brand, th[e] potential [to move beyond racism] lies in wrenching writing from the service of empire into the service of freedom" (117-18). Goldman expresses a similar sentiment when she explains that "[n]arratives, like maps, engage in tasks of spatial ordering, naming, dividing, and enclosing. The trick, for Brand, was to design a text that performs these tasks in ways that challenge rather than reinstall the maps that supported and continue to support oppressive institutions" (23). Finally, much of *Map*'s criticism locates the book's political work almost exclusively in its content and has tended to think about *Map* in terms of mobility.

While this work is convincing, there is much to be learned from carefully considering its form in relation to its content, especially with regard to how the book navigates moments of fixity. My work here aligns well with that of Brydon and Goldman in particular, but my focus will be on teasing out the intricacies and effects of *Map*'s structure. Katherine McKittrick is

helpful on this topic. She argues that Black[3] diaspora theories "hold place and placelessness in tension" in the Canadian context (106). This statement resonates with the epigraph, and both passages invite us to pay attention to textual moments that show this kind of tension. I suggest that we read them as demonstrating the epistemological and embodied effects of the history as well as the ongoing legacies of slavery and as challenging the limitations of dominant Western epistemologies.

The structure of *Map* immediately alludes to these tensions. Rather than adhering to a genre, *Map*'s structure is unconventional. If we consider the ways in which genres operate like other normalizing schema, we can see how genre structures what we can know.[4] I am interested in the ways that *Map* exceeds the norms of auto/biography because of the impossibility of adequately representing, or, perhaps more accurately, containing, the trauma and legacies of colonial history in a narrative. Bringing together the role and ideological work of mapping and the function of genre as it relates to mobility and fixity, this paper explores how *Map* troubles genre expectations. I examine how and why Brand draws the reader's attention to the refracting trauma of the history of slavery and shows it to be irreducible while exceeding epistemological categories. By refusing generic literary conventions, and by showing the limits of language and embodied effects of this legacy, *Map* ultimately unsettles the logics upon which these conventions are contingent.

One of the ways that the text radically disrupts conventional narratives is by showing that the space and people's relationship to it is not at all self-evident. In *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*, McKittrick expands understandings of geography from the assumption that space "just is" and that "the external world is readily knowable and not in need of evaluation" (xv) to include an understanding of how "material spaces and places underpin shifting and uneven (racial, sexual, economic) social relations" (xiii). McKittrick goes on to show the connection between particular identity categories and the spaces they occupy: "If *who* we see is tied up with *where* we see through truthful, commonsensical narratives, the placement of subaltern bodies deceptively hardens spatial binaries" (xv, emphasis original). McKittrick rethinks the logics that underpin these naturalizing assumptions, arguing that the "simultaneous naturalization of bodies and places must be disclosed, and therefore called into question, if we want to think about alternative spatial practices and more humanly workable geographies" (xv). Brand begins by

complicating the idea of the Door of No Return, showing that it is more than a physical space, that it is not a space that is only historically significant, and that it operates on multiple registers. In making the complexity of experience visible and mapping how dominant Western practices came to be, *Map* fosters the development of a different kind of social relationality that is not based in colonial logics.

In a way that is similar to how McKittrick complicates the idea of space, Brand complicates genre because genre can operate as such a significant organizing structure. *Map*'s structure does not align obviously with any genres, but it is often identified as auto/biography or memoir—indeed, the cover of the 2001 edition labels it as an autobiography. As Joanne Saul warns, "genres are never innocent or naïve but rather are formal constructs implicated in the very processes of ideological production" (13). For the purposes of this paper, I follow Julie Rak's use of the generic term "auto/biography" to refer to the wide variety of texts that exist, such as life writing, memoirs, autogynography, and so on, all of which pose challenges to imagining auto/biography as a singular genre, and many of which resist generic boundaries (16).[5] In order to attend to such complexities, I will focus on *Map*'s auto/biographical features after a discussion of the nuances in some of the key theories in contemporary auto/biography studies.

Reading *Map* in terms of auto/biography studies—especially with regard to the field's feminist roots—is integral to a comprehensive understanding of the text's work. Auto/biography studies is premised on the value of writing that is often not considered "legitimate," and much of which tends to be written by women. This history suggests that one of the genre's key elements is its ability to challenge the colonial epistemologies that McKittrick discusses through a valuing of the "illegitimate" sites of knowledge production like memory and subjective experience; this genre, therefore, has the potential to challenge the kinds of dominant epistemologies that emphasize empirically knowable and decontextualized "facts." In their study of auto/biography, Jeanne Perreault and Marlene Kadar explain that "[a]ttending to each element of identity is impossible" because "analyzing the intersections [is] as complex as reiterating a human life," but despite this irreducible complexity, "the recognition of historical or cultural patterns made visible through gender or race or class practices invites readers and critics to grasp the ground as well as the figure upon it" (4). Saul elaborates further on auto/biography with her discussion of the biotext, which "challenges the focus on the unified subject of autobiography by stressing the community that the self

is rooted in" (20). As she says, "[r]ather than depicting in a unified manner a unified subject's progress from youth to maturity, these texts are broken, disrupted. Wholeness, unity, linearity are rejected in favour of a more fragmentary approach to piecing together the details of a life" (23). Because of this fragmentation, she suggests that biotexts are particularly apt places for discussing diasporic displacement: "[T]hey negotiate how the *there*, or some version of it, operates in the *here*. It is in the retelling of their pasts that their identities take on new meaning" (26, emphasis original). Biotexts, then, seem to further destabilize Enlightenment notions of knowledge and subjectivity, emphasize the subject's community over the subject's autonomous existence, have a more overtly creative element, and write a self into being and in relation to place. The complexity of *Map*'s structure fits well with the idea of the biotext, but even with the biotext's emphasis on fragmentation, there is also much that extends beyond it.

In general, *Map* has been referred to as an auto/biography or memoir without a close look at its relationship to the genre or how it exceeds this genre. *Map* includes the narration of significant moments in the experience of the narrator, such as the opening story of the narrator asking her grandfather about "what people we came from" and the pain that accompanies his inability to answer her (3). The text also addresses life writing explicitly: in the scene from which I take my paper's title when a university student asks the narrator, "[w]hen you start writing because it hurts so much, do you only write about racism?" (82). The narrator responds that "you don't write about racism, you write about life. It is life you must write about. It is life you must insist on" (82), though her response is not a direct quotation. Instead of focusing on writing a topic, the narrator contends, it is important to write a life—in all its complexity—and to let the issues that arise in that life, such as racism, emerge. Doing so allows for multiple factors to arise as they overlap and crosscut each other; as the text demonstrates, there are always multiple issues present in any given moment.

Even though this passage can be read as auto/biography, that we do not get a full view of the narrator's response pushes us outside of a strictly auto/biographical context and turns us to theorization. Instead of responding directly, the narrator explains the general principle that it is important to write a life. By grounding the question in a specific moment the way that using a direct quotation does without giving a direct quotation for the response, Brand removes the discussion from the specifics of that conversation. While not all auto/biography is comprised of direct quotations, to be sure,

this is one of many examples of *Map*'s move to theorization. In paraphrasing her response, the narrator invokes a more generalized discussion of the urgency both of deep, complex engagement with issues such as racism as well as the importance of the humanization and contextualization of the issues that becomes possible when it is "a life" that is written. One might imagine that this conversation goes on at some length with the student—the narrator explains that "[f]or [the student] the distinction is inadequate and unhelpful. He asks again, but I cannot satisfy him" (82)—but addressing the minutia of a specific instance is beside the point. This scene bridges the gap between the individual and the systemic: the text honours the importance of expressing painful individual experiences like racism while insisting on seeing these instances as far more than incidents that happen in specific moments between individuals, which resonates with Saul's discussion of the ways in which a biotext contextualizes a life. In moving from the individual to the systemic, the text employs the opportunities provided by life writing/first-person narration to share moments and then moves to a more omniscient narration style to further draw out the significance of those incidents by contextualizing them in terms of larger systems.

In addition to the political work the text does in the sections that we can read most clearly as auto/biography, other sections of *Map* take a variety of approaches to challenging the Enlightenment epistemologies that undergird systems like the slave trade. Considering these departures through Daniel Coleman's concept of "refraction" is helpful. When discussing what he calls "masculinities in migration," or what we might call diasporic narratives that focus on masculinity, Coleman explains that

> when men emigrate, they take a familiar, though not necessarily unified, set of masculine practices with them; when they immigrate, they encounter a second, less-familiar set of masculine practices. Migration thus involves a process of *cross-cultural refraction*. Just as the transition between elements makes the straight drinking-straw appear to bend in the glass of water, so, too, the transition from one culture to another produces distortions. (3, emphasis original)

Coleman is referring here to the inevitable shift in norms and codes when one moves to a different cultural/geographical place. But Coleman discusses men's experiences exclusively, and Brand's narrator is a Black woman. *Map* gets at this tension when the narrator discusses the regulation of bodies and suggests that the only bodies more regulated than Black bodies are women's bodies, leaving the reader to reflect on what that means for Black women (37).[6] Despite some obvious limitations, Coleman's ideas can help to elucidate

some of the fracturing in the text.[7] A similar notion of semi-recognizability in a dramatically different context is echoed in Salman Rushdie's discussion of the fractured mirror. When thinking about homelands, he argues, one is forced to "deal in broken mirrors, some of whose fragments have been irretrievably lost" (11). As Coleman says, however, "[t]he opposition between cultures of origin and destination is not absolute" (4); thus, while the mirror and the straw—the semi-fractured objects—have split, they are still legible.

We can see refraction in a range of ways in the text's structure. The text is comprised of several dramatically different components that together support the mapping of the Door of No Return in a way that none of the components could do individually. The narrator's metatextual discussion of the book's contents, for example, demonstrates how the text questions the foundations of "legitimate" knowledge under this ideological system:

> So far I've collected these fragments. . . disparate and sometimes only related by sound or intuition, vision or aesthetic. I have not visited the Door of No Return, but by relying on random shards of history and unwritten memoir of descendants of those who passed through it, including me, I am constructing a map of the region, paying attention to faces, to the unknowable, to unintended acts of returning, to impressions of doorways. Any act of recollection is important, even looks of dismay and discomfort. Any wisp of a dream is evidence. (19)

In this section, Brand's unapologetic treatment of intuitive knowledge and memory as reliable sources of knowledge, in addition to her use of broken "shards" of unwritten history as opposed to neatly bound "whole" pieces of history, undermine received notions about what counts as "knowledge." Brand's use of the idea of "unwritten" histories, furthermore, suggests that decontextualized "objective" knowledge is not the only history because there is much that is unwritten. Moreover, the text questions the normalization of sources of knowledge—as both in the West and in the mind—to consider the relationship of the body to history: throughout the text, the narrator's subjectivity is imposed upon by history, and living with that history is both an intellectual and embodied experience, as I discuss further below. The text's refusal of dominant approaches to knowledge and history in these moments is related to its overall critique of Western knowledge systems. The multitude of elements collected in the book speak to the complexity of living in and with the history of the slave trade and demonstrate the limitations of thinking in the terms that most discussions of history and knowledge building naturalize.

These differences in approach to history and knowledge are made clearer through Brand's inclusion of quotations from colonial cartographers and

"explorers." At times, the quotations stand alone, providing context and inviting the reader to draw her own conclusions about the horrors described therein. In one case, Brand includes a portion of a letter by William Bosman, in which he impassively describes a large-scale revolt by slaves, saying "I have twice met with this Misfortune [*sic*]; and the first time proved very unlucky to me, I not in the least suspecting it" (24). He goes on to explain that the uprising was quelled by shooting one of the slaves in the head (24). Bosman positions the slaves as absurd when he explains that some of the slaves believe that the Europeans are kidnapping them in order to eat them, and they want to escape this fate. The narrator does not address this quotation explicitly; it is inserted to act as context for the rest of the text, indicating what kinds of discussions are happening at different points in history, and the reader is, thereby, invited to consider the legacies of these histories in the contemporary cultural moment. The narrator does not comment on the metaphors of consumption of humans that occur in the slave trade—that these "explorers" will definitely consume the slaves, even if they will not eat them. She does not note how shocking it is that Bosman—and, undoubtedly, many others—seem to think that they are the injured parties in the slave trade or that he frames a revolt as an inconvenient misfortune. At other moments, the narrator does reflect on these quotations, often leading to a theoretical discussion. In one instance, the narrator mentions Ludolf, a seventeenth-century German man who, in Charles Bricker's words, became the "founder of Ethiopian studies" (qtd. in Brand 18). Ludolf never went to Africa, but he still drew a map of it based on the reports of missionaries. The logical incongruity of mapping a place one has not been or of which one has no direct experience leads the narrator to reflect on the beliefs that must be in place for that to seem reasonable: "places and those who inhabit them are indeed fictions" (18), and she explains that these fictions have material effects for those who are fictionalized, leading to a kind of dissociation from the self (18-19). These sections of the text give the narrator the opportunity to ruminate on a problem without needing to arrive at a clear solution. Indeed, as the text suggests, there is no clear solution to address the issues it raises—they are far too complicated for simple responses; instead, the text models the process of thinking them through.

Map also moves away from a key element of auto/biography—memory—to emphasize the appeal of its antithesis, forgetting: "Forgetting is a crucial condition of living with any peace" (204). This peace, of course, is contingent upon a lulling closing of feeling and knowing, but the narrator genuinely

sees the appeal of it for people whose lives have been determined by so much violence, such as that of her grandfather.[8] Furthermore, if auto/biography and biotexts are about writing oneself in relation to a place, Brand's narrator resists that too. She takes up questions of place, and especially their "cognitive schemas," nations, but instead of writing herself into the place, the narrator offers a scathing critique of nations: she argues that "[t]oo much has been made of origins. And so if I reject this notion of origins I have also to reject its mirror, which is the sense of origins used by the powerless to contest power in a society" (69).[9] She insists, moreover, that "[w]hat we have to ask ourselves is, as everyone else in the nation should ask themselves also, nation predicated on what?" (68). In this passage, the narrator alludes at least in part to Canada's colonial history and the nation's predication upon wilful physical and cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples who live on this land, as well as to the ongoing colonization of the land and its effects on Indigenous and other marginalized peoples. She is concerned that complicity with this system—even if it is strategic—will only replicate it.

Rather than build community based on shared origins, which we might read as another kind of "place" that she troubles, the narrator emphasizes shared experience. The narrator in *Map* clearly understands herself as part of the Black diaspora, but rather than positioning herself only within even a varied diasporic community, however, she seeks out people who share experiences and feelings of displacement. That is, instead of valuing origins, the narrator recognizes her connection, for example, to the bus driver, her friend, and a Salish woman on a bus in Vancouver, because all of them share the trauma of having "no country" (220): "We all feign ignorance at the rupture in mind and body, in place, in time. We all feel it" (221). The text values communities based on shared experience, as opposed to shared identity categories, a point that Brydon, Goldman, and Maia Joseph all emphasize. As Joseph articulately puts it, "[i]n the act of querying her relation to others with obscured or unknown histories, Brand refuses to think and feel within divisive narratives of origin, and instead charts provisional alignment via the recognition of non-identical experiences of loss" (89). Goldman further argues that "the self-conscious references to story-telling, memory, and narration underscore that the community Brand has in mind is not predicated on an essentialized past" (26-27). Indeed, the narrator does not write herself into being and in a place the way life writing tends to do; she tries to write herself out of it. Or, rather, Brand's narrator writes herself into a place in that she makes a critique of the elements that

determine her existence, but she resists the logic of location by showing that writing oneself into a place and, therefore, into belonging in this way risks being complicit with the colonial nation. Under these historical and contemporary circumstances, *Map* shows some of the limitations conventional genres and understandings of place as they miss the complexity of the current cultural moment.

Map suggests that any meditation on these legacies is necessarily going to exceed narrative and genre. The excess that cannot be contained in narrative and genre is also evident on the level of language; the violence is inarticulable both because the Western cognitive schemas that favour more sterile, distanced histories cannot contain it and because it is so difficult to imagine the logic that would lead to this nearly unfathomable level of brutality and dehumanization.[10] The narrator thinks through this problem with articulation, for example, as she struggles to find words that are adequate to describe what happened to the enslaved:

> Leaving? To leave? Left? Language can be deceptive. The moment when they 'left' the Old World and entered the New. Forced to leave? To 'leave' one would have to have a destination in mind. Of course one could rush out of a door with no destination in mind, but 'to rush' or 'to leave' would suggest some self-possession; rushing would suggest a purpose, a purpose with some urgency, some reason. Their 'taking'? Taking, taking too might suggest a benevolence so, no, it was not taking. (21)

She goes on to ask

> What language would describe that loss of bearings or the sudden awful liability of one's own body? The hitting or the whipping or the driving, which was shocking, the dragging and the bruising it involved, the epidemic sickness with life which would become hereditary? And the antipathy which would shadow all subsequent events. (21)

As Brand demonstrates, language as we know it cannot convey the horrors and legacies of colonialism; there are no words that can express it.[11] The experience of being enslaved is, quite literally, incomprehensible and largely unspeakable, as are its legacies, such that it can only be conveyed in glimpses that can only ever express it partially.

Brand's narrator goes on to further challenge how knowledge is built under colonial logics by discussing the knowledge that is embodied. As McKittrick explains in her discussion of *Map*, "Brand illustrates the ways in which a specific time-space locality is unraveled by a sense of place that dislodges traditional geographic rules from [B]lack spatial experiences" (106);

in *Map*, nothing—not time, space, the body, or memory—is stable. Though she may not have directly lived through some of the history she discusses, the narrator is nevertheless familiar with the legacy of the slave trade and with the ways that history is written on the body. In *Map*, the narrator discusses the memories that determine her existence and the existences of other people in the Black diaspora, such as the ones that code Black bodies: "It is as if [the Black body's] first appearance through the Door of No Return, dressed in its new habit of captive and therefore slave, is embedded in all its subsequent and contemporary appearances" (37). And this sense of locatedness—the way in which stepping through the door operates physically and discursively—informs the text. The text's narrator, for example, is clearly located in specific places but is not ever fully there: her position in the diaspora means that she is perpetually "without destination": one of the "inherited traits of the Diaspora," she says, is that "I am simply where I am" (150). As Omisẹ̀eke Natasha Tinsley discusses, referring to *Erzulie's Skirt* and the queer Black Atlantic, a legacy of the slave trade is that people are "brutalized and feeling, connected to the past and separate from it, divided from other diasporic migrants and linked to them," and this history leads them to be "internally discontinuous" (203). The simultaneous dissociation from the body and almost hyper-embodiment that accompanies being overdetermined by history demonstrate the way that history is rooted in the body, rather than just in the mind.

History being written on the body is not the only embodied effect of the slave trade, however; as with the structure of the book and language itself, the narrator's body in *Map* is also to some extent permanently disjointed in ways that are similar to Tinsley's discussion. As M. NourbeSe Philip explains, "[t]he Atlantic trade in Africans severed Africans in the Caribbean and the Americas from their cultural roots" (15). This rootlessness is explored extensively in *Map* and is discussed in terms of the body and a separation of the self from the body. In order to recognize the "awful liability of one's own body" (21), there must be a disjointedness. When she states that her "body feels always in the middle of a journey" (87), the phrasing implies a detachment: the narrator does not say "*I* always feel in the middle of a journey." There are related moments in which the layers of trauma induce a loss of subjectivity altogether, as in the section in which the narrator explains that after the Grenadian coup "nothing is the same" and nothing is recognizable: "You find yourself at another base in another coming night waiting for an airplane to lift you out. *But there is no you*" (168, emphasis

mine). And this sense of self-alienation is also shown to be—in a very mundane way—central to existing in the colonies, though it is undoubtedly exponentially more alienating based on the subject's perceived distance from the Western ideal, as we see in the narrator's discussion of the radio's social function during her childhood: "The whole island pressed its ear against the radio, listening for itself" (15). Here, despite resistance to it that undoubtedly exists, Brand describes the hold that recognition from the colonial centre has on the population of an entire island; that this recognition brings them into existence further demonstrates a fractured relationship to the self.

The refraction throughout the book is countered, however, by significant moments of fixity. First and foremost is the fixity that the door itself imposes as it acts as a metaphor for the impact of colonialism.[12] To return to a moment I discuss above, in which the narrator of *Map* recalls her youthful desperation to know "what people we came from" and her distress that her grandfather cannot remember (3), she goes on to explain that "[a] small space opened in me" (4): "Having no name to call on was having no past; having no past pointed to the fissure between the past and the present. That fissure is represented in the Door of No Return" (5). At this point in the narrator's life, giving up the idea of origins is not an option: she explains that she "would have proceeded happily with a simple name" and "may have played with it for a few days and then stored it away" (4), but the fact of not knowing is devastating. While not having access to this information allows the narrator to express both the pain of that loss as well as to eventually become able to imagine possibilities such as an approach to relationality that emphasizes other sites of commonality, the small space that opened remains. As she states elsewhere, diasporic Black peoples are fixed by the door: "Our inheritance in the Diaspora is to live in this inexplicable space. That space is the measure of our ancestors' step through the door toward the ship. One is caught in the few feet in between" (20). During the Grenadian coup and in addition to the loss of subjectivity she experiences, there is also a fixity: she describes standing on a balcony with a friend, "spilling a glass of water forever" as they watch bodies fall from a cliff (166). This moment illustrates the trauma that will permanently determine their contexts and inflect their lives; to some extent, it is inescapable. She emphasizes this inescapability and the intimate impact of the event on her existence by saying that the "morning felt as close as family, as divine as origins" (158). At another moment, we hear about how the door is inscribed on her body: the Door of No Return "is on my mind. . . . The door is on my retina" (89). That is, the door is written on her body and

therefore determines her being to some extent, particularly her thoughts and what she sees. And though these statements defy conventional logic, they effectively communicate the extent of the impact of the door. It is important to note, however, that *Map* is not making the case that *identity* is fixed; rather the narrator maps out the permanent effect that traumatic events can have, but leaves room for further complexity.

Though these experiences are written on her body and have caused a refraction, the narrator is not affirming a victimization that suggests an endless subjection to the trauma. The narrator asks "[h]ow to describe this mix of utter, hopeless pain and elation leaning against this door?" (41) and points out that "[t]his dreary door. . . though its effects are unremitting, does not claim the human being unremittingly. All that emanates from it is not dread but also creativity" (42).[13] Here again, the book demonstrates that there are seeming oppositions happening at the same time. Instead of privileging one over the other, the text focuses on process; some of these moments are fixed, but others are refracted, and in writing a life, the narrator shows that the fracturing of the subject and her experience of fixity coexist.

Holding complexity in tension is at the core of *Map*. The door is both a fixed thing and the intersection of a range of discourses; it is both stable and permanently unstable. It operates on multiple ontological and epistemological registers. In order to better understand the depth of complexity of the legacy of slavery, this book is comprised of narrative, history, and investigation of the discourses and politics of mapping. And while these elements are identifiable, they are inextricably interwoven through the book's structure. Their degree of co-integration would have made breaks like chapter divisions difficult. To have used them would have implied that it was possible to separate these elements. Brand includes headings, but these do not suggest separation so much as cue the reader to prepare for a shift. The complexity of the component parts of the book are matched by how crucial it is to have them appear within and alongside each other.

The legacy of slavery is evident not only in *Map*'s content, but it is also visible in the fractal nature of the book's structure, the workings of language itself, and in the narrator's relationship to her body. As it acknowledges both destabilization and fixity, *Map* nevertheless does not suggest that we must be resigned to history. Instead, this text invites reflection before action by surveying the ground upon which we stand, insisting on facing the horrors of the legacy of the slave trade, and sitting with those horrors; the book identifies the effects of colonialism while also looking unapologetically

and unflinchingly at the weight of these histories. As McKittrick explains, Brand is both drawn to and repelled by mapping because she knows what accompanies it. For McKittrick, *Map* "invokes a different sense of place by presenting [B]lack diaspora geographies that are riddled with desire for place, the suspicion of desire for place, and experiential physical place(s)" (105). It is in this kind of complexity that *Map* sits and asks readers to sit; as the narrator explains, "a book asks us to embody, which at once takes us across borders of all kinds" (190). The disarticulated style of *Map* addresses the ways that trauma exceeds articulation and resists a (potentially) lulling narrativization.

A Map to the Door of No Return marks, echoes, refracts, and maps the traumas of colonialism. But most importantly, *Map* takes its readers through a thought process about the degree to which Western epistemologies must be re/dis/ordered as many of us work towards decolonization. Further, *Map* invites those of us invested in social change to strategize more effectively and to think dynamically about how to avoid getting caught up in differences of experience that, while important, can also impede collaborative work.[14] The tension between legibility and illegibility with regard to genre and narrative conventions, language, and the body as well as between refraction and fixity are part of the many dynamic features that *Map* exhibits, not all of which are commensurable. It is "a life" Brand writes, and lives are not only exceedingly complicated, but they also do not follow a single path or straightforward argument. This incommensurability is a necessary part of the text's project of challenging narrowing, simplifying, reductive logics in order to think expansively about how to live in the current cultural moment because changing the content of what we know is as urgent as changing the structure of how we know it.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Daniel Coleman, Lorraine York, Laura Moss, and my two anonymous reviewers for their generous comments on this paper. All flaws, of course, are my own.

NOTES

1 As Edward Said, among others, shows, non-Western places and cultures become receptacles for the West's ideas of itself. It is worth noting, though, that Brand is coming at the issue of a place—the Door of No Return, in this case—in terms of both physical places and ideas from another angle. She maps out the ideas that led to the slave trade as well as its effects, and the Door of No Return becomes the dense site of meaning to which everything else is related.

2 Criticism of *Map* has tended to focus on Brand's use of mobility as an organizing structure to discuss her remapping of the nation and the text's engagement with archives. Diana Brydon reads *Map* alongside Lawrence Hill's *Black Berry, Sweet Juice*. She is interested in their reconfigurations of belonging in the Canadian nation in relation to diasporic cultural studies and uses the metaphor of a "detour" to describe how their texts work against current issues related to colonialism. Marlene Goldman reads Brand's *At the Full and Change of the Moon* beside *Map* to discuss how these texts "challenge the legacy of the Enlightenment's obsession with quantification" by embracing what she calls "the aesthetics and politics of drifting" that counters the "unsavoury politics of belonging" (22, 24). Goldman draws on an interview between Brand and *Map*'s editor, Maya Mavjee, to bring in Brand's discussion of her goals with this project, particularly with regard to mapping. Her comments align well with criticism of the text, including mine. But, she also suggests, this is not ideal—there are limitations to this strategy. Maia Joseph's analysis of Brand's works—especially *Map*—responds to Goldman's discussion of drifting and deterritorialization by focusing on "landing" and "reterritorialization," in order to emphasize the ways that Brand rewrites "spaces within the Canadian nation" (76). She is convinced by Goldman's argument and sees her own argument as a complement to it. Erica L. Johnson focuses on the archives from which Brand draws materials for *Map*, suggesting that Brand's presentation of "the affinities and tensions between [personal memoir with larger historical and cultural concerns is] a key to the postcolonial aesthetic" (152); Johnson focuses on how Brand creates a "neo-archive" in that she "creates history in the face of its absence" (157). See also Krotz, Medovarski, Mezei, and Tinsley.

3 I capitalize "Black" in order to emphasize the humanity of Black people in the face of white supremacy and anti-Black racism. Due to the house style of this journal, I have left "West" capitalized. I want to note, though, the ways that doing so risks naturalizing its dominant position and investments in—to quote bell hooks—white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy. With that said, I also recognize the limitations of both of these gestures.

4 For a discussion of the socio-political effects of genre, see John Frow.

5 For an extensive overview of the terms and trends in this field, particularly as they arise in the Canadian context, see Rak.

6 As Goldman says of the centrality of masculinity to Paul Gilroy's work in *The Black Atlantic*, we might read Brand as contributing a different perspective to the conversations that centre masculinities in diaspora studies (22).

7 Notably, Brand takes up a similar fractured metaphor in her discussion of the door: "For those of us today in the Diaspora this door exists as through a prism, distorted and shimmering. As through heat waves across a vast empty space we see this door appearing and disappearing. An absent presence" (21).

8 Several critics comment on this scene and read it, I would suggest, overly positively. If forgetting is positive, it is only so because it minimizes or disguises pain, not because it is an ideal situation.

9 David Chariandy has recently written on the complexities of Black Canadian literary studies, emphasizing "Roots," in which there is an emphasis on demonstrating the often-erased history of Black people in Canada, and "Routes," in which there is an emphasis on mobility and connections elsewhere, in Black Canadian literary studies. Notably, he points out that there is overlap between these two approaches and that they are imbricated in each other (541). He also discusses a third area of study that has always been a part of the others—that of "Post-Race"—in which, especially in the Canadian context, there is a sense that race is no longer a meaningful category, a notion that the previous two areas of thought have always fought against (542).

10 See the discussion of slaves as dehumanized extensions of slave owners' bodies (Brand 30-31).
11 For a discussion of the inarticulability of pain, see Elaine Scarry.
12 As Joseph points out, Jody Mason discusses the fixity of doors in *Map*, but she uses this fixity to discuss doors in *Thirsty*. As she says, doors are a "trope for fixed forms, such as slavery and capitalism, that limit our ability to understand how past and present experience interact" (784).
13 It is important to note that the narrator does not claim to represent anyone's thoughts but her own: "I don't want to suggest that my thoughts are typical of the Black Diaspora, only that they proceed from the experience" (92).
14 I am remaining intentionally vague about the decolonization process here. While I certainly recognize that there are widespread decolonization efforts that are ongoing and have been since colonization began, I also would not be prepared to say that it is happening in a concrete sense, as precisely the issues that *Map* raises are also ongoing and resisting those efforts. In short, I am acknowledging that social change is a complex and ongoing process over a long period of time, replete with victories and setbacks.

WORKS CITED

Brand, Dionne. *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging*. Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2001. Print.

Brydon, Diana. "Detour Canada: Rerouting the Black Atlantic, Reconfiguring the Postcolonial." *Reconfigurations: Canadian Literatures and Postcolonial Identities/ Littératures canadiennes et identités postcoloniales*. Ed. Marc Maufort and Franca Bellarsi. Brussels: Peter Lang, 2002. 109-22. Print.

Chariandy, David. "Black Canadian Literature: Fieldwork and 'Post-Race.'" *The Oxford Handbook of Canadian Literature*. Ed. Cynthia Sugars. New York: Oxford UP, 2016. 539-63. Print.

Coleman, Daniel. *Masculine Migrations: Reading the Postcolonial Male in 'New Canadian' Narratives*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1998. Print.

Frow, John. *Genre*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2015. Print.

Goldman, Marlene. "Mapping the Door of No Return: Deterritorialization and the Work of Dionne Brand." *Canadian Literature* 182 (2004): 13-28. Print.

hooks, bell. "Feminism: A Transformational Politic." *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. Cambridge: South End, 1989. Print.

Johnson, Erica L. "Building the Neo-Archive: Dionne Brand's *A Map to the Door of No Return*." *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism* 12.1 (2014): 149-71. Print.

Joseph, Maia. "Wondering into Country: Dionne Brand's *A Map to the Door of No Return*." *Canadian Literature* 193 (2007): 75-92. Print.

Krotz, Sarah Wylie. "Place and Memory: Rethinking the Literary Map of Canada." *English Studies in Canada* 40.2-3 (2014): 133-54. Print.

Mason, Jody. "Searching for the Door*way*: Dionne Brand's *Thirsty*." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 75.2 (2006): 784-800. Print.

McKittrick, Katherine. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2006. Print.

Medovarski, Andrea. "Roughing It in Bermuda: Mary Prince, Susanna Strickland Moodie, Dionne Brand, and the Black Diaspora." *Canadian Literature* 220 (2014): 94-114. Print.

Mezei, Kathy. "Domestic Space and the Idea of Home in Auto/Biographical Practices." *Tracing the Autobiographical*. Ed. Marlene Kadar et al. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2005. 81-95. Print.
Perreault, Jeanne and Marlene Kadar. "Introduction: Tracing the Autobiographical: Unlikely Documents, Unexpected Places." *Tracing the Autobiographical*. Ed. Marlene Kadar et al. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2005. 1-7. Web. 12 Apr. 2016.
Philip, M. NourbeSe. "Echoes in a Stranger Land." *Frontiers: Essays and Writings on Racism and Culture*. Toronto: Mercury, 1992. Print.
Rak, Julie. "Introduction—Widening the Field: Auto/biography Theory and Criticism in Canada." *Auto/Biography in Canada: Critical Directions*. Ed. Rak. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2005. 1-29. Print.
Rushdie, Salman. "Imaginary Homelands." *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*. London: Penguin, 1991. Print.
Said, Edward. "Imaginative Geography and Its Representations: Orientalizing the Oriental." *Race Critical Theories: Text and Context*. Ed. Philomena Essed and David Theo Goldberg. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002. 15-37. Print.
Saul, Joanne. *Writing the Roaming Subject: The Biotext in Canadian Literature*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2006. Print.
Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York: Oxford UP, 1985. Print.
Tinsley, Omise'eke Natasha. "Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic: Queer Imaginings of the Middle Passage." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 14.2-3 (2008): 191-215. Print.

Erinn Beth Langille

That part of driving

Tantramar
reading John Berryman
thinking John Thompson
hay to Boston
the Big Stop
girl with red hair
and breasts
and the boy who lit the fire on the marsh.
Primordial forest
gas
up it goes in
mutiny of bird din
hubbub chatter mute
and a tent
and your ghazals
and guns
and spatulate fingers.
Beer soaked ha
the Vautours and
a party in the Wandlyn
and how I can never
place the second river
or which is the prettier
of the two humps,
La Planche or Aulac.
Also, Fort Beausejour—
hated the way she said that.

Kate Siklosi

"the absolute / of water"
The Submarine Poetic of M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!*

What marks the spot of subaquatic death?
—M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!*

The unity is submarine
breathing air, our problem is how to study the fragments/whole.
—Kamau Brathwaite, "Caribbean Man in Space and Time"

Bajan poet and critic Kamau Brathwaite situates the surface fragmentation of the Caribbean islands as a matter of scope and perspective: from the surface of the ocean the islands appear separate, yet underwater they form a network of connected submarine mountain ranges. Brathwaite's observation can also be taken into historical context. His reference to a "submarine unity" bifurcates the history of the transatlantic slave trade into two archival sites: that of the ocean's surface, and that of its depths. Indeed, the Atlantic catalogues a historical power imbalance between the imperial ships crossing its surface and those overwritten human histories that lie below—the submerged narratives of those whose lives were lost to the project of imperial profit. These underwater narratives form a "submarine unity" that lies fragmented and dispersed beneath the surface of the water, linking lives that were lost in the passage in a submerged community.

Furthermore, by invoking the "submarine unity" of the ocean depths, Brathwaite calls for a literary engagement with Caribbean history: the forward slash between "fragments/whole" proposes a reading and writing process that neither privileges the fragment nor the whole, but the networks of underlying unity between them. M. NourbeSe Philip's 2008 long poem *Zong!* takes up this call to explore the submarine unity of the Middle Passage by staging a confrontation on the level of language between the

logic of the ocean's surface and its poetic depths. Written over the course of seven years, Philip's constraint-based text uses the language of *Gregson v. Gilbert*, a 1783 insurance settlement case resulting from the Zong slave ship massacre, about when the owners of the ship threw a large number of slaves overboard in order to claim insurance money for the loss of "property." This decision of the court—the only public document in existence that testifies to the Zong massacre—cloaks the violence and injustice of the event in the logic of expense and proprietary loss. Equal parts elegy and revisionary archive, Philip's text dismembers the logic-locked rhetoric of the law into a fragmented word store that recovers and mourns its overwritten voices. As the language and logic of the legal decision break down and fragment over the course of the text, a fugue of submerged voices, sounds, silences, and stories surfaces in a visceral language of memory and affect. *Zong!* thus explores the crisis of the Zong slave ship by means of what I call a *submarine poetic*, wherein the maritime law of the ocean's surface is submerged within the deep of its own language. Under Philip's hand, the legal document is dis-membered and then re-membered in its fragments; in so doing, Philip interrupts the perceived wholeness of this surface account of history as singularly authoritative, revealing the voices of a resistant submarine unity beneath the waves of the surface's forgetting.

Indeed, the elusive history of the ocean, with its unfixed flows that seem to resist time, make it an apt metaphor through which to imagine new configurations of unity and community within the Caribbean historical imaginary and present consciousness. In critical discourse, Caribbean identity has been expressed through aquatic metaphors of fluidity in order to emphasize its alterity as the other, "long drowned" history of the Atlantic (DeLoughrey, "Heavy Waters" 703).[1] Brathwaite's contributions to the subject are many; aside from the "submarine unity," his related concept of "tidalectics"—which I discuss in detail in the following section—describes an independent historiographic methodology rooted in a system of tidal logic. For Antonio Benítez-Rojo, the cultural milieu of the Caribbean is "not terrestrial but aquatic," since it is the "realm of marine currents, of waves, of folds and double-folds, of fluidity and sinuosity" (11). Arguably, the most discussed aquatic metaphor of the ocean as an intervening space in modernity is Paul Gilroy's concept of the "Black Atlantic." In his canonical work *The Black Atlantic* (1993), Gilroy situates the ocean as a fertile space of historical and continuing signification. He analyzes the sea as a material and symbolic space that not only marks the atrocities of the slave trade but also

serves as a dynamic, "rhizomorphic" space of transcultural exchange (28). Such aquatic metaphors attempt to articulate the ocean within Caribbean consciousness as a site of both connection and disconnection, a space governed by flows and folds as opposed to a linear telos. My conception of Philip's submarine poetic extends these critical discussions of the Atlantic by calling attention to the ways in which diasporic poets have rendered the submerged history of the Middle Passage as a reckoning with and within the flows of language.

Rendered poetically, the submarine poetic articulates the fragmented unity of Caribbean consciousness by means of poetic interruptions, which disrupt order and sense within language and within normative reading practices. Brathwaite's effective "fragment/whole" imagery of the island archipelago, which appears fragmented on the surface but unified beneath the waves, is mirrored through Philip's experimental poetic: on the page, the word store seems to exist in a vacuum of fragments separated from sense and syntax, unable to be captured by recognizable systems of order. However, as Brathwaite insists, the ocean's underlying unity is a matter of perspective and gaze, and this manifests in *Zong!* as an uneasy reading practice wherein language is not culminative in meaning, but cumulative and reiterative. The reader must read the fragments according to the submarine logic of the text, which is unseated from the surety of left-to-right linear semantic control; re-membering the fragments produces a unified collectivity that is not readily perceivable on the text's surface. The very "unreadability" of the text pays homage to the incomprehensible trauma and loss of the Zong massacre and of the slave trade generally; however, from the swash and backwash of Philip's poetic logic, from the submerged fragments of narrative untelling, a unified community of voices emerges in *Zong!*'s watery scape.

Philip practiced law for seven years, so as both a lawyer and a poet, she possesses a keen attentiveness to the weight of words and the economy of meanings generated by them. She insists that both law and poetry share a common concern for the "precision of expression," yet they work towards an oppositional telos. As she explains, "It must be told—that is the law—the compulsion; it can't be told—that is poetry: it can only be told through its untelling" ("Re: Zong Query," personal communication n. pag.). *Zong!*'s submarine poetic engages these competing logics of the law and of poetry. The text pits the compulsive rationality of the maritime law of the ocean's surface, which depends upon order and balanced ledgers for profit, against

the fragmented submarine poetic of its depths, which seeks to untell this silencing logic and retrieve the voices of humanity lost within it. As Philip reveals in her "Notanda" to the text, the underlying reasoning or *ratio* of the legal decision in the Zong insurance case is "that the law supercedes [*sic*] being, that being is not a constant in time, but can be changed by the law" (*Zong!* 200). Philip thus interrogates the law, "its order, which hides disorder; its logic hiding the illogic" (197). Such order is bent towards the preservation of profit and property; by bringing the concealed disorder of the language to the fore, she articulates a community of fragmented yet united human voices brought forth against their silencing.

As I will demonstrate in the sections to follow, the submarine poetic of *Zong!* thus imposes its own *ratio* to respond to and contest the law's commoditization of being. As Philip insists, "where the law attempts to extinguish be-ing, as happened for 400 years as part of the European project, be-ing trumps the law every time" (200). Her use of experimental poetry provides the anti-logic that underlies this responsive *ratio*. Philip insists that her project must "avoid imposing meaning" and she does so through poetry that can "disassemble the ordered, to create disorder and mayhem so as to release the story that cannot be told, but which, through not-telling, will tell itself" (199). Within the alchemy of poetic experimentation, with its recombinations, anagrammatic reformulations, and disjointed syntax, the submarine unity of these lost lives can be repatriated, recovered, rehumanized. Philip's subjection of the surface language and logic of the law to its prolific poetic depths signals her reckoning with the problematic of historiography writ large: her experimentations provide a way of poetically recovering the living silences within the lacunae of historical language, while critiquing the narrative strategies of erasure and "forgetting" upon which colonial projects rely.

Submarine Tidalectics and the Law's Untelling

Water—the source of suffering, deprivation, and death—becomes the only salve through which we can imagine and remember the lives of those lost in the passage. Within *Zong!*, the law's "absolute / of rule" is confronted by this "absolute / of water" (39). It is therefore fitting that *Zong!* opens with an extended phonetic meditation on the word "water" as its first act of decentring the authority and logic of legal discourse. The opening poem of the collection submerses the reader in the decentring waves of the text's watery matrix (see Figure 1).

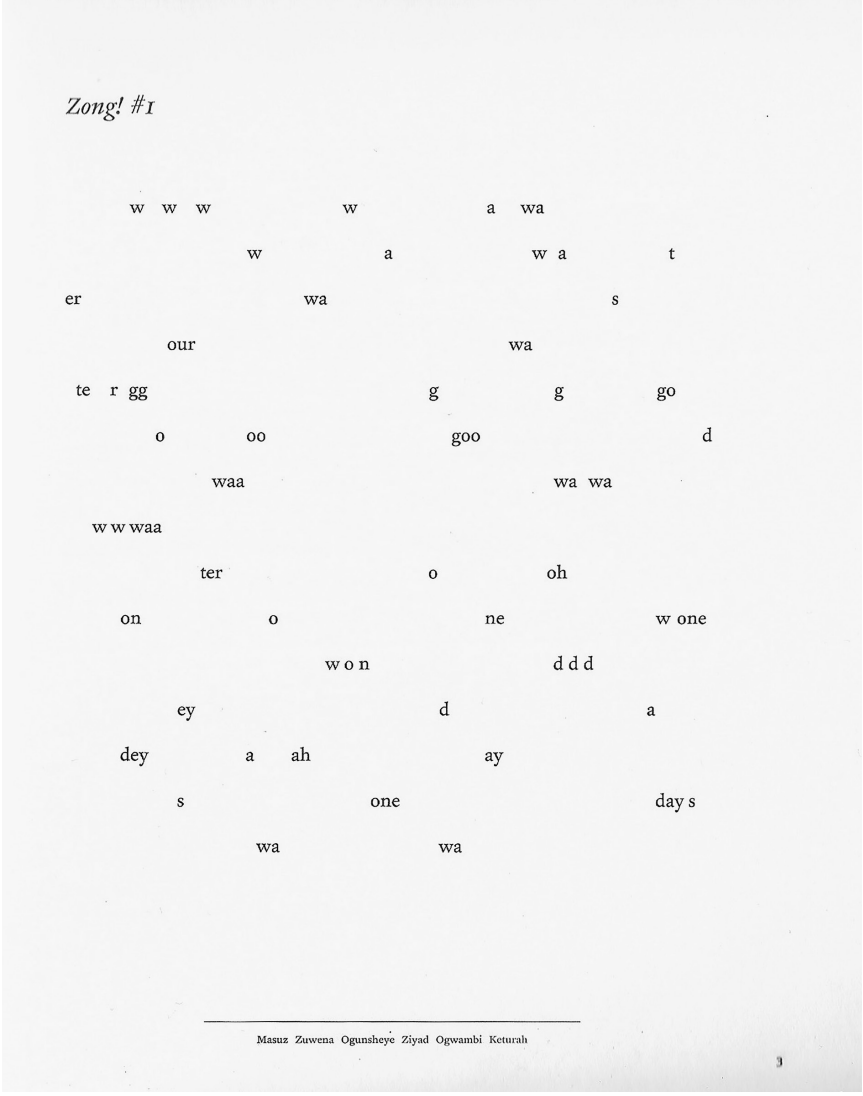


Figure 1
M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong! #1* 3. Reproduced with permission from the author and publisher.

"Zong! #1" confronts the reader with the materiality of water—here, the word is de-composed and dispersed as flotsam and jetsam on the page, transforming the language of the law document into a stuttering, saturated pool of sounds. Not only does this watery confrontation signal the text's reckoning with

language—its dismemberment of it—but it also signifies the text's reckoning with humanity and with loss: the text appears breathless to start, gurgling, and struggling for breath under the weight of water. In live performances of the text, Philip brings the sputtering and drowning imposed by the spatial dispersals of the submarine poetic to life, albeit uneasily.[2] She capitalizes on the persistent gaps and fragments as a vocal score; when she reads the first passage above, for example, the deferral of the word "water" becomes an unhurried meditation on the slave's torturous crossing of the Atlantic. The sonority of the sputtering fragmentation is painfully and mournfully delayed, with the letters and phonemes enunciated in long, drawn-out pauses. This prolonged meditation brings the body of the slave to the fore in a ceremony of communal witnessing: the fragments form prayers invoking the watery grave of the ocean's floor and the spirit of the lost souls who remain there.

Philip's text harnesses the flows and dispersals of water as a poetic model for confronting the authoritative "rule" of the law and its prolific underbelly of elemental language. As Elizabeth DeLoughrey notes, "the ocean's perpetual movement is radically decentering; it resists attempts to fix a locus of history" (*Routes* 21). Since Philip's submarine poetic decentres the authority and cohesion of the law's language by subjecting it to the open drift of poetic permutation, I have taken a cue from Brathwaite's concept of *tidalectics* in order to situate Philip's poetic praxis as a resistant form of interruption. Tidalectics delineates a specifically local, Caribbean spatial imaginary; it defines an aquatic principle of fluidity and cyclic movement between land and sea that Brathwaite attributes to the Caribbean identity. Brathwaite describes "tidalectics" as "the movement of the water backwards and forwards as a kind of cyclic . . . motion rather than linear" (qtd. in Mackey 14). By imparting an intervening logic of circulation and shift, tidalectics contests the racist ideological dialectics of colonial European consciousness—of which Hegel's master/slave dialectic is representative. Here, Brathwaite follows in the footsteps of writers and thinkers such as Frantz Fanon, who have interrogated the language and praxis of the dialectic toward the end of anti-colonial struggle. The term "tidalectics" revises the Hegelian teleological dialectic of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis—which privileges linearity and forward progression—with a sense of circulatory, tidal logic represented by the back-and-forth movement of the sea's waves. As a "natural tidal procedure within a continuum rather than towards a fixed 'objective solution'" (Brathwaite "Caribbean Culture" 49), it serves as a fluid heuristic that undermines the linearity and fixity of teleological Western historiography.

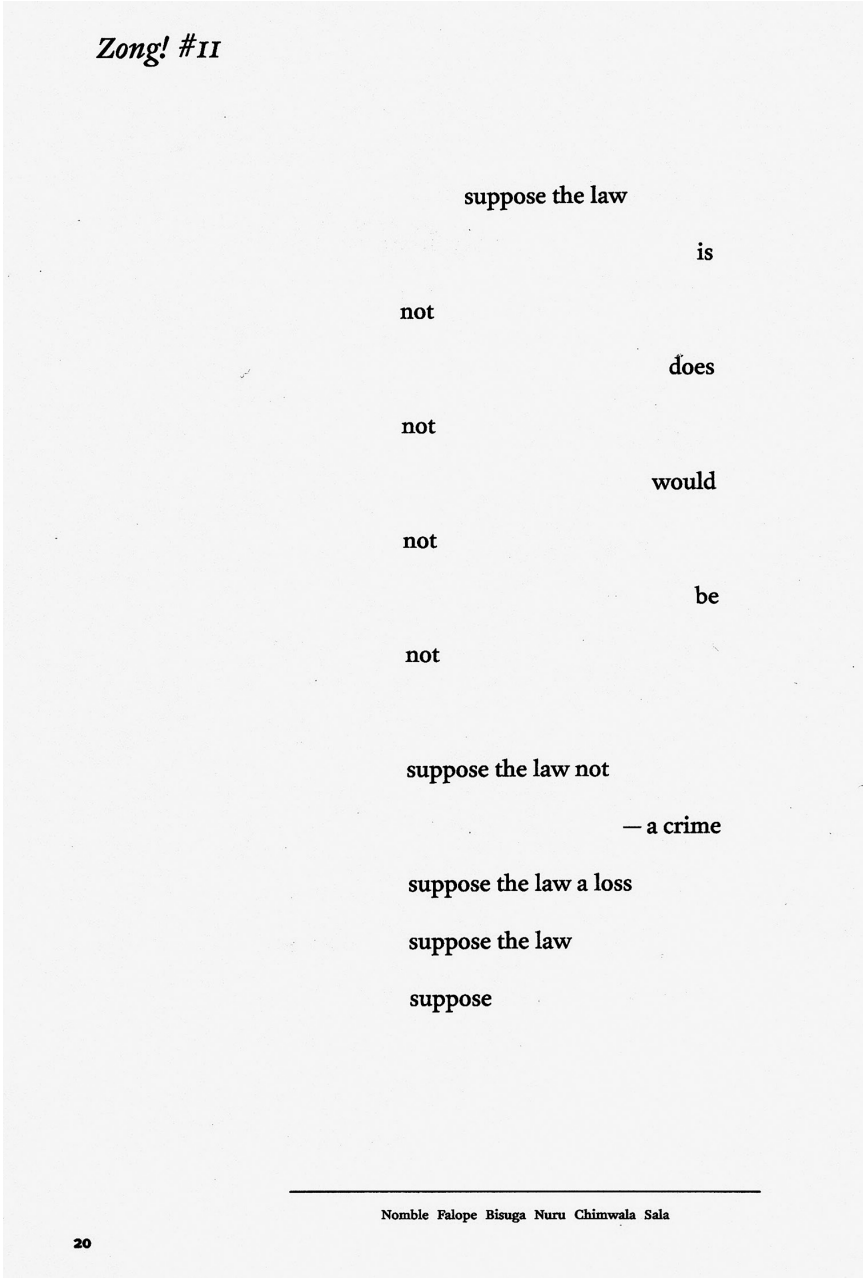
Both Brathwaite's concept of tidalectics and Philip's submerged poetic are revisionary praxes; through poetic experimentations within the ordering and logic of language, Philip's poetic enhances the practice of tidalectics by means of resistant literary reversioning. According to British Columbian poet and critic Wayde Compton,

> tidalectics describes a way of seeing history as a palimpsest, where generations overlap generations, and eras wash over eras like a tide on a stretch of beach. . . . Repetition . . . informs black ontologies more than does the Europeanist drive for perpetual innovation, with its concomitant disavowals of the past. In a European framework, the past is something to be gotten over, something to be improved upon; in tidalectics, we do not *improve* upon the past, but are ourselves *versions* of the past. (17; emphasis original)

For Philip, this versioning process is key, since her project "re-versions" the language and logic of the law—a key script that undergirds the European colonial project—with poetic interventions. It is in the text's versioning of the past through poetic fragmentation, repetition, and recombination of the original law document that the agency of those silenced by the forgetting of dominant historiography is recovered.

Philip's work, with its dispersals and fugues of language, visually bears resemblance to L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry. However, as she explains in her "Notanda" to *Zong!*, she sees her project as radically different in intention: the strategies of the text, she explains, "signpost a multifaceted critique of the European project" (*Zong!* 197). Whereas L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry can be considered political in its dispersals of hegemonic ordering in language, Philip links this practice in her work to historical erasure under the colonial project. Her dispersal of the archive of law in the text's fluid cartography signifies a tidalectic engagement with the past by recirculating the language of the law in order to reversion it anew. By subjecting the knowledge of the law to the uncertain tides of poetic variation, she dismantles this linguistic system of power and oppression meant to de-subjectify black bodies and keep them "in place" in the historical gaze.

The emergent gaps of the text thus signify an epistemological break between the "authoritative" legal decision and the tidalectic untelling of it. We see these competing logics forming a contrapuntal rhythm in "Zong! #II," wherein Philip constructs a poetic ledger—as she does repeatedly throughout the first section of the text—in an attempt to balance objective truth versus the "supposition" of truth imposed by the will of the law (see Figure 2). The workings of tidalectics in Philip's work are manifest most clearly in her recasting of the capitalist ledger of the slave ship as a poetic



Zong! #11

suppose the law

is

not

does

not

would

not

be

not

suppose the law not

— a crime

suppose the law a loss

suppose the law

suppose

Nomble Falope Bisuga Nuru Chimwala Sala

20

Figure 2
M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong! #11* 20. Reproduced with permission from the author and publisher.

tool of untelling. Philip imports the ledger from the maritime logbooks of slave ship owners and appropriates its form as poetic discourse in order to better its instruction—her poetic form mimics the form of the ledger, but undoes its reliance on balanced closure, instead leaving the ledgers open to gaping silences. In these ledgers, the language of law and of poetry compete as two oppositional systems of knowledge production.

Here, in "Zong! #11," the ledger forms an argumentative structure to interrogate the "supposition" of law. The repeated refrain of "suppose the law" is interrupted on the page by the counter-refrain of "not" that is repeated down the left side of the ledger, and the words "is," "does," "would," and "be" along the right side. This repeated call-and-response interrogation of the law forms a back-and-forth rhythm on the page. In this way, the ledger emphasizes the oppositional logic of tidalectics in terms of narrative and knowledge; whereas the language of the law purports to know and tell what "is not, does not, would not, be not," the tidalectic poetic seeks a different (un)telling. As Erin Fehskens has rightly pointed out, the ledgers "remain blatantly unbalanced and unbalanceable" (413). Philip subjects the capitalist ledger to its dreaded nemesis: the gap, the imbalance. Her poetic wounds the sure logic of the ledger by refusing its desired equivalence in debits and credits, thereby making it account for the historical losses it overlooks. As she notes in her "Notanda," the ship's manifest would have listed the slaves as taxonomic property: "'negroe man' [*sic*], 'negroe woman,' or more frequently, 'ditto man,' 'ditto woman'" (194). Philip's poetic disorients the structure of the ledger so that its gaps between and across are starkly manifest; this unbalancing act points to the irrevocable loss in this capitalist archiving of human lives as unspecified commodities.

Philip's counterpointed repetition of "suppose the law" becomes a refrain that guides the methodology of the entire text. As a response to the presumed authority of the law, an alternative voice of logic emerges to question the law's very foundations and intervene with waves of unauthorized interruptions. In "Zong! #19" this tidalectic logic continues:

There is no evidence
in the against of winds
the consequence of currents
or
the apprehension of rains
the certain of value
or
the value in certain (34)

As in "Zong! #11," language is encountered in a contrapuntal, back-and-forth structure. However, rather than simply interrogating the language of the law with interlocutory words and phrases, here the language of law is altered in form and in semantic output. The poem's ledger narrates the confrontation between tidalectic logic and the teleological language of the law that determines value. For instance, the line "the certain of value" is subject to recirculation by the oppositional "or," resulting in the alternative semantic arrangement of the line as "the value in certain." The ledger's method lies in its repetition: its structure imposes a call and response rhythm wherein two voices fight for authority yet respond to one another in a manner that mirrors the rising and falling of the sea tide upon the shore. Like the waves of the tide, the words of the passage fold back onto themselves, into that which came before, adding to the newly created surge of meaning. In this way, the language of the legal document is made to rewrite itself, to untell its own singular logic with plural possibilities. These unauthorized interruptions of the poetic voice rework the original text in ways that refuse the relegation of colonial violence to the past; in so doing, Philip's text reconfigures historical time and space in the present of the writing and reading process. The text's refusal of closure and ordered balance serves as a consistent reminder that the past is, in fact, not *passed*—that "this is / not was" (7).

Exaqua: Unmanageable Salvage

While the structure of the slave ship ledger attempts to control the bodies of the slaves as capital, Philip's tidalectic undoing of the ledger's balance renders it unmanageable. Throughout her poetic oeuvre, Philip has harnessed such "unmanageability" as her resistant poetic praxis. In reference to her previous work *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks* (1989), Philip has stated that she "set out to be unmanageable" by means of "making the poem unreadable" ("Managing" 296, 298). She sees management as a tactic of the colonial project, defining it as "putting the unmanageable into preordained places within society so they can be more easily controlled" (295). Thus, she renders her texts "unreadable" in order to better register the experience of slaves as "managed peoples" (298). In *Zong!*, Philip continues this resistant tactic of unmanageability by means of her experimentations that interrupt normative reading practices with poetic unreadability. Her poetic techniques of dis-membering and re-membering go beyond poetic experimentation to become critiques of colonial order, "so that the ordering of grammar, the ordering that is the impulse of empire, is subverted" (*Zong!* 205). The

unreadability of the text involves the readers in its attempt to "exaqua" (201) the "unmanageable" testimonies of love and community that are submerged within the law's language and logic of erasure.

In the earlier sections of the text, the law document is recombined and restructured into new words and phrases that are intact; in the latter sections, however, the language breaks down further into a dissociative, watery fugue of fragments. Words begin to dismember and bleed apart into others while the torn ligaments of letters are left drifting in open gaps, only to be reassembled by the reader's eye:

> es es oh *es os o* *s* they ask fo
> r water we g ive them s
> ea they as k for bread we
> give them se
> a they ask for lif e we give them o
> nly the sea (170)

In these sections, the slippery fragments of words slide from one to another uneasily. The broken, sputtering language mimics a drowning voice that is struggling to speak, thus bringing the particular space-time of the overthrown slaves into the present moment of the reading. Aside from visually invoking the bodies and bones of the overthrown slaves floating in the sea, these staccato configurations also suggest interrupted passage—the words are not easily transported across the page, in a manner reflective of the disrupted passage of slaves across the Atlantic.

Under Philip's hand, any sure sense of linear reading and understanding becomes a remote (im)possibility. The later sections of the work require a tidalectic reading practice in order to form fragments of sense from the dispersed word store on the page. The language is disembodied and scattered upon the page as word-salvage; individual words lie adrift with gaping open wounds, rendering them incomplete and "unmanageable" by sense. The eye must read in a continual practice of back and forth, across the lacunae between crucial connecting letters and then back again, in order to re-member and make sense of the severed words. Collaged formations of sense appear to form a cohesive fragment of meaning once the eye has traversed their uneasy pattern of connecting and disconnecting gaps; however, their spatial construction resists the permanence of recorded meaning, and, like the ever-receding tide, such moments of sense recede back to the foamy

expanse of the text's matrix. However fleeting, these glimpses of sense become sedimented over time; the reader who struggles to make sense of the fragments endures a process not unlike the sedimentation of silt built up from the recursive ocean waves. With each re-membering within the text, traces of meaning layer together to reflect the submarine unity that is sedimented below, across, and between the linguistic salvage.

Philip's submarine poetic refuses the surface order of communication; just as she refuses the ledger the order upon which it relies, so too she refuses the reader/witness the comfort of linguistic cohesion. Such refusal marks the story of the Zong as one that "cannot be told yet must be told, but only through its un-telling" (*Zong!* 207). This uneasy transport of meaning is intensified in the oral performance of these latter sections of *Zong!*. The staccato gaps and absences of syntactic connections make passages illegible not only for the eye, but for the mouth that desires cohesion and sense in the telling. During a performance in Toronto in October 2015, Philip passed around fragments extracted from the text for the participants to read throughout the performance.[3] The text's refusal of a comfortable and cohesive reading practice was intensified by the initial discomfort of the participants as they struggled at first to adapt to this new form of speaking language with absented logical connections. In the audibly nervous sputtering of the participants, the uneasy crossing of the slaves on the Zong was reckoned with in the present moment of its untelling.

While the difficult reading practice of Philip's text and her performance conveys the sheer *sense*lessness of loss in the Zong tragedy, it also reveals the ongoing tension in the text between the attempted articulation of memory and its suppressed silence by master narratives. Despite the disjointed syntax of these latter sections in the text, there nonetheless exists a submerged poetic of sense beneath the chasms of non-meaning (or resistant meaning). For instance, Philip's broken utterance, "this is me / ant for y / our eyes" (160), seems to directly address the reader left adrift in the difficult reading process. If the line breaks are held to their articulated pauses (as is evident by Philip's sustained refusal of linear enjambment throughout these sections), an individual "me" surfaces with a collective "our" to offer a minute consolation of communal witnessing across the voids of the text. Since "eyes" is a homophone of "I's," the reading/witnessing process becomes a collective practice that unites individuals together.

Whereas the earlier sections of the text retain a loose left-to-right reading pattern, in the latter sections the reader is left unanchored in their reading, often unsure as to whether the sequence is vertical or horizontal, or both:

the ship
cradles our longing
our lust our
loss all
that is old in this
new age
the time the

date of (81)

Whereas familiar Western reading practices often proceed dialectically—following from one premise or word to the next linearly, leading to a semantic synthesis of the two—here the seascape of the page initiates a tidalectic reading practice. There are a myriad of ways in which the above passage can be read and interpreted out of the text's fluid grammar. It could be read left to right across the surface of the page as "the ship cradles our longing our lust . . ."; or the eye of the reader could follow the downward flow of the text, reading "the ship cradles our loss that is new . . ." as the first configuration of the fragments. Alternatively, the reader's eye could register the collage all at once, picking words like random objects out of the matrix. The text's spatial arrangement defies authorial authority and linear logic in that the reader decides reading order and the priority of word arrangements. The networked interpretation of these fragments is circulatory and requires a consistently mobile reading practice across multiple directions of reading.

While writing the text, Philip notes that the words in the poems "need a great deal of space around them … as if they need to breathe" (*Zong!* 194). As such, the broken words and phrases in the later sections of the text are situated on the page such that no word comes directly below or above another, as seen in the passages quoted above. Whereas the law compels the narrative to cohesion and order, the poetic voice untells it. The fluid spaces surrounding the words give agency to the salvaged language by forming complex and unpredictable semantic linkages and networks. These collages of undoing form "unmanageable" spaces of meaning, aleatoric paths along which the reader chooses how to encounter the text, how to *confront and rupture* its underwater history.

Zong!'s submarine poetic thus initiates a process of linguistic cumulation, but it refuses the closure of culmination—as in the waves of the ocean, words, letters, and phonemes in the text cumulate momentarily in collage, only to be dispersed back into the word store to become such flotsam and jetsam for another burgeoning wave cycle. As Philip writes in her "Notanda,"

"As the ocean appears to be the same yet is constantly in motion, affected by tidal movements, so too this memory appears stationary yet is shifting always" (*Zong!* 201). The prolific and ongoing archive created by the text demonstrates that memory itself is tidal, as the field of the page suggests. The reader must work to place the fragments together, to re-member the text and then subsequently interpret the newly re-membered words. Creating unpredictable collages in the spaces of the text opens passageways of chance encounters with meaning; in this way, both poet and reader are able to decide how they will re-member the event in the present immediacy of the poem. The shifting nature of memory and meaning in the text disrupts the fixity of the traditional archive that is housed in a permanent site and remains unchanged, unaffected by time and by environment.

Reflecting on the writing of *Zong!*, Philip argues that the text "is a work of haunting, a wake of sorts, where the spectres of the undead make themselves present" (*Zong!* 201). Accordingly, Philip has suggested that one of the driving forces behind the text is her felt need "to defend the dead" (200), whose humanity was overwritten as chattel. The disjunctive fugue of the text, then, becomes a pragmatic method of "heal[ing] the original text of its fugal amnesia" (204). By manipulating its very language, she overwrites the source document's rhetoric of loss and property with spectral, yet human, voices. Therein, she constructs an alternative archive of the historical event not only on the level of tidalectic language and logic, but also by exhuming ghosts: while the names of the victims are absent from the original case document, Philip restores humanity to these victims by naming them along the bottom of each page in the first sections of her work, referring to them as "ghostly footnotes floating below the text" (200). This footnoting acts as a gravestone to remember the dead, to mourn their erasure by honouring their undeniable presence. The names appear separate with no punctuation between each; as such, they form a chain of unbroken utterance, an undercurrent that persists throughout the opening sections of the poem. Significantly, Philip submerges these names on the page—they are separated from the rest of the poetic text by a thin line, suggesting their sustained vigilance and presence just below the surface of the text's undoing. Conversely, this line emphasizes the fact that the names, histories, and humanity of these individuals are "unmanageable" by the law—indeed, they exist *outside* of the law, since Philip broke her poetic constraint by creating the names outside of the legal word store. The break here lends a beauty and dignity to the names lost in the ledgers of colonial capital; they cannot be

named within its language and exist in an independent space where their dignity as persons—not as property for value and exchange—remains intact, and they can be imagined, recognized, and named.

In her most recent performances, Philip has projected these names onto a water table that cycles the names through a gurgling water fountain so the names appear to float hauntingly amid ocean waves. Aside from providing the added sonorous weight of water to the performance, this display provides a visual accounting of this sustained utterance of names in the text. During one particular performance, a participant placed individual shards of slate in a wake pattern across the middle of the floor, cutting right through the centre of the cacophony of the reading. The sharp and chalky pieces of slate resembled bones, and their scattered wake displacement transformed the floor of the reading into a vast and continuous grave, mimicking the haunting ossuary of the Middle Passage. This laying of bones during the performed fugue of the text brought Philip's submarine poetic to the fore. The visuality of the grave, as well as the collective witnessing of the participants in the process of its formation, ritualizes the performance within spaces of the ocean depths.

Philip holds the surface and depths of the ocean in productive tension, and in so doing, she honours the space and time of the slaves' overthrowing as a marker to remember the dead. In resistance to the surface time of the ship's passage, the text includes fragments of longing, desire, and testimony of the time of the slaves' overthrowing that mark the site of the ocean in a particular space and time. In the section "Ferrum," Philip renders the text to suggest the setting of the sea at the moment that the slaves were thrown overboard:

will they c all his n
ame fall into t he blue nig
ht they bra ve the wa
ter sing a p
raise son g that is a
frica un
der water a d (155)

The significance of this passage is twofold: first, the sputtering language mimics a drowning voice who is struggling to speak, thus bringing the corporeal space-time of the slaves into the present moment of the reading. Second, the references to "blue nig / ht" and "the wa / ter" establish the

site of the overthrowing as a particular setting in time, a specific site of memory. By means of the slaves' song, "singing a praise song that is africa under water," Philip reimagines the slaves reckoning their passage in the sea with the memory of their homeland and its cultural traditions. Indeed, the ocean is the only repository to which Philip can turn to mark the histories and memories of those lost. We don't have the bones; indeed, we can never recover them. However, her poetic attempts to pause time at the moment of the overthrowing in order to meditate on this loss and lend it the space-time reverence it is due. By invoking the night, the surface of the water, and the underwater space, the text halts the passage of the ship and holds it in a moment of time—in so doing, the text ceremonializes the submarine as a haunting site of remembering in the present.

Although Philip acknowledges the impossibility of retrieving bones from the ocean floor, she nonetheless views her aesthetic interventions upon the law as an attempt to "re-transform" these bones "miraculously, back into human" ("Notanda" 196). The collages of the text register the mayhem and disorientation of the tragedy, but they also reveal submerged human spaces of love and community. The voices of the families, friends, and lovers that speak to each other surface throughout the text to form a powerful, collective untelling. Moreover, they serve to illustrate the "submarine unity" that Brathwaite identifies within the relationship of the fragment to the whole. Celebrations, incantations, and laments undulate within the seascape in many different languages, and in the section "Ferrum," a family emerges (see Figure 3).

In this passage, from the tides of the text's undoing, the Yoruba names "wale," "sade," and "ade" surface in the fragmented store. Given the wealth of permutations in the text, these names are relatively concealed and are "hard to find" in the text's expanse. However, it is this very concealedness that lends these stories of love their autonomy: by remaining "hidden," they remain "unmanageable" by any totalizing gaze. Towards the end of this section, the collaged words form a broken narrative of Wale, the African male, in the process of composing a letter to his wife: "*me me wa* / *le you wr* / *ite for m* / *e* such an un / common man *me i s* / *ay you write* / *e on pap* / *er* i wri / te *de* / *ear sade you b* / *e my queen e* / *ver me i mi* / *ss you and a* / *de al* / *l my lif* / *e*" (172; original typography). The following lines then describe Wale consuming the letter before being thrown overboard: "i a / m do / ne he ta / ke s the pa / per e / ats it the / n he fa / ll s on his li / ps … he fa / lls to the we / ight & wa / it in w / ater" (172). In an act of final resistance, while "fall[ing] to the weight & wait in water," Wale consumes his love letter to his

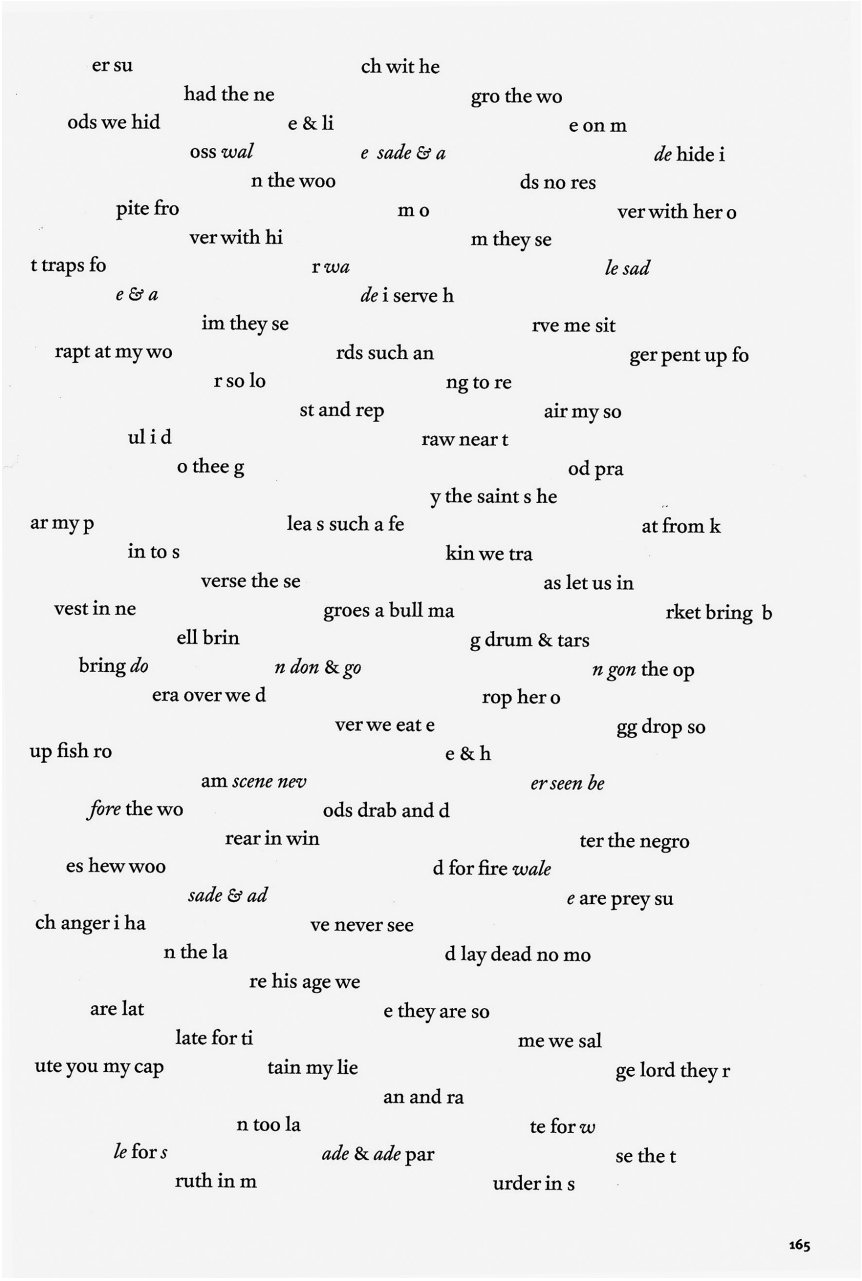


Figure 3
M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!* 165. Reproduced with permission from the author and publisher.

family before drowning; this concealed love will be carried with him to the depths of the ocean, where it cannot be touched by the violence of the law. Philip's inclusion not only of voices carried to the deep but also of the slaves' hidden documents and testimony illustrates the submarine archive as one that remains untouched, unknowable, and thereby unmanageable by the law at the surface. As Philip writes in *A Genealogy of Resistance*, "To love! is to resist" (29).

Indeed, below the surface of the law, these voices within the "weight & wait of water" construct a submerged archive out of the "unmanageable" testimonies scattered in the ship's wake. In her discussion of the uneven voices of personhood in *Zong!*, Sarah Dowling examines the voices that surface in the text—mainly the "dominant" English voice in the narrative and the demotic English voice of the slave—in the context of personhood. In her "Notanda" to the text, Philip identifies a "dominant" voice in the text as the voice of "someone who appears to be white, male, and European" (204). Dowling attributes this dominant voice to "the lyric 'I'" (47) that persists throughout the text, one to whom she associates clear personhood, for the voice is reflective and expresses thoughts, desires, and even remorse for the murders. Dowling then notes Philip's "little" use of demotic English as a counterpart to this English voice; she argues that when Philip uses the demotic, the voice is marked by a lack of interiority compared to the dominant "I" voice:

> The voices in demotic English do not carry the same implication of interiority as the dominant voice's lyric 'I': they only narrate actions, never thoughts. Unlike the dominant voice, whose reflections and remorse characterize him as a lyric person, these demotic utterances stretch only just beyond the single words in other languages and still do not attain this normative form of personhood. (51-52)

In light of my discussion above, however, it is clear that the demotic voice expresses a clear interiority through familial connection as well as expressed wants, desires, pains, and losses. Moreover, the scattered, sparse presence of these affective human fragments submerged within the "dominant" voice of the text serves to further resist the singular authority of the English "word" metonymically expressed though the law. While one cannot necessarily fault Dowling for missing or overlooking these other narratives in the prolific expanse of the text, her oversight serves to prove my point: these voices are purposefully submerged within the text—they are hidden from "view," and it is this very concealedness that makes these persons unmanageable by any gaze. The bodies of overthrown slaves, as Édouard Glissant reminds us, "sowed in the depths the seeds of an invisible presence" (67). From the depths of Philip's maritime poetic, these fragments of love emerge from within

the law itself, revealing the hidden yet omnipresent bonds of a dignified love within a language that dispossessed human subjects of their humanity.

Philip's epigraph outlines the major question at the heart of *Zong!*'s poetic labour: how to mark the spot of subaquatic death, in the face of a language that erases history and waves that diminish the evidence of bones. The submarine, then, becomes the site and ceremony of her poetic experimentation—it is through her dis-membering and re-membering of language, and through her saturation of the legal text with depths of linguistic possibility, that a means of marking the subaquatic death of the lost slaves is witnessed. Only the recursive currents of the ocean's tides bear witness to the ongoing inscription and erasure of histories, the passing of epochs and empires—the waves hold the best key to understanding these passages in the present. With the impossible task of bringing the actual bones to the surface of the ocean, Philip chooses instead to work within language—that great tomb of history—in order to lay the souls of the dead to rest. Philip's attempt to "exaqua" these submerged inventories of language brings these uneasy narratives and forgotten voices to the surface of our present consciousness. The dispersive currents and overlapping streams of *Zong!*'s submarine poetic produce a resistant hermeneutic of memory and experience that suggests that the voices and humanity of the slaves are not lost, but are submerged in a unity below the surface.

NOTES

1 The examples here are many. Aside from the works discussed herein, see also Édouard Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* (1997), Ian Baucom's *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (2005), Iain Chambers' *Mediterranean Crossings: the Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (2008), as well as the anthology *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean* (2004) edited by Bernhard Klein and Gesa Mackenthun.

2 Over the years, I have attended many of Philip's performances of *Zong!* in Toronto. They have taken place in a variety of locations and with different modes of improvisation between herself and the audience. For many performances, she also invites musicians to perform the text to enhance the sonorous score of *Zong!*'s soundscape.

3 This particular performance, entitled "Dead Reckoning," took place at the *b current performance space* at Artscape Wychwood Barns in Toronto, Ontario, on October 8, 2015.

WORKS CITED

Baucom, Ian. *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History*. Durham: Duke UP, 2005. Print.

Benítez-Rojo, Antonio. *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*. 2nd ed. Trans. James E. Maraniss. Durham: Duke UP, 1996. Print.

Brathwaite, Edward Kamau. "Caribbean Culture: Two Paradigms." *Missile and Capsule*. Ed. Jürgen Martini. Bremen: U of Bremen P, 1983. 9-54. Print.
—. "Caribbean Man in Space and Time." *Savacou* 11-12 (September 1975): 1-11. Print.
Chambers, Iain. *Mediterranean Crossings: The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity*. Durham: Duke UP, 2008. Print.
Compton, Wayde, ed. *Bluesprint: Black British Columbian Literature and Orature*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp, 2001. Print.
DeLoughrey, Elizabeth M. "Heavy Waters: Waste and Atlantic Modernity." *PMLA* 125.3 (2010): 703-12. Print.
—. *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures*. Honolulu: U of Hawai'i P, 2007. Print.
Dowling, Sarah. "Persons and Voices: Sounding Impossible Bodies in M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!*" *Canadian Literature* 210-211 (2011): 43-58. Web. 3 Feb. 2016.
Fehskens, Erin M. "Accounts Unpaid, Accounts Untold: M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!* and the Catalogue." *Callaloo* 35.2 (2002): 407-24. Print.
Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. London: Verso, 1993. Print.
Glissant, Édouard. *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*. Trans. J. Michael Dash. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 1989. Print.
—. *Poetics of Relation*. Trans. Betsy Wing. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1997. Print.
Klein, Bernhard and Gesa Mackenthun, eds. *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.
Mackey, Nathaniel. "An Interview with Kamau Brathwaite." *The Art of Kamau Brathwaite*. Ed. Stewart Brown. Bridgend, Wales: Poetry Wales P, 1995. 13-32. Print.
Philip, M. NourbeSe. *A Genealogy of Resistance and Other Essays*. Toronto: Mercury, 1997. Print.
—."Managing the Unmanageable." *Caribbean Women Writers: Essays from the First International Conference*. Ed. Selwyn R. Cudjoe. Wellesley, MA: Calaloux, 1990. 295-300. Print.
—. "Re: *Zong!* Query." Personal communication. Email message to the author. 14 May 2015.
—. *Zong!* Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 2008. Print.

Tom Wayman

Like Water, Music

el agua . . .
no se consume como el fuego sangriento
no se convierte en polvo ni en ceniza
—Pablo Neruda, "Fin de fiesta, VIII"

i

Like water, music neither consumes as a fire does
nor transforms to dust and ash.

Resembling water in one of its states,
a cantata can drift through air
though unlike water, a hymn cannot in any configuration
be channeled across a landscape

despite how both music and water
may be harnessed to generate a desired effect
while retaining a pristine form.

ii

Water is older than music's earthly home.
Yet the art is ancient enough:
our bodies are mostly water
like the planet
and melody was taught to each of us in the womb
by a young woman's heart.

Indeed, the human throat and mouth
are shaped as much for music
as for any other utterance. Sung words
were perhaps coincident with speech
—one thinks of those stutterers

who nonetheless can mellifluously
sing.

When winter fog
hovers over white fields here, shelves of ice
materialize at the edges of the rivulets and creeks
that thread out of the mountainside spruce and cedar forest.

So, too, fingers absently strumming guitar strings,
or an ear that absorbs a sequence of heard or
imagined sounds, or a hand scribing time-signature changes
onto a sheet of lined staves
are transubstantiated
by a mind into harmonies, contrapuntal rhythms, ballads

while above the ridges
float enormous clouds
—vast reservoirs of future music.

Jessica McDonald

Beyond Generic Hybridity
Nalo Hopkinson and the Politics of Science Fiction

It has become commonplace to encounter the term "hybrid" in scholarly discussions of Nalo Hopkinson's fiction. Critics widely broadcast Hopkinson as a writer whose work can be read through the context of hybridized genres. The genres that critics have seen as merged within Hopkinson's writing fall largely within the "speculative fiction" umbrella term: science fiction, fantasy, magic realism, fabulist fiction, and dystopian and utopian literatures. Generally, the merging scholars that articulate is reasonable; Hopkinson is a prolific writer, and her numerous short stories and novels have conceivably run the gamut of genres, such that her oeuvre indeed combines various literary forms. Yet, confronting each of her works individually, we see that this understandable focus on generic hybridity has some politically charged consequences, and that there are troubling, if subtle, assumptions undergirding the way scholarship has regarded Hopkinson's writing. Such scholarship generally refuses to see her texts as residing squarely in the realm of science fiction, and reads them instead as hybrid forms of science fiction. This generic classification requires interrogation because many of Hopkinson's works, in fact, include much content that would situate the texts comfortably within the science fiction genre. That this content is frequently passed over in scholarly dialogues suggests the presence of underlying assumptions about the kind of textual universe that is considered viably science fiction. In an effort to elucidate these politics of genre, I will first describe my understanding of generic hybridity and address what the concept seems to afford in the context of science fiction. I will then explain how previous scholars have centralized

generic hybridity in reading Hopkinson's works. I argue that the consequences of this centralization, this hesitancy to view Hopkinson's writing as science fiction, are that such canonization judgments ultimately keep science fiction from becoming more epistemologically varied; this means that, for example, white, Western worldviews continue to predominate ideologically in science fiction even while texts featuring other worldviews could just as easily be welcomed according to the genre's conventional criteria. I will then focus on Hopkinson's *Brown Girl in the Ring* (1998)—redressing the significance of its overlooked technoscientific components—and argue that the novel's heart transplant storyline can be read as a commentary on the politics of genre I scrutinize in this study. Lastly, I will address the proposals of other scholars who seek to relieve these fraught politics through new genres, and will counter that any productive transformation might best occur within the form and title of science fiction.

Hybridity has long been a central, though much-debated, concept in postcolonial studies. Hybridity has been seen, at times, as a productive rejection of essentialist notions of identity and of binary logic in the context of colonizer-colonized relations. It has likewise been theorized as an embracing of the politically resistant possibilities of living in the realm of "both/and"—living in the "'in-between' spaces" (1) and "the interstices" (2), as Homi K. Bhabha names them. However, there has also been skepticism about the term, with scholars such as Robert J. C. Young cautioning that postcolonial theory should not rely on a term whose origins lie in racist discourses that hinge on, for example, latent colonial desires for miscegenation. While the definitions and types of hybridity (cultural, racial, linguistic, literary, etc.) vary vastly across disciplines and according to scholar, my use of the concept here is strictly tied to genre. Thus, I use "generic hybridity" to describe texts that are seen to blend elements of two or more literary/artistic genres. This generic hybridity can either produce a new genre or subgenre—as in Lee Skallerup's articulation of magical dystopias, which blend magical elements with dystopian literature—or it may just recognize that a work culls elements from multiple genres, without the subsequent claim that a new genre manifests from that mixing.

Thinking about genre through hybridity admittedly seems appropriate within the nexus of science fiction and postcolonial scholarship. After all, as scholars have demonstrated, science fiction's historical reliance on Western notions of reason and knowledge have "divided the genre into a fantastic continuum that . . . excludes fantasy, women, and people of color" (Barr xv).

The very terminology of the genre—*science* fiction—professes authoritatively that the futures imagined within it are legitimate, rational, provable. This focus on legitimacy is upheld by many scholars—Darko Suvin, for example, whose perspective will be explored later in this paper—but also, frequently, by writers themselves, such as popular Canadian science fiction author Robert J. Sawyer. Sawyer announces that "[b]y 'science fiction,' [he] mean[s] the real thing: stories that *reasonably* extrapolate from *known* science; stories that might *plausibly* happen" (12, emphasis mine). The generic confines writers and scholars establish demonstrate how science fiction can shape the conceptual boundaries of the future by structurally designating which futures are scientific or plausible. Jessica Langer suggests that Canadian science fiction, in particular, has "erased . . . from its possible futures" (*Postcolonialism* 45) those minority communities and writers who do not fit Westernized generic criteria. This erasure points to why using concepts of generic hybridity to study the ways writers move through the boundaries of the genre does seem to make sense. As Langer tells us, "[r]adical hybridity" can pave the way for "radical inclusion" (*Postcolonialism* 126).

It is no surprise, then, given the affordances of hybridity, that many have relied on it as a means to articulate perspectives on the writings of Jamaica-born, Toronto-based Nalo Hopkinson. A scan of some titles on Hopkinson's work quickly demonstrates the conceptual sway of hybridity on discussions of genre in her fiction: Gordon Collier's "Spaceship Creole: Nalo Hopkinson, Canadian-Caribbean Fabulist Fiction, and Linguistic/Cultural Syncretism"; Jessica Langer's "The Shapes of Dystopia: Boundaries, Hybridity and the Politics of Power"; Ruby S. Ramraj's "Nalo Hopkinson: Transcending Genre Boundaries"; Catherine Ramsdell's "Nalo Hopkinson and the Reinvention of Science Fiction"; and Lee Skallerup's "Re-Evaluating Suvin: *Brown Girl in the Ring* as Effective Magical Dystopia." The articles themselves mirror the focus on generic hybridity signalled by their titles. For Skallerup, this hybridity manifests through the ways *Brown Girl* "challenges the perceived norms of both dystopia and science fiction" (67) and "explores and questions the relationship between utopia and dystopia" (73), though the critic suggests the novel generally "fall[s] more readily into the category magic realism" (69). Collier expresses that *Brown Girl* is "a racy generic amalgam of dystopia, futuristic technology, supernatural horror and witchcraft, generational romance, mythic quest story, and trickster tale" (444), and he praises Hopkinson's "clever syncretization of the generic features of science fiction and dystopia with the operational fabric of Caribbean folk culture" in *Brown*

Girl and *Midnight Robber* (2000) (455). Langer, meanwhile, is one of the few critics who admits that "[r]eading Hopkinson's text as science fiction," more conventionally speaking, "is appropriate" ("The Shapes" 174); even still, in her subsequently published *Postcolonialism and Science Fiction* (2011), Langer summarizes that "[i]n a sense, all postcolonial science fiction—indeed, all postcolonial cultural production—is about hybridity" (125). Ramraj labels *Brown Girl* as first "fantasy and horror" (135), and then as part of "the science fiction genre" (136), suggesting that she is hesitant to locate Hopkinson's writing within one genre. On the same note, Ramsdell finds Hopkinson's writing "hard to classify," a combination of "[s]cience fiction, fantasy and postcolonial Caribbean-Canadian literature" (155).

As we can see, Hopkinson's texts are frequently interpreted by scholars as *hybridizing* science fiction rather than *contributing to* or politically and radically *forming part of* science fiction.[1] Her works are rarely treated as fully realized, entirely admissible contributions to science fiction, conventionally understood, and this treatment has consequences. As Sherryl Vint notes, "the act of labeling certain texts 'science fiction,' and hence shaping the genre to particular forms and ends, is also an act that produces the genre's communities of practice" (7). In other words, generic classification can shape the actual readerships that engage with bodies of texts. This classification process also influences the formation of what Brian Attebery and Veronica Hollinger call the "sf megatext": "a kind of continually expanding archive of shared images, situations, plots, characters, settings, and themes generated across a multiplicity of media" (vii). The political dimension of the sf megatext seems to be what critics let into it and what they exclude from it via processes of canonization; the danger of the megatext is that it will simply become another space in which Western notions of science and knowledge will dominate, hindering the ability of science fiction texts that do not share the same epistemological foundation to take up space within and thus form the archive, thereby barring those texts from shaping readerships, as Vint would add. That Hopkinson's work is most frequently considered only within the "science fiction *and* . . ." category, as if naming her texts simply "science fiction" might be unjustifiable, means that the ideological transformations her writing could foster within the megatext do not manifest. Another problem is that because few scholars use specific or theoretically contextualized articulations of hybridity to discuss genre and Hopkinson's fiction, the claims about Hopkinson's generic hybridity run the risk of being a bit broad and perhaps even superficial; it is easy to call a

text generically hybrid when we are working with a de-contextualized usage of the term because almost any entity—genre, body, community—can be seen as "composed of . . . diverse elements" ("Hybrid" n. pag.). There is also the danger that reducing complex works to the signifier hybrid ascribes to them an easy narrative, particularly in terms of interpreting works through patterns of genre. My critique thus urges that Hopkinson scholarship be reframed. We need to widen the focus on hybridity and recover the *science fiction* from Hopkinson's work.

Hopkinson's first novel, *Brown Girl in the Ring*, is set in a near-future world wildly different and yet, at times, eerily indistinguishable from our own. The novel follows the life of Ti-Jeanne, a young Afro-Caribbean Canadian woman, newly a mother, who is gifted with capital-S "Sight," the ability to see spiritual visions. She lives in the Burn, what is left of downtown Toronto after the city's economic collapse and the resulting Riots have spurred a white flight that leaves Toronto's disordered core to the multicultural underprivileged. Ti-Jeanne lives with her grandmother, Gros-Jeanne or "Mami," who is a Caribbean "seer woman" (36) who "serve[s] the spirits and . . . heal[s] the living" through mixed Afro-Caribbean spiritual rituals (59). The lives of Ti-Jeanne and Gros-Jeanne are complicated by Tony, Ti-Jeanne's ex-boyfriend and the father of her child, whose involvement with the novel's central antagonist propels the plot. Rudy, the villain, is the head druglord and ruler of the Burn. He holds significant power over the personal and professional dealings of many citizens in Hopkinson's core Toronto. Like Gros-Jeanne, who is incidentally his former wife, Rudy has spiritual command, though he uses it for self-interested purposes rather than for healing.

Brown Girl is marketed as fantasy, according to the back cover of the 2012 Grand Central edition, and is read by scholars as generically hybrid. Yet, the novel includes numerous elements that locate it quite straightforwardly within the traditional bounds of science fiction. These elements primarily take the form of what leading science fiction scholar Darko Suvin has famously called "*novums*." In Suvin's articulation, a *novum* is "an important deviation from the author's norm of reality" (36). In science fiction, *novums* typically take the shape of new objects, events, practices, or social structures. As Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr. explains them, they are "the radically new inventions, discoveries, or social relations around which otherwise familiar fictional elements are reorganized in a cogent, historically plausible way" (47). Traditionally, the presence of *novums* is the core criterion guiding whether a text is given entry into the canon of science fiction. For Suvin, "the validation of the [*novum*]

by scientifically methodical cognition into which the reader is inexorably led is the *sufficient* condition for SF" (37). Skallerup has called for a re-evaluation of Suvin's core concepts in light of the fact that many texts which would before rely on technological *novums* or "defamiliarizers" might now use "magical aspects . . . [to] defamiliarize[ ] the reader" (71). Thus, Skallerup shows, Suvin's insistence on valid "scientifically methodical cognition" might not make as much sense when applied to emergent science fiction from recent decades.

While Hopkinson is persistently included in the category of speculative writers who do not fit the mould of science fiction traditionally conceived, a closer look reveals that Suvin's concepts actually hold true within much of her writing. We need not re-evaluate Suvin, to borrow Skallerup's language, in order for science fiction to accommodate Hopkinson's work; there is enough within *Brown Girl*, for example, for the text to situate *itself* within science fiction's bounds. Thus, while Sharon DeGraw claims that Hopkinson "revises the technological and scientific focus of traditional science fiction," and while she perceives, in *Brown Girl*, that "[t]echnology is largely elided" (193), the novel is actually populated by references to technoscientific *novums* that draw it securely into the corpus of science fiction. These *novums* are obscured in scholarly readings because of the collective overemphasis on the novel's generic hybridity and the claims of scholars who see *Brown Girl* as fundamentally magical in nature.

Perhaps the most important of the novel's technoscientific *novums* is the "Porcine Organ Harvest Program [that] has revolutionized human transplant technology" (2). This program, an extrapolation from real-world health sciences, facilitates the transplanting of pig organs into human bodies for medical purposes.[2] Other technological *novums* include the "synapse cordons" that Rudy's underlings use: they are described as "baseball-sized lump[s] of what look[s] like modelling clay" that send "a stake sprouting a good eight feet high from each lump of clay," causing "branchlike filaments [to] explod[e] from the triangle of stakes" (114). Rudy's group also uses "dazers," which recall current-day "tasers," but are here "the portable equivalent to the synapse cordon[s]" (116). When Ti-Jeanne and Tony visit the Strip, we are given more glimpses of the technological advancements of the novel-world. For instance, there are "Deeplight ads glow[ing] at the doors to virtually every establishment: moving 3-D illusions that [are] hyped-up, glossy lies about the pleasures to be found inside" (176). There are "copter limos that [bus] people in from the 'burbs to the rooftops of the Strip" (176). We also learn that the Eaton Centre has been secured by

"coded security fence[s]" and, the narrative explains, "[i]f your biocode wasn't in the mall's data banks, you got an electric jolt rather than admittance" (178). Further, a group of children Ti-Jeanne encounters are able to create "the illusion of a battalion of feral children" (183) through a "jury-rigged electronic box, about the size of a loaf of bread, held together with patchy layers of masking and electric tape" (185) and a "Deeplight projector hooked up on the subway tracks" (186).

I include this list of *novums* to illuminate the dark spot (i.e. technology) in previous scholarship on *Brown Girl* and to make explicit those technoscientific elements that have been neglected. *Brown Girl* clearly imagines a world that is *saturated* by technoscientific artifacts. The tech references, in some cases, are admittedly minor, and these *novums* often become the more procedural means by which the plot moves forward rather than the focus of the story (in contrast to the novel's most significant *novum*, which is the futuristic spatial relations governing Toronto's core and suburban areas). I argue, however, that the degree to which the novel focuses on the technoscientific development in the world seems plausible given that the society depicted does not appear to be far off in the future and given that the novel focuses on the Burn, an underprivileged community wherein more advanced technoscientific materials would likely not be available.

Critics' hesitance to confront the novel's technologies might stem from the fact that the book certainly *critiques* technological advancement at the same time that it introduces science fiction technologies, and that critique may lead readers away from thinking about the *novums* as important science fiction elements in their own right. Indeed, Hopkinson's world aligns tech with the villains and the privileged elite. Through its references to, on one hand, the Eaton Centre's identity-checking code bank and the elegant copter limos that descend onto rooftops from the 'burbs, and on the other hand, the comparatively makeshift electronic box the street children use for defence, the reader understands that while this is a highly technological world, the high-level tech is accessed primarily by those with the money and power to do so—namely, those in the 'burbs, with whom the reader does not become very familiar. Readers thus need to reconcile that Hopkinson critiques the current and future state of technology use at the same time that she inserts her work, quite deliberately, into a body of fiction that centralizes technoscientific development. This reconciliation is about moving away from how the novel performs genre *hybridly* and wondering about the ways it performs genre *conventionally*.

I also provide the catalogue of *novums* in order to consider that the tendency *not* to tackle these technological elements in published scholarship on *Brown Girl* perhaps emerges from collective underlying assumptions about the kind of Caribbean Canadian world Hopkinson (re)presents. Critic Sarah Wood wisely reminds us that "in the Caribbean worldview it would be more surprising, more implausible, to imagine a world where the living and dead, humans and gods did not coexist than one where they did" (325). Yet for those who hail from the white Western secular mode of thinking, a world in which spirituality and science logically coexist can be difficult to envision, as such thinking often conceives of the two as mutually exclusive. In scholarship, Caribbean folklore seems to be interpreted as one of two distinct sides in the generic hybridization, when in fact, as Hopkinson herself remarks in an interview, "[f]olklore, old tales, old ballads . . . a lot of them are fantastical in nature, or they imagine the future, or they imagine . . . how we got here. They are the sort of original literature that you see nowadays in science fiction and fantasy" ("Nalo Hopkinson" n. pag.). In other words, critics presuppose a natural separation between these Caribbean elements and science fiction traditionally conceived, which leads them to see Hopkinson's fiction as hybridizing two very different traditions. Yet, as Hopkinson notes in the excerpt above, Caribbean folklore can be seen as making the same speculative moves that science fiction does, even if the two might do so from different epistemological grounds.

There is also, of course, the possibility that the technoscientific aspects of Hopkinson's novel are legitimately minor enough *not* to elicit scholarly discussion. This paper thus seeks to show how those aspects are vital to an alternative, politicized reading of the novel's genre. But the paper's goal is also to wonder about the implications of this gap in the discussion, and of this focus on Hopkinson's supposed generic hybridity, particularly within a reading climate that has long and comfortably categorized texts that incorporate Judeo-Christian belief systems within the bounds of science fiction.[3] Unlike those works, fiction that features non-white belief systems is often considered too far down on the "fantastic continuum" (Barr xv) to be justly labelled science fiction. Yet crucially, as Langer points out, if we consider elements of these belief systems against elements of classic science fiction, the unsurprising conclusion is that the former is indeed no less plausible than the latter: "Indigenous culture, including faith in indigenous divinities, makes as little sense within a purely Western scientific context as does belief in various other SF tropes such as faster-than-light travel"

(*Postcolonialism* 137). There is some glitch in the matrix of genre that sees faster-than-light travel, UFOs, and alien presence as phenomena that satisfy the validity criterion of science fiction while, say, spiritual command—such as that which *Brown Girl*'s Rudy and Gros-Jeanne have—is regarded as too impossible to belong to fiction bearing science's authoritative name. Clearly, as Langer writes, "indigenous and other colonized systems of knowledge are not only valid but are, at times, more scientifically sound than is Western scientific thought" (*Postcolonialism* 9). If epistemological soundness and validity are the necessary preconditions for science fiction, then texts that feature, say, Caribbean systems of thought and belief no doubt meet the traditional criteria. Perhaps there is a kind of ideological justice in reading these works squarely as science fiction.

Moreover, if science fiction is widely recognized as the realm of the possible, and fantasy is the realm of the impossible, then I have to wonder why so many critics fail to see Hopkinson's work as anything but a hybrid of the two (and/or of other related genres). Hopkinson herself provides a hesitant and disheartening explanation; when asked, on the CBC radio show *Q*, "Why is it so hard for some people to imagine black people in the future?," Hopkinson replies: "It's because I think there's still this notion that we're not smart enough," adding that this difficulty to imagine black futures derives from the underlying assumption that black communities do not have the "technology or intellect" for the kinds of futures science fiction constructs (n. pag.). Hopkinson has previously lamented the lack of characters of colour in speculative fiction in an essay from 2007, observing that, frequently, the only non-white characters allowed entry are aliens, monsters, and the like ("Maybe" 101). The title of this piece, "Maybe They're Phasing Us In: Re-Mapping Fantasy Tropes in the Face of Gender, Race, and Sexuality," recounts what Hopkinson's brother suggests when they discuss this predicament: "Maybe they're phasing us in" (101). The idea he expresses is clear: black bodies, black epistemologies, are often only allowed to exist under the cover of alienness in science fiction. Importantly, it is not science fiction itself that creates this condition; as a genre, its canonization practices depend on creators, consumers, and critics. Thus, if, as Hopkinson and her brother say, black individuals are not seen, within the genre, as *plausible* future bodies and with knowledges extrapolated from the current world, this is only a product of critical and creative practices that disallow those from the label of science fiction. That science fiction is phasing in black identities—that black identities are being incorporated

into the genre in stages—can thus be seen in the way works are categorized/canonized. Generic hybridity, in this sense, could function as one structural manifestation of this phasing in; the end goal may be just—the incorporation of black subjectivities and epistemologies into science fiction—but one has to wonder why they need to be phased in through the discourse of generic hybridity, why they cannot be wholly present in science fiction from the outset, as much a shaping force as the more fully "accepted" content in the canon.

Brown Girl itself invites readers to regard it as science fiction, especially within my allegorical reading of the novel, which perceives the novel's setting as a concretization of the fraught politics of genre. The relationship between Hopkinson's segregated inner-city Toronto, largely made up of destitute minority groups, and the privileged, presumably white-dominated outcity can be read as a metaphor for the relationship between science fiction, traditionally conceived, and the body of texts that have historically been excluded from it based on, for example, Suvin's monopolizing conception of the genre. In this allegory, the suburbs correspond to Suvin's style of exclusionary science fiction, through which white, Western epistemologies have historically dominated, and the Burn corresponds to the minority science fiction texts (accurately paralleled by the Burn's multiculturalism) that do not adhere to these same epistemological fundamentals and are therefore rarely treated as science fiction proper.

In this reading of the novel, the heart transplant storyline becomes particularly important, as it features a body part from the Burn—a place historically sectioned off from the suburbs—being incorporated into a body from the suburbs. At the outset of the novel, the reader learns that the premier of Ontario, Uttley, is in poor health and requires a heart transplant (3). A representative from the Angel of Mercy transplant hospital approaches Rudy to find "a viable human heart" for transplant into Uttley's body (1). Rudy eventually tasks Tony with finding the heart, instructing him to "[f]ind somebody the right size, the same blood type, healthy, and arrange for them to be in a condition to donate their heart" (30). Rudy's demand leads to the act of Tony terminally injuring Gros-Jeanne and calling in the Angel of Mercy workers to deliver her heart to Uttley, whose body, after some complications, ultimately accepts the new organ.

I propose that we read this transplant plot as a narrativization of the potential power in reading *Brown Girl* as science fiction—in the act of minority texts and writers taking up space in the body of science fiction. I see, for example, Uttley's declining health as a symbol of the ill health of the

genre *without* texts such as Hopkinson's included within it; when we refuse to read such texts as science fiction, how can the genre survive, remain vital? That Uttley requires a *heart* transplant of all things suggests, in my reading, that science fiction needs texts such as *Brown Girl* to sustain the heartbeat of the genre. In many ways, the "transplant" process is in the hands of scholars and readers: we need to read these works as science fiction in order for the texts to productively and radically occupy the body of the genre. This occupation promises to be neither smooth nor without its own problems; when Uttley's doctors are "fighting to establish a symbiosis between their patient's body and its new heart" during the surgery, their efforts literalize the conceptual struggle going on between science fiction (represented by Uttley's body) and all those who have been excluded from it (represented by the heart from the multicultural inner city) (236). This is a struggle that manifests subtly, for example, in the critical tendency to sidestep *Brown Girl*'s legitimate presence in the science fiction canon. When Uttley recounts that she "*realized that she was being invaded in some way, taken over*," and that the transplanted heart "*leapt and battered against her chest*," her words suggest the ideological friction involved in reorienting ourselves to set aside the potentials of generic hybridity and to activate alternative, political possibilities by contrarily having these texts occupy space within a single genre—a genre from which they might previously have been excluded (236).

Allegorically, the result of the heart transplant is that when a piece of the generic body is taken over, the whole body begins to work anew, and in that there is a kind of transformation-from-within. Uttley's body accepts the new heart, and the implication is that she has been psychologically changed: "*Bit by bit, she was losing the ability to control her own body. The heart was taking it over*" (237). Uttley knows that now "*she [will] no longer be herself*" (237). Michelle Reid explains that these lines "indicate[ ] a fundamental alteration, not a fortification. The fact that her brain cells were 'given up one by one' implies a submission and takeover" (311). Indeed, in line with this takeover, *Brown Girl* seeks to *take up space* in the established body of science fiction—to form and reform that body from within, rather than to foster new hybrid bodies alongside it. For Reid, Uttley's "loss of consciousness into total 'blackness' suggests a revolutionary act of resistance by Gros-Jeanne's heart, perhaps making the word 'blackness' racially-charged" (311). This reading works within my interpretation of the transplant, too, as it suggests that a transformative force of blackness—hitherto denied the power of physical occupation—is revitalizing the genre.

The transplant occasions a figurative change of heart in Uttley. She uncharacteristically decides to "rejuvenate Toronto" (239), "offer interest-free loans to small enterprises" in the Burn (240), and restructure the organ donation program to make it more conscionable (239). Apparently, Mami's spirit has infused Uttley's conscience and refigured the premier's moral compass. Critics have read this moment through the perspective of hybridity and syncretism. Skallerup writes that when Uttley "gets Gros-Jeanne's heart, she is transformed. She becomes a reflection of how Gros-Jeanne lived her life practicing cultural hybridity" (81). Neal Baker perceives that "Uttley's urban plan [of rejuvenation] parallels the 'intertwined' yet 'distinct' streams in her blood, promising a syncretic metropolis that will join divisions between the suburbs—primarily white—and the multicultural inner city" (221). Reid agrees that "the 'intertwined' streams of blood indicate a more equal partnership based on a hybrid combination," rather than simply "an act of possession" (311).

In my reading, the heart becomes an enduring *intrusion* in Uttley's body; because it is a whole, corporeal artifact with tangible boundaries that mark inside from outside, the heart represents not so much a blending, but instead the imposition of an independent force, with its own agency, within Uttley's body. If we think of this within the allegory I propose, this force becomes *Brown Girl* itself, a text with genre-shaping agency, and one that intrudes upon, ultimately *forms*, and thus determines the body of science fiction, as opposed to creating new hybrid bodies. Notably, this reading assigns more power to both the heart, or more precisely the spirit it carries, and the text. Readings that see Uttley's change as a moment of hybridity mute the independence of the new force (the heart/Gros-Jeanne's spirit and the novel), thereby suggesting its future discontinuation, because hybridity as a concept carries the anxiety that each individual component could be diluted in new hybrid forms. Moreover, these interpretations do not seem to account for the fact that Uttley's moral transformation is unwanted—her body and mind fight it until the moment Gros-Jeanne's spirit takes over (236-37)—and thus the heart transplant speaks to a loophole in the system by which the oppressed can turn body occupation (literary/generic, allegorically) into a source of transformative, decolonizing power.

Readers never know the results of Uttley's figurative change of heart, as we are unable to see her plans manifest within the scope of the novel. Reid views this as "optimistic but ambiguous," writing that "it remains to be seen how the localised endeavours will map out across the whole city" (312). In the allegory I describe, this ambiguity suggests that while *Brown Girl*

may, indeed, be newly shaping part of science fiction's body, the results of this effort are undetermined. The generic transformations catalyzed by the political act of reading *Brown Girl* as science fiction may not unfold in an altogether smooth and positive way; there is bound to be friction, just as Uttley is bound to put up a fight against the entity now forming part of her. This friction is foreshadowed earlier, as the entire transplant is made possible by the forced removal of Gros-Jeanne's heart. That this removal is violent and unwanted highlights, in my allegorical reading, the conflict involved in the fraught politics of genre: it is not that science fiction has worked to forcibly cull the heart of previously excluded writing for its own use, but that when these works are finally seen as constitutive of science fiction's body, this process of recognition and reorientation creates as much friction as it does rejuvenation. If the transplant were presented only as easy and desired by all sides, it would not work allegorically because it would not authentically represent the epistemological and politicized disputes undergirding science fiction and surrounding genres.

Indeed, it is this very politicized generic matrix that has compelled some scholars to declare alternative genres, subgenres, and entirely different nomenclatures for types of speculative writing that are based in more than just the white, Western mode of scientific thinking. Mark Dery puts forth the term "Afro-Futurism" to describe "[s]peculative fiction that treats African-American themes and addresses African-American concerns in the context of twentieth-century techno-culture" (8). Madhu Dubey suggests we consider "black anti-science fiction" as a foil to traditional science fiction: in this subgenre, "Afro-diasporic systems of knowledge and belief . . . are consistently shown to confound and triumph over scientific reason" (34). "The descriptor 'speculative fiction,'" too, Langer reminds us, "has often been assigned to works that are cross-genre," and thus has been used for those minority texts that do not neatly fit into the Western scientific bend fortified by some science fiction scholars and writers (*Postcolonialism* 9). Yet, Langer wisely points out, "the 'science' part of science fiction is essential in a discussion of postcolonial SF," and so speculative fiction comes up a bit short as a prospective space for science fiction's outlaws (9). Speculative fiction, theorized differently depending on author or critic—Margaret Atwood notably suggests that it should include "things that really could happen" (*In Other Worlds* 6)—could be that space if it were not for the fact that there would still be a separate or subsidiary dedicated science fiction genre, and such a partitioning of science from speculation maintains the same

hierarchical structure that claims real-world validity for one set of narratives while relegating other sets to mere fantasy and conjecture. Together, these proposals for new nomenclatures constitute an effort to create distinct literary communities that are inclusive, and yet this attempted inclusion threatens to repeat a separatist instinct inhered in sectioning off alternative genres.

Having considered some alternatives, I return to "science fiction" as the title that could be powerfully claimed in order to recuperate hitherto-obscured narratives and ideologies. One reason for this is that the genre nominally attributes a scientific-cultural currency or power to the epistemologies circulated within, which matters because including or excluding texts under the banner of "science" can vitally (re)form what readers see as valid or sound epistemologies within the context of science fiction. This is especially important given the sometimes arbitrary reasons why a text which could viably be called science fiction is categorized into other genres. Hopkinson has addressed this in response to the question "Why don't people of colour write speculative fiction?": "We do, but it's unlikely that you'll find it on the sf shelves in your bookstores . . . [because it] end[s] up on the shelves for black authors, not in the sf section" ("Dark Ink" n. pag.). As long as we relegate narratives by minority writers to other categories not bearing the authoritative-sounding "science" qualifier, or as long as we consider these narratives only a hybrid form of science fiction, even if they meet the genre's usual requirements, we will continue to uphold the internalized hierarchies that see non-Western epistemologies and knowledges as primarily magical and thus not valid or rational in their own right. Also, to treat differently those works that include decolonizing spiritual elements is to discount, in the name of plausibility, an entire body of writing by communities whose present *and* future realities are religiously and spiritually embedded in what the secular Western world deems magical and thus beyond the realm of science fiction.

It seems appropriate to end this paper by considering how Hopkinson situates her own writing within these wider politics of genre. In publications and interviews, Hopkinson most often regards her work as science fiction, and she finds herself having to defend this self-fashioning:

> [W]hen people ask me why a black Caribbean woman is writing science fiction, or why I'm not angry at having my work 'labelled' as science fiction—a label I myself chose—or what science fiction has to do with the realities of black and Caribbean and female lives, I find myself thinking something along the lines of ain'tlawomanthisiswhatsciencefictionlookslikemysciencefictionincludesme. ("The Profession" 5-6)

Hopkinson constructs herself as "writ[ing] within a particularly northern tradition of speculative and fantastical fiction" in which "the speculative and fantastical elements of a story must be 'real'" (*Whispers* xii). She expresses a deep and enduring connection to science fiction: "science fiction as a literature probably helped to save my life. . . . So even when I'm critical of it, I'm very happy that it's here" (Johnston 215). In these quotes and elsewhere, Hopkinson points to one of the central ideas this paper has sought to draw out, which is that there is some measure of power in adhering to the label of science fiction. There is power in choosing or claiming science fiction as one's own. There is power in occupying space within a genre, for there lies the chance to transform it from within.

NOTES

1 There is one notable exception here: Ramsdell, like myself, sees that "scientific discovery is crucial to the plot of" *Brown Girl* (156), and she acknowledges the "numerous traditional science fiction elements" in the text (167). Still, Ramsdell returns to the conclusion that Hopkinson's texts do not contribute to science fiction so much as they "subvert the genre" and "blend[ ]" the "more traditional tenets of science fiction . . . with various mythologies and magics" (170). The diction here—subversion, blending—echoes the interpretive patterns I take issue with, ones that persistently see Hopkinson as resisting or hybridizing science fiction rather than occupying the space of science fiction herself.

2 This pig-to-human organ replacement system anticipates the "pigoon project" in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), a novel that is more widely accepted as science fiction, albeit for various reasons and not simply for the pigoon development. In Atwood's novel, the "goal of the pigoon project [is] to grow an assortment of foolproof human-tissue organs in a transgenic knockout pig host—organs that [will] transplant smoothly and avoid rejection" (27). We might imagine that the "Porcine Organ Harvest Program" in *Brown Girl* operates similarly to Atwood's pigoon project.

3 See Jo Walton's "Religious Science Fiction" blog post (and proceeding comments section) for examples.

WORKS CITED

Attebery, Brian, and Veronica Hollinger. "Parabolas of Science Fiction." Introduction. *Parabolas of Science Fiction*. Ed. Attebery and Hollinger. Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 2013. vii-xv. Print.

Atwood, Margaret. *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2006. Print.

—. *Oryx and Crake*. 2003. Toronto: Seal, 2004. Print.

Baker, Neal. "Syncretism: A Federalist Approach to Canadian Science Fiction." *Extrapolation: A Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy* 42.3 (2001): 218-31. Web. 18 Dec. 2013.

Barr, Marleen S. "'All At One Point' Conveys the Point, Period: Or, Black Science Fiction is Bursting Out All Over." Preface. *Afro-Future Females: Black Writers Chart Science*

Fiction's Newest New-Wave Trajectory. Ed. Barr. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2008. ix-xxiv. Print.
Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.
Collier, Gordon. "Spaceship Creole: Nalo Hopkinson, Canadian-Caribbean Fabulist Fiction, and Linguistic/Cultural Syncretism." *Matatu: Journal for African Culture and Society* 27.1 (2003): 442-55. Print.
Csicsery-Ronay Jr., Istvan. *The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction*. 2008. Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 2011. Print.
DeGraw, Sharon. "*Brown Girl in the Ring* as Urban Policy." *Blast, Corrupt, Dismantle, Erase: Contemporary North American Dystopian Literature*. Ed. Brett Josef Grubisic, Gisèle M. Baxter, and Tara Lee. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2014. 193-215. Print.
Dery, Mark. "Black to the Future: Afro-Futurism 1.0." *Afro-Future Females: Black Writers Chart Science Fiction's Newest New-Wave Trajectory*. Ed. Marleen S. Barr. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2008. 6-13. Print.
Dubey, Madhu. "Becoming Animal in Black Women's Science Fiction." *Afro-Future Females: Black Writers Chart Science Fiction's Newest New-Wave Trajectory*. Ed. Marleen S. Barr. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2008. 31-51. Print.
Hopkinson, Nalo. *Brown Girl in the Ring*. 1998. New York: Grand Central, 2012. Print.
—. "Dark Ink." 1998. *Nalo Hopkinson*. 31 Dec. 2006. Web. 16 Dec. 2013.
—. Introduction. *Whispers from the Cotton Tree Root: Caribbean Fabulist Fiction*. Ed. Hopkinson. Montpelier: Invisible Cities, 2000. Print.
—. "Maybe They're Phasing Us In: Re-Mapping Fantasy Tropes in the Face of Gender, Race, and Sexuality." *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 18.1 (2007): 99-107. Web. 19 Mar. 2016.
—. "The Profession of Science Fiction, 60: Sometimes It Might Be True." *Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction* 91 (Summer 2004): 5-9. Print.
"Hybrid." Def. adj. 2a. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. OED Online. Web. Mar. 2016.
Johnston, Nancy. "'Happy That It's Here': An Interview with Nalo Hopkinson." *Queer Universes: Sexualities and Science Fiction*. Ed. Wendy Gay Pearson, Veronica Hollinger, and Joan Gordon. Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2008. 200-15. Print.
Langer, Jessica. *Postcolonialism and Science Fiction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. Print.
—. "The Shapes of Dystopia: Boundaries, Hybridity and the Politics of Power." *Science Fiction, Imperialism and the Third World: Essays on Postcolonial Literature and Film*. Ed. Ericka Hoagland and Reema Sarwal. Jefferson: McFarland, 2010. 171-87. Print.
"Nalo Hopkinson on racial and gender diversity in science fiction literature." *Q Radio Show*. CBC Radio, 25 Nov. 2015. Web. 18 Mar. 2016.
Ramraj, Ruby S. "Nalo Hopkinson: Transcending Genre Boundaries." *Beyond the Canebrakes: Caribbean Women Writers in Canada*. Ed. Emily Allen Williams. Trenton: Africa World, 2008. 135-53. Print.
Ramsdell, Catherine. "Nalo Hopkinson and the Reinvention of Science Fiction." *Beyond the Canebrakes: Caribbean Women Writers in Canada*. Ed. Emily Allen Williams. Trenton: Africa World, 2008. 155-72. Print.
Reid, Michelle. "Crossing the Boundaries of the 'Burn': Canadian Multiculturalism and Caribbean Hybridity in Nalo Hopkinson's *Brown Girl in the Ring*." *Extrapolation: A Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy* 46.3 (2005): 297-314. Web. 29 Nov. 2013.
Sawyer, Robert J., ed. *Distant Early Warnings: Canada's Best Science Fiction*. Markham: Red Deer, 2009. Print.

Skallerup, Lee. "Re-Evaluating Suvin: *Brown Girl in the Ring* as Effective Magical Dystopia." *Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction* 104 (Winter 2008): 67-87. Print.
Suvin, Darko. "The State of the Art in Science Fiction Theory: Determining and Delimiting the Genre." *Science Fiction Studies* 6.1 (1979): 32-45. Web. 19 Dec. 2013.
Vint, Sherryl. "What Is Science Fiction?" *Science Fiction: A Guide for the Perplexed*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2014. 1-15. Print.
Walton, Jo. "Religious Science Fiction." *Tor.com*. 21 Jan. 2011. Web. 17 Dec. 2013.
Wood, Sarah. "'Serving the Spirits': Emergent Identities in Nalo Hopkinson's *Brown Girl in the Ring*." *Extrapolation: A Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy* 46.3 (2005): 315-26. Web. 14 Dec. 2013.
Young, Robert J. C. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.

Pearl Pirie

where 10 people gather

a bird of prey and some pigeons of prayer
protest they too are female

when 4mg makes mental fireworks stop
living can resume its vigil

clear articulation is a symptom of privilege
stumbling on a forced "tell me more"

what we have learned is a chute, a straw
in the damp crack between lips which open, incendiary

3rd generation inheritance bowls, earrings
were sourced from Chinese kid factories

I imitate the cat, sprawl
and by chance my shoulder pops back into joint

a tumble of grumbles.
why shoot a breeze that's already emptied of you?

swat midges. did you know
a cloud the size of a bus yields under half a cup of rain?

Jeff Fedoruk

Plotting "Nowhere"
Towards a Theory of Urban Folklore on Vancouver's Gentrifying Frontier

On the subject of urban development in Vancouver's East End, particularly along the Hastings Street Corridor, Vancouver condominium marketer Bob Rennie has asserted that the city can develop in only one direction: "I've been saying since 2002 that the city will grow east . . . I only have three stories I tell all the time, and that's one of them" (Gold S5). Rennie's "story" is not unique. It reflects the beliefs, and even traditions, of a large group of marketers, developers, and city planners who have a vision for Vancouver. Not everyone agrees with Rennie, however, and other groups are quick to claim that such a story silences the voices of those who have lived and worked in Vancouver's East End prior to this recent vision. Consequently, designs for spatial growth and densification in the city take on narrative implications, with recent trends in urban development becoming normalized as "grassroots" public policies, pushing at and overwriting the everyday concerns of extant residents. This could be a working definition of *gentrification*. And yet the term contains many divisive and contested understandings, while nonetheless perpetuating a process that already has dangerous momentum. Broadly understood in cultural geography as "the transformation of a working-class or vacant area of the central city into middle-class residential and/or commercial use" (Lees, Slater, and Wyly xv), gentrification has been critiqued as "the public hegemony of creative economics and cultural politics" in the context of Canadian neoliberal urbanism (Keil 241). At the same time, literary critics such as Sarah Brouillette have taken interest in the role that the arts and creative economies play within processes of gentrification and discourses of urban renewal, making "literary expression a barometer for the

creative capital that is now often positioned at the heart of civic renewal" (426). I hope to nuance the concept of gentrification by identifying Vancouver's Hastings Corridor as a current site of cultural struggle around issues arising from gentrification and by mobilizing a multifaceted theory of *urban folklore*, that is, of structured narratives and stories that represent the beliefs, traditions, and ritualistic tendencies of various urban peoples and groups.

Urban folklore is the nexus of discourses and stories around strategies for urban living. An urban folkloristics accounts for the power dynamics that exist within these discourses and within the process of gentrification, between the development policies that have perpetuated gentrification and the narratives that both define and resist it as an inevitability. I argue that, while policy actors and the ownership class have utilized a pseudo-grassroots or "AstroTurf" urban folklore to normalize gentrification processes and to strengthen their political and economic agendas concerning gentrification, an urban folklore from the perspective of extant residents continues to have the possibility of performing resistance. My argument explores such potential within the field of Canadian literary studies to bring together the narratives of gentrification and cultural production that have dispersed over the years, but also to augment the power of story in the extensive scholarship on the cultural, social, and economic impacts of gentrification. The ambiguity of gentrification as a process—who moves into an area and who gets pushed out—problematically persists in narratives of city life. Along cultural lines, urban folklore clarifies discursive positions within the popular media that shape the Hastings Corridor as a gentrifying frontier; urban folklore also clarifies discursive positions in the fiction, poetry, and performances that represent a potential resistance. In this article, I aim to first establish an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that viably aligns understandings of urban folklore with understandings of gentrification. I then turn to the contemporary context of the Hastings Corridor in order to explore how an urban folkloristics registers the effects of, and the potential resistances to, gentrification in the current context of the Hastings Corridor.

My analysis operates at the scale of the neighbourhood, for it is here that an account of cultural agency and cultural struggle in everyday life has been situated by urbanists, from Henri Lefebvre to Jane Jacobs to Richard Florida, and urban geographers, from Ruth Glass' 1964 coinage of the term *gentrification* in London's East End to Neil Smith's 1996 North American recontextualization and through Nicholas Blomley's cross-generational studies in Vancouver. The neighbourhood, as a dialectical entity, is both representative of and

resistant to the global and civic pressures of gentrification, whereas the "city" has obfuscated its politics through public policies promoted at various scales. Thus, I am advancing urban folklore as an effective strategy for narrating the neighbourhood vis-à-vis the city framed both nationally and transnationally. Vancouver's Downtown Eastside neighbourhood—an internationally notorious locality of class, race, and gender struggles—provides a particularly compelling example in this context; however, even as shifting development policies in the surrounding Gastown, Chinatown, and Strathcona neighbourhoods increasingly encroach upon the area,[1] the Hastings Corridor—just east of the Downtown Eastside—remains a similarly contested site that has received relatively little public or critical attention.

In localizing larger discourses on gentrification within Vancouver's Hastings Corridor, then, this paper hones in "just east" of the mark. Roger Keil, following Vancouver economic geographer Jamie Peck, maintains that "as urban elites struggle to reorient themselves in a frantic world of inter-urban competition, they introduce drastic austerity policies on their budgets and communities while toying with concepts such as the creative class and the culture industry" (241). Political scientist Katherine Burnett locates this dynamic distinctly in Vancouver, where trendy restaurants have become both literal and figurative (economic) "spaces of consumption," supposedly attracting the Creative Class while simultaneously commodifying the historic, derelict, "authentic" working class or ethnic neighbourhoods (162). Peck himself deftly summarizes and critiques Richard Florida's now ubiquitous concept of the "Creative Class": "urban fortunes increasingly turn on the capacity to attract, retain, and even pamper a mobile and finicky class of 'creatives,' whose aggregate efforts have become primary drivers of economic development" (740). With "culture" seemingly the homogenizing force here, the resistance and counternarratives that have been mobilized in Vancouver's gentrified spaces risk social stigmatization simply by opposing attractive "Creative Class" tales of progress and improvement. Burnett notes that "activists and community organizations have challenged social constructions" of Vancouver's East End neighbourhoods, but she also laments that "an overly deterministic view of the neoliberal reconstitution of imagined spaces conceals the struggles waged over the symbolic meaning of space," since the business community is quick to emphasize "history, resilience, creativity, architecture," and "even the cobble-stone streets of Gastown" (159-60). Such is the scenario that has engulfed the Downtown Eastside, and which now creeps further eastward along the Hastings Corridor. If the Corridor were to gentrify to the extent

that the Downtown Eastside and its surrounding areas already have, the public memory of marginalized cultural activity along the Corridor may fade rapidly relative to the other, more storied neighbourhoods of Vancouver's East End. The need for a consolidation of the Corridor's stories is urgent, and my analysis is therefore attendant to the function of literary production in storying and restorying the neighbourhood.

Literary production is an obvious starting point for my theory of urban folklore, but I am careful not to idealize its role in neighbourhood change, for it also plays a part in processes of urban marginalization. The most celebrated example in the context of Vancouver is Timothy Taylor's novel *Stanley Park* (2001), which tells of young chef Jeremy Papier's attempts to establish his own restaurant in "Crosstown," an up-and-coming area in Vancouver meant to resemble the spatial and cultural crossroads between the Downtown Eastside, Chinatown, and Strathcona. The novel's narrator equivocally states that the area "offered a shifting multicultural client base that nobody could consciously target . . . that embraced neighbourhoods in the earliest stages of gentrification: architects, designers, software developers" (52). The term *gentrification* appears devoid of critique—its agents, let alone its critics, are difficult to pin down. Taylor's novel attempts to conscientiously dwell in the contradictions of cultural production in socially vulnerable urban spaces, but its jamming of high and low food culture ends up celebrating the protagonist's artistic development while casting the urban poor to the plot's periphery.[2] The question remains: who gets pushed out when the Creative Class moves in? Literary analysis speaks to this, by nuancing and critiquing the ways in which gentrification is framed by urban narratives. Brouillette has recently suggested that while critiques of gentrification "have been definitive for urban geography," literary scholars also "have good reason to engage with them," since urban regeneration and poverty tourism have become prominent themes in literary texts concerning everyday life in the city. Such engagement, in turn, supports "the flourishing of a diverse young creative class [and] connects the revitalizing presence of art and artists to official urban planning strategy" (426). I want to expand this notion of "literary texts" to engage urban folklore explicitly, tracing the movement of gentrification ideologies from fiction into popular media, as well as in everyday writing forms such as newsletters and letters, and additionally in performances and stories orally told.

In Vancouver's East End, texts such as Maria Campbell's memoir *Halfbreed* (1973) and Wayson Choy's novel *The Jade Peony* (1995) are foundational in

portraying the activities of marginalized communities at the intersections of labour and cultural production. Additionally, oral history anthologies such as Daphne Marlatt and Carole Itter's *Opening Doors* (1979/2011) and Wayde Compton's *Bluesprint* (2001)—both featuring Strathcona—demonstrate how literary work interacts with orature and storywork at the scale of the neighbourhood; indeed, Marlatt's own *Vancouver Poems* (1972) and Compton's *Performance Bond* (2004) and *49th Parallel Psalm* (1999) can be seen as reflections of their respective folkloristic efforts. These examples show that while gentrification is a city-scale process, its impact is registered most potently at the level of the neighbourhood. And while none of these texts encapsulate the Hastings Corridor as such, they all certainly highlight immediately surrounding pressures. Marlatt and Itter's interview with Gordon Lewis in *Opening Doors* perhaps comes closest to highlighting the joint history of labour and residence along the Hastings Corridor. Lewis, a Strathcona resident, describes the proximity and shared resources between the Hastings Mill and the Rogers Sugar Refinery as well as the active role these industries played in constructing a social identity for the neighbourhood (42-43). Nowadays, despite ongoing activities in the Rogers Sugar Refinery, the industrial sites of the Hastings Corridor are considered devoid of social exuberance or cultural production.

In an attempt to highlight the analytical flexibility of the term *urban folklore* and to reinforce its narrative leanings, this article begins by bringing folkloristics into critical dialogue with ongoing work on narrative form and cultural critique in Cultural Studies and Performance Studies, while simultaneously underlining its efficacy in critiques of gentrification; I ultimately hope to arrive at a formation of the relationship of gentrification, space, power, and urban folklore as a set of cultural practices deployed by both the marginal and the powerful in Vancouver. Within understandings of folklore are assumptions about *myth* and *frontier* that, through mediation in literary studies, Cultural Studies, and Performance Studies, open up space for an urban folklore of cultural resistance to gentrification. Here, I maintain a dialectic between an "AstroTurf" urban folklore and a more neighbourhood-oriented urban folklore, to emphasize the varied effects of actions by policy planners, developers, the Creative Class, artistic managers, artists, the working class, residents, and non-residents or vulnerable groups, and to detail how a theory of urban folklore allows a dialectical engagement between these voices akin to their current struggle in the existing conditions of gentrification in Vancouver. The Hastings Corridor is still a relatively

new site of struggle in the public imaginary, and consequently my examples are broadly sourced. As such, I can only begin to account for the voices of resistance, but in gesturing towards the community work yet to be done, I hope to present a malleable framework for more inclusive critical engagement in future studies of gentrification and cultural production in Canadian urban neighbourhoods.[3]

Theories of Pushing Back at the Urban Frontier

An urban trajectory for folkloristics has seemingly informed the identification and critique of gentrification in North America. When Neil Smith argued, in 1996, that gentrification in 1980s New York City had been "generalized to stand for the 'eternal' inevitability of modern renewal, the renovation of the past" (34), folklorist and Performance Studies scholar Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett had already written about an "urban frontier" for folklore studies in 1980s New York that promotes a perspective "designed to address the specifically urban character of city life and its expressive implications" (179). Under these premises, we might imagine how urban folklore could speak to the social impact of urban change even when prior infrastructures are so quickly buried. Today, the same situation persists in Vancouver: urban folklore could pose a challenge to the "inevitability" of gentrification. I follow Kirshenblatt-Gimblett as well as folklorist and Media Studies scholar Martin Laba in seeking what Laba calls "behavioral patterns which are essentially strategies for appropriate action in the diversity of face-to-face situations, and which are typical to city living" (164). The highly interdisciplinary work of these scholars allows for flexible application of their theories. Similarly, the urgency of urban issues such as gentrification has surely generated a climate for increasingly expressive behaviour, necessitating flexible approaches to understanding both the problem and the expression of the problem.

To begin examining urban folklore more locally, I must distinguish the term from colloquial understandings of *urban myth* and *urban legend*—these latter terms representing tales that circulate in city life as though true, though assumed to be false. Urban folklore can reframe urban myths and legends so that they do not hinge on their veracity, but rather on their circulation and effect. Whether or not these stories are factual or embellished, or changing over time (their repetition and iterations are what make them folklore), they are truthful to the extent that they reflect the tendencies and beliefs of an individual or group. The narrative dynamic between folklore, myth, and legend, teasing ideological veracity and

falsehood in an urban context, has potential as a counter-narrative to the ideological discourses of gentrification and urban renewal. Along these lines, Henri Lefebvre, in *The Urban Revolution*, lays out a dialectical movement in the relation between myth, ideology, and ultimately utopia: myth is a "noninstitutional discourse," ideology is a justifying institutional discourse, and utopia attempts to transcend the institutional through a mobilization of myth. In other words, utopia "uses" myth to transcend ideology. And while Lefebvre's critiques of urban society emerge from the specific context of Paris following the urban uprising in 1968, his statement about gentrification also resonates in Vancouver: "However, the truth (the fragmentation of the city though gentrification) was hardly apparent to their contemporaries. What would it have taken for the truth to become apparent?" (110). This is exactly what I argue deep critical engagement with urban folklore can enable us to do—see the "truth" of gentrification today.

Perhaps more legend, or even ideology, than myth, the "urban frontier" has developed as a pervasive concept in policies and critiques of gentrification, producing a dominant spatiality within this mytho-ideological dynamic. This frontier is set up as a cultural "edge" for creative "heroes" to live at and develop, offering new ideas for economic success in the city. While Kirshenblatt-Gimblett implies an emancipatory potential for the "urban frontier" of folklore studies (179), Neil Smith sees the term in a more problematic light, as part of conservative political efforts that deregulate, privatize, police, and gentrify what he calls the "revanchist city" (44-47). The legend of the urban frontier, drawn from its own ideology, has thus come full circle under neoliberalism, and it underpins a colonial imagination of the city promoting unprecedented growth of both economic *and* social capital, without questioning the uneven development in the city itself. The new "heroes" of this neoliberal urban frontier legend are Florida's "Creative Class" and the young artists and artistically minded entrepreneurs whose creative labour helps the city to continue competing economically (Lees, Slater, and Wyly xix). The urban frontier legend is today mobilized to heroicize the ownership class for having the capital to instigate cultural initiatives. Therefore, the Creative Class focus on cultural production in urban territory is problematically biased towards artistic managers rather than artistic producers. This involves art and creativity in processes of gentrification while maintaining economic priorities, for it rationalizes, naturalizes, and promotes, via policy, artistic occupation and production in working class or vacant areas of the city. The Creative Class may celebrate the labour that goes

into the work of art, but its focused occupation along the urban frontier has detracted from the "texture" of urban life, or what John Fiske describes as the "dense, vivid, detailed interwoven narratives, relationships, and experiences" of everyday life in the city (155). An urban frontier that caters solely to the Creative Class ends up smothering a multiplicity of voices, promoting cultural hegemony rather than texture.

As the urban frontier is both a spatial and an ideological boundary, it exists as a demarcation of cultural contestation—and cultural production. Vancouver geographer Nick Blomley, responding to Smith's figuration of the urban frontier, maintains that "[t]he politics of land, in relation to gentrification, has tended to turn on class. . . . In some cities, of course, a class-based politics is supplemented by an attention to racialized power-relations . . . troubled entanglements of possession and dispossession, settlement and unsettlement" (148). To demonstrate "the link between colonial dispossessions and contemporary gentrification," Blomley draws on the recent example of CRAB Park in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside: "[t]he campaign to secure CRAB Park involved native [*sic*] activists, and linked a community claim with historic native [*sic*] uses of the site" (149-50). The park now contains a number of sites of "particular native [*sic*] significance," such as a rock inscribed by Downtown Eastside resident Fred Arrance with the poem "Urban Indian," one of several "Story Stones," which calls out to the Indigenous community and settlers alike: "Mighty warriors now hunt in Safeway / . . . / Do not let the smell of money fool you / Indian ways are not for sale." The stones may seem spatially paltry, but their interspersion within a city-planned park draws attention to the overlaps and contradictions of spatial and historical precedence implicit in urban frontier ideology.

A folkloric reaction, debunking the myths of neoliberal revanchism, has risen most prominently on East Hastings Street from the Carnegie Community Centre Association (CCCA) and its associated branches, the Carnegie Community Action Project (CCAP) and the *Carnegie Newsletter*. The CCCA describes itself as "a grassroots organization that supports programs at the Carnegie Community Centre and works to give voice to low-income Downtown Eastside (DTES) residents" ("CARNEGIE" n. pag.), and its newsletter has been printing since 1986. Its reach is broad, but its directness regarding issues of gentrification and resistance is exemplary in Vancouver's urban folklore nexus. Reacting to popular media coverage of violent anti-gentrification protests in 2013, the CCCA clarified its position and the goals of its Action Project, stating

> At the core of this work at present is CCAP's 2010 document, "Assets to Action: Community Vision for Change in the Downtown Eastside" and the 12 key actions the report identified after collecting the stories and views of over 1200 DTES residents. CCAP, its few employees, and numerous volunteers, occasionally plan and execute protest actions in support of the 12 key actions. These actions come from the grassroots, street level, straight from the minds of low-income people living in the Downtown Eastside, and have the complete support of the CCCA. . . . Other actions, which have included smashing windows and stealing private property, are completely outside of CCCA's mandate from the community and go against our non-violent values, yet have been wrongly linked in the media with CCAP and its organizers. CCCA supports the democratic right to protest. ("CARNEGIE" n. pag.)

"Stories" once again take precedence here, and the oral-print relationship inherent to the CCCA's "Assets to Action" document is a testament to how community activism generates its own narrative, thus participating in a broader restorying of the neighbourhood cultural production that I read as urban folklore. The directness of the CCCA's initiatives starkly contrasts the actions of for-profit publications stemming from the area, such as the *Gastown Gazette*, which covers "original investigative journalism, enlightening videos and great writing about everything from local and world news, local events, business, art, travel, food, fashion, music, politics, sports, drugs, sex, health and cute animals" ("The Gazette" n. pag.). The *Gazette* may flaunt localism by proudly stating that it is "made in Gastown," but its superficial focus actively disavows the large-scale tensions of its classed cultural discourse, effectively celebrating gentrification. The close jamming of appeals to "AstroTurf" and neighbourhood grassroots folklore—both within and amongst publications—is what necessitates an understanding of the various contexts through which urban folklore is derived, in addition to the media through which it is reproduced.

Urban Folklore and Its Literary Leanings Along the Hastings Corridor

The Downtown Eastside offers many telling examples of urban folklore, but further east the Hastings Street Corridor desperately lacks any attention towards stories of resistance, despite its being a crucial site of cultural production and gentrification in Vancouver. Nevertheless, an examination of current media coverage, in addition to recent and historical literary production that suffuses the area, can plot a trajectory through which we might anticipate and begin to examine cultural resistances. As with the Downtown Eastside, the particular context and parameters of gentrification along the Hastings Corridor can be parsed in terms of urban folklore. The recent renovation, sale, closure, and now reopening of the Corridor's

Waldorf Hotel are indicative of how neoliberal revanchism can overwrite neighbourhood-specific urban folklore. This "cultural oasis in the middle of nowhere," as *Globe and Mail* journalist Marsha Lederman has identified it (S1), attracted, for a time, many creative projects as well as an enthusiastic audience, while at the same time drawing attention to the development potential of surrounding lots. However, this idea of the cultural oasis is based upon the erasure of the extant narratives. The Hastings Corridor has a complex and indeed rich cultural history and cultural memory, which includes its history as a location for the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Canada, the BC Maritime Employer's Association, the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society, the Urban Native Youth Association, the Vancouver Native Housing Society, and Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services, as well as the various iterations of the Waldorf and numerous other small businesses, publishers, galleries, and organizations. The long-standing presence of these various social organizations and cultural institutions is a testament to the labour and community activities that have been overlooked in recent cultural surveys of the area. And while their narratives of resistance have yet to be mobilized, their continuing activities certainly warrant the kind of cultural attention already paid towards the Downtown Eastside, Chinatown, and Strathcona.

Even a quick account of the breadth of cultural activities along the Hastings Corridor immediately points to their folkloric and resistant potential. Despite what the popular media has reported, this part of Hastings Street is not the middle of nowhere. Opposite the Creative Class agenda of the Waldorf, there are counter-narratives of creativity in the initiatives of the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre, for example, which range from weekly "cultural nights" of West Coast Indigenous and Métis song, dance, and textile-making, to Pow Wow Family Nights ("Cultural Nights" n. pag.), as well as occasional Hip Hop for Social Justice events (Kozuback n. pag.). And across the street, the Urban Native Youth Association has a long-running series of programs for Indigenous youth in Vancouver, focusing on recreation, education, personal support, and live-in support (*Urban Native Youth Association* n. pag.). All in addition to the essential services provided by Vancouver Native Housing and Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services, such creative and social initiatives expand on and complement wider expressions of Indigenous culture. Moreover, the cultural activities of the various Indigenous groups in the area demonstrate how labour

beyond that of the Creative Class—the labour of what Richard Florida problematically labels as the "Service Class" and "Working Class" in *The Rise of the Creative Class*—is inherently creative.

For literature to participate in active resistance to gentrification and widen the dialectic between "AstroTurf" and neighbourhood urban folklore, it needs to resist equivocal formulations of gentrification as an inevitable process. To date, gentrification is more of a general theme than a specific issue in contemporary Vancouver "city" texts. Michael Turner, who worked as a creative programmer for the Waldorf Hotel, barely polemicizes the term *gentrification* in an artistic description of the Waldorf lobby written as a preamble to the *Grand Hotel* exhibit at the Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG). He defers the issue to two hairdressers, who shift from discussions of Susan Sontag, Giorgio Agamben, and Bob Dylan to respond in a "slow and measured" fashion that "the area is still zoned for light industry, and that whatever is 'redeveloped' will only allow for much-needed social housing," and that "if The Waldorf had not had its 'makeover,' it more than likely would have been torn down and replaced with what is coming anyway" (n. pag.). Even without any new social housing projects to substantiate their impressions, the intentions of Turner and other creative programmers at the Waldorf might be positive in the sense that they are assumed to be culturally and socially constructive (as well as productive); however, the assumption and deferral of the inevitability of gentrification dampens the critical capacity within the space of the Waldorf. Ironically, shortly after Turner wrote his blurb, Vancouver condominium developer Solterra purchased the Waldorf, and the Waldorf disappeared almost entirely from the VAG exhibit. Waldorf Productions, the hotel's former management group, similarly appealed to the inevitability of the Corridor's gentrification despite admitting to an awareness of their venture's own complicity in the process (Lederman S1). The ultimate irony, then, is that Waldorf Productions were quick "victims" to the process they knowingly ushered in as they went into massive debt and did not really profit from their venture.[4]

A stronger resistance could be generated through a more comprehensive account of gentrification's social impact—a conversation that local authors have at times attempted to facilitate. For example, Madeleine Thien, during her 2013 writing residency at Simon Fraser University, worked on a "multimedia storytelling project" titled *Vancouver of the Mind*, which focused on her desire to remember the East Hastings Street on which she was raised. She presented this as an act of public remembering. As part of

the project, she distributed a questionnaire with inquiries that have urgency in the current problematic of cultural memory and gentrification along the Hastings Corridor. She asks, "Do you believe in the future?" and "How would you describe your relationship with forgetfulness?" (n. pag.). Most pertinently, Thien also asks, "When Hastings Street is mentioned, what comes to mind?" and "What would Vancouver be like if there were no East Hastings?" (n. pag.). Such questions present an interesting engagement with memory and location, since they paradoxically invite an imaginative experiment in erasure to emphasize presence. Thien rhetorically implies that Hastings Street has always been spatially and mythically contested in Vancouver, and that to consider erasure would entail a recollection of personal, embodied memories and experiences. Although the results (or a literary manifestation) of Thien's survey have yet to appear, the structure of her appeal within the context of her writer's residency nevertheless offers a more direct engagement between literary and local cultural production.

As a final example, I want to point to Timothy Taylor's *Stanley Park* as a local novel that neglects a polemical view of gentrification but still opens ample space for such a critique. Put differently, the determined localism of *Stanley Park* has been received on a national scale (as a Giller Prize and *Canada Reads* finalist) thus projecting an authoritative "Vancouverness" that questionably simplifies the realities of lived experience at Vancouver's social margins. The protagonist Jeremy Papier certainly experiences ambivalence about his restaurant's presence in "Crosstown," which influences his shift towards a hyper-local foraging cuisine based on the strategies of Stanley Park's homeless community, but his eventual disillusionment with the city's restaurant scene results simply in his self-serving relocation to a heritage home in Chinatown and a shift towards a more "secret" dining experience. Even at the end of the novel, the narrative does not question the impact that Jeremy's social capital might have on the vulnerable areas into which he is moving. Jeff Derksen encapsulates this scenario best when he writes about *Stanley Park* that "the local, developed through an extended metaphor of the local as 'bounty' and food, . . . has its more resistant aspects buffed off—it returns as connoisseurship and taste cultures, as a value-added experience of the global-urban experience" (55). In this novel, even the character of the Professor—Jeremy's urban anthropologist father and his connection to the Stanley Park homeless community—cannot trouble the Creative Class narrative since his work is intellectually self-serving: he lives in and amongst the Stanley Park street people during his fieldwork, but returns to his home

in Vancouver's highly affluent Point Grey neighbourhood to write up his "findings."[5] So, while *Stanley Park* offers many openings for community engagement in Vancouver's East End, it maintains a Creative Class sense of "edginess." It is an important example, though, because it depicts Vancouver at the current global neoliberal conjuncture. Urban folklore therefore enables literary scholars to engage the issues and voices that fiction sometimes obfuscates with a broader material reality (popular media, oral histories, performance, everyday life) while pointing to recently and historically contested sites of urban change.

Conclusion: Towards a Political Folklore

Bob Rennie's "story" from my introduction seems to reinforce the sense that the gentrification of Vancouver's Hastings Street Corridor is an inevitability. His claim to authority on this topic (aside from his marketing activity in the area) is built upon his office's presence in Chinatown, and upon his personal narrative as a local East End boy made good. Similarly, Timothy Taylor has appealed to his own entrenchment on Vancouver's gentrifying frontier by working in an office "on the edge of Gastown" ("Writers' Rooms" n. pag.) while writing *Stanley Park* and his second novel, *Story House*, which takes up a Creative Class home restoration in the Downtown Eastside as its main subject. These kinds of appeals to cultural capital have a significant influence on public and political perceptions of the area, to the extent that the "Crosstown" from Taylor's novel is now a very real neighbourhood designation in Vancouver, where real restaurants are placing pressures on the local population.[6] A recognition of urban folklore helps to nuance the effects of stories in specific neighbourhoods while drawing critical attention to the depth of cultural production both contributing to and resisting gentrification. I understand urban folklore here as a way of both reading and writing about marginalized voices in vulnerable urban spaces. Brouillette's claim that literary expression might serve as a "barometer" for Creative Class gentrification is instrumental in my critical push here, but I want to add that literary texts as commodities become deeply invested in the gentrification processes that they represent by being placed (and purchased) within larger frames of "authentic" urban narratives. Attention to the urban folklore of a neighbourhood maintains a dialectical perspective on local cultural activities.

This article stresses such a dialectic by showing how "grassroots" urban narratives are actually derived at multiple scales—and not always with the best of intentions for local residents. Ultimately, this dialectic represents

interactions between policy and everyday life. In Vancouver, the ownership class has used urban folklore to strengthen its gentrification policies, casting economic development as cultural development. Yet, urban folklore in the same areas has the possibility of performing resistance, and long-standing organizations such as the CCAP in the Downtown Eastside, along with the multiple Indigenous organizations along the Hastings Corridor, demonstrate both directly and indirectly that such resistances have staying power.

The political dialectic between "AstroTurf" and neighbourhood cultural production can be muddy, but distinctions become more prominent when discerning revanchist and resistant forms of urban folklore. My goal here has been to draw urban folklore closer to literary studies as a distinctive strategy for reading and writing the city, particularly at the scale of the neighbourhood, while recognizing similar approaches in Cultural Studies and Performance Studies. Distinct from, but close to, these disciplines, folkloristics has greatly expanded its conceptions of orality and the folk in part to demonstrate how far it has come from its classist and racist roots. Folklorists today are engaged in a conversation about how folklore might become more politically involved. Stephen Gencarella calls for a "collaboration between the fields of folklore and rhetoric and for the development of a critical folklore studies," arguing that "[a] performance of folklore, as an active memorial to common sense and the need for pieties, constitutes 'the folk' as a political category; accordingly, such constitutions may be critically engaged for the sake of emancipatory, impious, and comic advance of new social imaginaries or the reduction of violence" (190). In this formulation, folklore does not necessarily require a folklorist; rather, much of folklore's power rests in its endless transmission and iteration orally and through other mediums, in spite of academic appropriations or political challenges. But literary writers and critics can also find a place for themselves in and amongst the folk. The carriers of folklore can be anyone, but a dialectical theory of urban folklore necessitates more active participation from all storytellers if a substantial resistance is to manifest on the gentrifying frontier.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the guidance of Jeff Derksen and Peter Dickinson on earlier versions of this article, as well as Amber Dean's attentive feedback during the revision process.

NOTES

1 The 2011 Chinatown Historic Area Height Review encapsulates the kind of social and economic pressures that Chinatown and the Downtown Eastside are currently facing. Vancouver City Council voted in favour of relaxing building height restrictions in the area, thus compromising the status and structure of many low-income housing units. Many businesses, activists, and academics weighed in on the issue (see Pablo; Cole).

2 Emily Johansen is skeptical of the political potential for any local-global dichotomies that the novel might encompass, arguing that "Jeremy's commitment to local food—a commitment which would suggest global environmental responsibility . . . only marks his personal/psychological commitment to local place and an attempt to understand his position within an authentic tradition" (135). For Johansen, food is merely another plot device in *Stanley Park*, and the world of the novel does not seem overly concerned with the economic tensions of local-global capitalisms—nor does it seem concerned with the labour politics of food beyond "that of the chef, a highly trained and privileged individual" (136).

3 I am envisioning an oral history anthology that features the voices of labourers and residents based along the Hastings Corridor: Indigenous organizations, longshore workers, industrial labourers, street people, and sex workers. My future research will certainly involve interviews in some capacity, in addition to a broader examination of existing literatures regarding the area.

4 One of the venue's managers, Thomas Anselmi, states in the *Huffington Post* that "The irony that the Waldorf was taken over by a condo developer in the very area we helped reinvigorate is obvious to anyone. The Waldorf filled a void" (qtd. in "East Vancouver's Waldorf Hotel Sold to Developer"). But his use of the term *reinvigorate* draws attention away from any sense of gentrification, and as a representative of the Creative Class he and his business are simply perpetuating colonial tropes of emptiness and "void." With regard to their business model, CBC reporter Elliott Garnier explains that the original fifteen-year lease was compromised by rent forgiveness "after a slow start in 2010," but no clear delineation of budgets or profits explains the situation that Waldorf Productions found itself in just prior to the building's sale. The change of beer taps from cheaper domestic beers to more expensive craft beers, for example, might have ostracized the formerly profitable labour-class clientele. In any case, with the Waldorf's tortured recent history both culture and capital are rendered equivocally and problematically vulnerable: Waldorf Productions plays victim to the process to which it was central, and in effect this business' poor practices write over the larger narrative of gentrification along the Hastings Corridor.

5 Taylor prefaces *Stanley Park* with an Author's Note that begins: "One strand of this novel is based on fact" (ix). He then details a 1953 murder case concerning the skeletal remains of two children found in Vancouver's Stanley Park. Within the novel's narrative, this "fact" is of primary importance to the Professor; but the Professor is less concerned about its factual aspects than he is about the "different views on this over the years . . . the *myths* surrounding their death" (26; emphasis mine). This quick shift from *fact* to *myth*, and to a mythology of what the Professor calls the "Babes in the Wood," is what indicates the irony of Taylor's initial statement. Throughout the novel, *urban myth* and *urban legend* are terms attributed to perceived rumors, condemning myths to the realm of falsity and consequently eliding their cultural or behavioural implications.

6 A recent example in Vancouver of Creative Class "restauranting" at the expense of vulnerable communities is PiDGiN restaurant in the Downtown Eastside (very much

within what Taylor imagined to be "Crosstown"), which is located at a former Single Room Occupancy site directly across the street from a popular meeting place for street people, Pigeon Park. By the name alone, this restaurant's opening was seen as a slap in the face to the disenfranchised locals, and heavily policed protests ensued. For a detailed analysis of PiDGiN's problematic presence in the Downtown Eastside, see Ellan.

WORKS CITED

Blomley, Nicholas. *Unsettling the City: Urban Land and the Politics of Property*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.

Brouillette, Sarah. "Literature and Gentrification on Brick Lane." *Criticism* 51.3 (2009): 425-49. *JSTOR*. Web. 29 Nov. 2014.

Burnett, Katherine. "Commodifying Poverty: Gentrification and Consumption in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside." *Urban Geography* 35.2 (2014): 157-76. *Taylor and Francis Online*. Web. 29 Nov. 2014.

Campbell, Maria. *Halfbreed*. Halifax: Formac, 1973. Print.

"CARNEGIE COMMUNITY ACTION PROJECT: Homes and Better Outcomes for All." Carnegie Community Action Project, n.d. Web. 12 Nov. 2014.

Choy, Wayson. *The Jade Peony*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1995. Print.

Cole, Yolande. "Vancouver's Chinatown Faces Change as Building Heights Go to Public Hearing." *Georgia Straight*. Georgia Straight, 17 Mar. 2011. Web. 30 Mar. 2016.

Compton, Wayde, ed. *Bluesprint: Black British Columbian Literature and Orature*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp, 2001. Print.

Compton, Wayde. *49th Parallel Psalm*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp, 1999. Print.

—. *Performance Bond*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp, 2004. Print.

"Cultural Nights." *Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society*. Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society, 2014. Web. 30 Nov. 2014.

Derksen, Jeff. "National Literatures in the Shadow of Neoliberalism." *Shifting the Ground of Canadian Literary Studies*. Ed. Smaro Kamboureli and Robert Zacharias. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2012. 37-63. Print.

"East Vancouver's Waldorf Hotel Sold to Developer." *Huffpost British Columbia*. The Huffington Post, 9 Jan. 2013. Web. 19 June 2014.

Ellan, Nicholas. "Pidgin's Past: A Track Record of Profiteering at Our Expense." *Mainlander*. Mainlander, 27 Feb. 2013. Web. 30 Mar. 2016.

Fiske, John. "Cultural Studies and the Culture of Everyday Life." *Cultural Studies*. Ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler. New York: Routledge, 1992. 154-73. Print.

Florida, Richard. *The Rise of the Creative Class, Revisited*. New York: Basic, 2012. Print.

Garnier, Elliott. "Vancouver's Waldorf Hotel to Close after Being Sold to Condo Developer." *CBC*. CBC Radio-Canada, 9 Jan. 2013. Web. 19 June 2014.

Gencarella, Stephen Olbrys. "Constituting Folklore: A Case for Critical Folklore Studies." *Journal of American Folklore* 122.484 (2009): 172-96. *Project MUSE*. Web. 1 Dec. 2013.

"The Gazette." *The Gastown Gazette*. Northwest Community Enterprises, 2014. Web. 12 Nov. 2014.

Gold, Kerry. "Paint Store Sale Heralds Major East Hastings Redevelopment." *Globe and Mail* 14 Jan. 2012: S5. *Canadian Newsstand Major Dailies*. Web. 9 Oct. 2012.

Johansen, Emily. "The Political Allure of the Local: Food and Cosmopolitanism in

Timothy Taylor's *Stanley Park* and Ruth L. Ozeki's *My Year of Meats*." *Politics and Culture* 2 (2009): 132-46. Print.
Keil, Roger. "The Urban Politics of Roll-With-It Neoliberalization." *City* 13.2-3 (2009): 230-45. *Taylor and Francis Online*. Web. 29 Nov. 2014.
Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. "The Future of Folklore Studies in America: The Urban Frontier." *Folklore Forum* 16.2 (1983): 175-234. Print.
Kozuback, Kristin, ed."Events Calendar: Aboriginal Conferences, Native Gatherings." *RedWAY BC News E-zine* 4.14 (2007): n. pag. Web. 30 Nov. 2014.
Laba, Martin. "Urban Folklore: A Behavioral Approach." *Western Folklore* 38.3 (1979): 158-69. *JSTOR*. Web. 26 Oct. 2011.
Lederman, Marsha. "A Cultural Oasis in the Middle of Nowhere." *Globe and Mail* 29 Oct. 2011: S1. *Canadian Newsstand Major Dailies*. Web. 9 Oct. 2012.
Lees, Loretta, Tom Slater, and Elvin Wyly. *Gentrification*. New York: Routledge, 2008. Print.
Lefebvre, Henri. *The Urban Revolution*. Trans. Robert Bononno. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2003. Print.
Marlatt, Daphne. *Liquidities: Vancouver Poems Then and Now*. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2013. Print.
—. *Vancouver Poems*. Toronto: Coach House, 1972. Print.
Marlatt, Daphne, and Carole Itter, eds. *Opening Doors In Vancouver's East End: Strathcona*. Madeira Park: Harbour, 2011. Print.
Pablo, Carlito. "Plan to Increase Downtown Eastside Building Heights Raises Concerns." *Georgia Straight*. Georgia Straight, 19 Jan. 2011. Web. 28 Oct. 2011.
Peck, Jamie. "Struggling with the Creative Class." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29.4 (2005): 740-70. *Wiley Online Library*. Web. 29 Nov. 2014.
Smith, Neil. *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. London: Routledge, 1996. Print.
Taylor, Timothy. *Stanley Park*. Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2001. Print.
—. *Story House*. Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2007. Print.
—. "Writers' Rooms: Timothy Taylor." *Vancouver Writers Fest*. Vancouver Writers Fest, 2016. Web. 30 Mar. 2016.
Thien, Madeleine. "Vancouver of the Mind: Hastings Street Project." N.p., n.d. Questionnaire.
Turner, Michael. "The Lobby: The Waldorf Hotel." *Grand Hotel*. Vancouver Art Gallery, 2012. Web. 9 Oct. 2012.
Urban Native Youth Association. N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Nov. 2014.

Amanda Charlotte Earl

Beauty, revisited

she wanders
through Westmount
her red cloak undone
in order to meet
the wolf

she admires
her own reflection
between dead
leaves in the puddles
along the way to another
young poet's walk up

she is a beautiful liar
who sleeps with handsome
award-winners but never
returns their texts

poetry is fleeting,
she writes on paper
airplanes made of the pages
of their latest collections
she folds meticulously
before setting on fire
and flying them off
the balcony of her
19th floor apartment

aflame the plane
of poetry swoops
low, singeing the
ear hairs of formerly
dapper rogues sitting
in parks and listening
to Leonard Cohen
there's a wisecrack
in everything, that's how
the blight gets in, the frog
croaks

Brenna Clarke Gray

Border Studies in the Gutter

Canadian Comics and Structural Borders

In spite of the literal and metaphorical relationship between borders in comics and in culture, there is little overlap between border studies and Canadian comics studies. The history of the Canada-US border looms large over the history of English-Canadian comics; indeed, for English-language comics, American comics are the primary influence, and the Canadian mass-market comics industry came into existence largely as a matter of border trade rather than artistic intent. Borders, and their corollary gutters, are also part of the vocabulary of comics, and their literal depiction on the page helps the comic consumer to both read and understand. This paper uses readings of three contemporary Canadian comics—*Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography* by Chester Brown, *Scott Pilgrim's Precious Little Life* (and the rest of its series) by Bryan Lee O'Malley, and *Red: A Haida Manga* by Michael Yahgulanaas—to argue for the productive intersection of border studies and comics scholarship. These three comics offer varying readings of nation and also represent a range of use of the literal borders and gutters of the comic. The borders as depicted visually in contemporary Canadian comics serve to deconstruct, trouble, and reinforce the discussion of the narrative use of the same liminal space. As Reingard M. Nischik notes, "to enter a border region consciously means entering a liminal space" (74) where one "lies between boundaries" (213). Where the narratives of these comics address border liminality in the lives of the characters, their structures underscore both the limitations and possibilities of this in-betweenness, offering a new site of inquiry for scholars of both border studies and Canadian comics studies.

In his *Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud defines the structural concepts of borders and gutters. The basic unit of language in comics is the panel; a comic can be a single panel, as typically seen in editorial cartoons, or a sequence of panels linked together to form a strip, a page, or a book. The edges of the panels, whether strongly defined or not, are the borders of the panel; they frame the comic's content. When panels are strung together to tell a story or frame a larger narrative, the term for the space between the borders is called the gutter. As McCloud notes, this space is where the brain perceives "two separate images and transforms them into a single idea," a concept he labels "closure" (66-67). If the visual structure of the borders and gutters, however constructed, is what makes the text a comic, then it is across the space of the gutter that readers achieve McCloud's version of closure, completing the work of the comic. In this way, borders and gutters work together to arrange the visual elements of a comic into their larger meaning. This process is part of the grammar of comics. It is the reliance on the liminal space between borders that makes comics a uniquely participatory art form.[1] But this is not a value-neutral reading of the comic page. Mila Bongco, in her work that builds upon McCloud's theory, notes that the gutter "depends on reading and understanding 'empty spaces,'" which may have very different resonances for European and Indigenous comics readers, for example (66). Likewise, Thierry Groensteen theorizes the panel "as a portion of space isolated by blank spaces and enclosed by a frame that ensures its integrity," again foregrounding the emptiness of the gutter and here asserting the line of the frame as the root of meaning-making (25). Groensteen's reading differs from McCloud's, but still suggests the primacy of a border-space in comics. Either way, then, the borders and their attendant gutters are important to the comics page, and yet go largely unconsidered by the average reader. A careful examination of the space between borders in comics offers a useful way to probe the border as a literal and metaphoric structure that has participated in the shaping of Canadian literature and culture, and to question "for whom the border performs legitimately in the first place" (Roberts and Stirrup 22). In each case in this study, the comic artist uses the visual representation of the panel border to underscore a troubled relationship to national borders.

The comics outlined in this study represent a range of approaches to the border, both structurally and narratively. In *Louis Riel*, Chester Brown uses a rigid border-and-gutter structure that serves to underscore the colonial national borders used to literally police the Métis people, in spite of the

historically ambivalent relationship between the Métis and the Canada-US border.[2] In *Scott Pilgrim*, Bryan Lee O'Malley offers a more playful approach to the Canada-US border that sees the border as permeable, and transgression as both possible and aspirational for young people seeking mobility and opportunity. And finally, in *Red*, Michael Yahgulanaas deconstructs the very concept of the comic border in order to redefine nationhood in an Indigenous context and underscore the imposed colonial border's impact; in so doing, Yahgulanaas develops an entirely new hybrid form he calls "Haida Manga."

What we can trace across these comics is a changing relationship to border and gutter, both structurally and thematically, from the traditional European mode of Brown's work, to the steps towards a hybrid manga-inspired mode in O'Malley's work, to a use of Japanese manga in Yahgulanaas' work that fully deconstructs the European understanding of gutter. Taken together, they demonstrate the range of approaches to border both narratively and structurally, and offer evidence for the need for more careful consideration of this space. The three comics presented here have a key similarity that shapes this reading: they are all independent artist-authored comics rather than works that separate these roles, as is common in mainstream work from publishers like Marvel, DC Comics, and Image. It is easier, perhaps, to attribute intent and purpose to the border/gutter structures of artist-authored comics created for indie presses than to those of major commercial titles that need to adhere to a house style or editorial expectations. There are also key differences in the audience for these comics: Bryan Lee O'Malley's work is created for a wide popular audience, Chester Brown's is much more literary, and Michael Yahgulanaas creates primarily for a visual arts audience (*Red* was a mural first, and the mural form continues to tour major art galleries around the world). Despite these differences, however, each comic effectively engages with the notion of border through the structural use of gutters on the page, echoing the discipline of border studies and its "complicated webs of interrelated gestures" (Roberts and Stirrup 22). In each case, the structure of the comic offers an additional space to interrogate the thematic notions of border represented in the comic and to reify the way nation and border are used narratively in the comic. The unique visual depictions of border in three comics that are all, to a greater or lesser degree, about geographical borders, allows for three comparative case studies for how comics can productively be used in border studies, and vice versa.

The Border and the History of Canadian Comics[3]

The Canada-US border is a significant presence in many aspects of Canadian literature, but its legacy looms especially large over the history and development of English-Canadian comics. Early comics, like politically-minded editorial cartoons, were obsessed with issues of the Canadian nation and the border. In her thorough reading of one of these comics, J. W. Bengough's "A Pertinent Question" published in 1869, Jennifer Andrews notes how the nation and the border are represented in such classic editorial cartoons. In this particular comic, Mrs. Britannia, Miss Canada, and Cousin Johnny are all represented, with Miss Canada's virtue in question as a metonym for her borders; Bengough's comic concerns itself with the question of Canada's vulnerability to America's philosophy of Manifest Destiny. Andrews notes that this comic "emphasizes the importance of this neighbourly relationship between Canada and the United States, cemented by the shared border, in sexual and financial terms" (30). This is a recurring trope in editorial cartoons of the late-nineteenth century, particularly in the years immediately following Confederation. Given the role of the editorial cartoon as the earliest version of the development of the comics medium in Canada, the historical fascination and obsession with the border as a site of conflict and anxiety from these earliest moments ascribes Canadian comics with an attention to border.

During World War II, the popular American superhero comics were no longer available for purchase in Canada due to wartime paper rationing and restrictions. Because of the huge numbers of young comics fans, Canadian artists like Adrian Dingle and Joe Bachle stepped in to fill the vacuum with comics produced in Canada. To meet the expectations of a wartime audience sacrificing for a greater good, these comics were nationalistic and patriotic in content and tone. While the comics—known as Canadian Whites in reference to the cheap paper used to print and produce them—sold well, the fledgling Canadian industry did not survive the return of American comics following the conclusion of wartime paper rationing in 1945. English-Canadian comic books would not re-emerge again until the 1970s. Indeed, not a single comic book was published for market in English Canada in the 1950s and 1960s. That comics were still purchased throughout this period, especially en masse by young people, demonstrates the economic stranglehold US comics artists held over the medium—and particularly the genre of the superhero—for two generations of fans. Since the 1970s, like many other art forms in Canada, English-language comics—now a vibrant

contribution to the literary and cultural conversation in this country—continue to be heavily influenced and sometimes overshadowed by the trends and developments of comics in the US.

The Canada-US border shapes the content citizens on either side read, not only by virtue of US sales driving much of the publishing industry generally, but because of the ways identity and representation can be challenged by the laws that govern the border. Comics are vulnerable to censorship under obscenity laws both because of their visual nature and because the audience of adult-oriented comics is regularly misunderstood to be juvenile. Indeed, the history of comics in Canada is full of examples where comics were uniquely targeted for censorship. For example, federal Bill 10 in 1949 outlawed crime and horror comics, and through the 1950s and 1960s municipal and provincial boards of inquiry into comics were created. Frequently, Canadian legislators and lay moralizers concerned themselves with the bad influence of comics from the US on innocent Canadian children (Lent 70; Ryder 149). Those involved in censorship efforts worried that the visual nature of comics made them more attractive to children and more likely to find their way into vulnerable hands. But the impact of this misguided desire to protect has been far-reaching. For example, Little Sister's Book and Art Emporium in Vancouver, BC, a bookshop specializing in queer content, has regularly run afoul of Canadian customs laws and practices, including a substantial court case regarding the importation of the *Meatman* comic book series. Proceeds from Arsenal Pulp Press' two-volume *What Right?* and *What's Wrong?* collection, which features comics artists speaking out against censorship and the chilling effect of border control, have been put toward Little Sister's legal defence.

In their recent collection of essays, *Parallel Encounters: Culture at the Canada-US Border*, editors Gillian Roberts and David Stirrup note that "the subtle distinctions between Canada and the United States have long exercised Canadian cultural producers," and that in a global age and a post-9/11 context, the border is "paradoxically both circumvented and rendered more visible by the forces of globalization" (2). Significantly, Roberts and Stirrup acknowledge the constructed and metaphoric nature of the border while allowing for its psychological and political significance. There is space for "simultaneous acknowledgement of the absurdities of cartography and its insistence upon the national implications engendered by the imaginary line between Canada and the United States" (4). This is a useful parallel for looking at the borders in comics: where we view geopolitical borders

as cartographic choices with far-reaching cultural implications, so too the borders and gutters of comics are artistic choices that impact our reading and understanding of the comic.

Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography

Easily the most well-regarded of Chester Brown's compositions, *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography* tells the story of the Red River Rebellion and the Battle of Batoche by focusing on the rise and fall of Métis leader Louis Riel. Brown is a settler writer who positions himself as sympathetic to Riel's story: Riel's hallucinations and religiosity align with two abiding interests in Brown's work and personal life (Bell 164). Brown's careful historiography in the endnotes strives to make his process transparent, and Brown is clear that Sir John A. Macdonald is very much the villain in this sympathetic, though not one-sided, portrayal. First published as single issues beginning in 1999 before being collected as a single volume in 2003, *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography* is as notable for its use of a rigid border-and-gutter form as it is for its plotting and thematics.

Nation and border are both essential to the story of Louis Riel and the Métis people, and thus are narratively important to this comic. Riel's right—and indeed obligation—to rebellion is rooted in his sense of the Métis nation as a sovereign people; it is a rejection of the British North American (BNA) definitions of nation and border. At the same time, Riel is able to use BNA-defined borders to his advantage when he must hide from those same forces, as when he escapes to Montana where Canadian institutions have no jurisdiction. Given the historical and political context, Riel is both dismissive of the border and willing to use it to his advantage. In this way, there is at least a perception that the border is flexible, in that it can be used to fulfill particular ends for Riel's project.

And yet, in his retelling of Riel's life and death, Chester Brown chooses to construct one of the most rigid panel-gutter structures of his career up to this point, in an effort to reflect the ways in which borders govern this historical figure's narrative. Form mirrors content and the reality that Riel faces as a Métis man who is ultimately hanged for his defiance of a colonial power. While Brown typically works in a consistent square panel form, his earlier works like *I Never Liked You* (1994) demonstrate a willingness to experiment with panel size and placement and, by extension, gutter size and placement. Even in his later comics with more rigid panelling, as in *Paying For It* (2011), the number of panels per page can vary. But *Louis*

Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography functions differently: each page is identically structured with six identically sized panels per page, and the gutters never change shape, even when the comic's content traverses them; in other words, though content can span over two panels, the panel itself remains rigid and unyielding to the needs of the plot. Other than the preparatory map pages, Brown transgresses this structure only twice: when Louis Riel is hanged, Brown omits the final panel; and in the epilogue, the panel that tells of the death of the Riel lineage is expanded to cover two panels (see Figure 1).

In this first example, the impact of the missing panel after Riel's hanging is visceral. Everywhere else in the comic, as Ben Lander notes in his review article, "uniformity provides a steady speed to the book, like a metronome or a heartbeat" (117). When the final page ends with this missing panel, the reader experiences it therefore as the cessation of a heartbeat. Louis Riel's death signals unfinished business and a life cut short. The absence of its visual representation is the literal manifestation of this silencing of a powerful voice and vision. As Andrew Lesk interprets it in his article, "Redrawing Nationalism," the absence suggests that "Riel's death transcends the visual medium itself" and "cannot be contained" (79). It also gestures to the many decades of silence that would follow the death of Riel vis-à-vis the Métis people and their relationship to the Canadian state. The silence echoes in the panel that tells of the end of Riel's family line, which extends across two typically-sized panels with no accompanying gutters. The Epilogue is dark and sad in tone, informing the reader of the loss of Métis independence, Gabriel Dumont's second career as a performer in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, and the political successes of Macdonald. In the centre panel, the reader is told of the deaths of Riel's wife and children, accompanied by an image of Louis Riel's wife, Marguerite, with a single lamplight (Brown 241). The panel is desperate and desolate, and Brown's intended message is clear in the care he takes to underscore the tragedies: with the death of Riel comes the death of Riel's familial line. Taken together, the panels of the Epilogue serve to remind readers of the tragedy of the Métis and the victory of Macdonald's version of nation over their own; while we know this not to be the lasting legacy of the Métis people, it is the version Brown chooses to conclude his story with. While the Epilogue could have fast-forwarded to the vibrant Métis culture of the late-twentieth and early twenty-first century, it does not. In both cases where Brown interrupts his own rigid structure, he underscores the hopelessness of Riel's situation within this narrative.

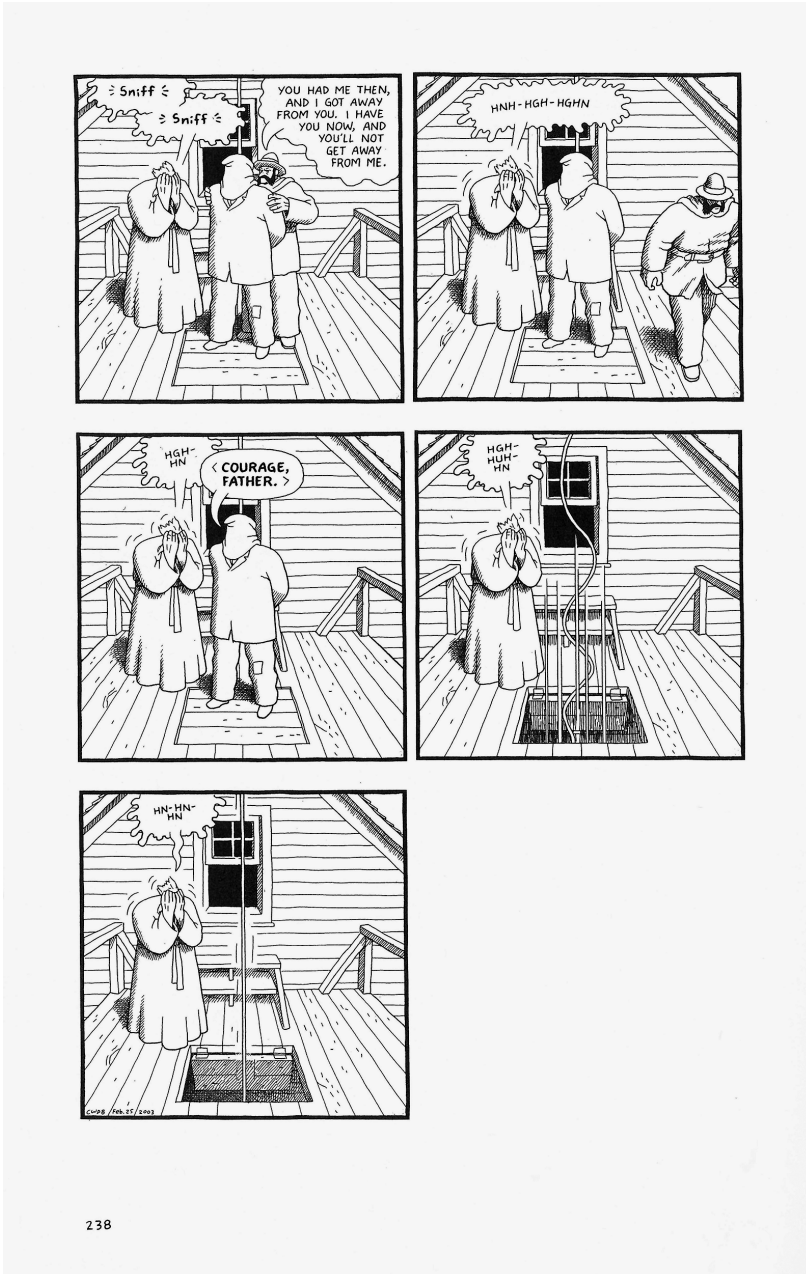


Figure 1
Copyright Chester Brown, used with permission from *Drawn & Quarterly*

The meaning in these panels exists in the slippage between Riel's culturally appropriate and politically motivated desire to view the border as a flexible construct (and his use of the border to his advantage as though he has ultimate control over the situation) and the rigidity of Brown's visual representation of the borders and gutters as structural components of the comic. The borders Brown uses are imposed upon Riel regardless of his cultural values or beliefs, and the structure they represent is immutable. In the end, the only option for transgression of these imposed structures is death: not only death for Riel, but death for his culture and people as Brown chooses to represent them in the panel quoted above. There is no triumph within this narrative, and no way to transgress the BNA-imposed borders that frame and limit Riel's life. In this way, Brown uses the structure of the comic to reinforce the political reality of the historical moment he is retelling in this story, and successfully employs the structure of his comic to comment on the role of the Canadian national borders in the narrative.

In *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography*, Chester Brown creates rigid panel structures in order to underscore the importance of the imposed border on his protagonist. Conversely, in *Scott Pilgrim's Precious Little Life* (and indeed, in the entire series), Bryan Lee O'Malley borrows the more flexible border-gutter structure from manga comics to demonstrate the permeability of the Canada-US border, in spite of his protagonist's aspirational sense of the US as an inaccessible other.

Scott Pilgrim's Precious Little Life[4]

In the world of independent comics, the *Scott Pilgrim* series by Bryan Lee O'Malley has been a phenomenon for publisher Oni Press. It has garnered massive sales, critical acclaim, expensive full-colour re-issues, product tie-ins, a major Hollywood film adaptation, and even a video game. Unlike *Louis Riel* and its self-consciously serious graphic narrative style, *Scott Pilgrim* is meant to stylistically echo the manga pulp comics popular in Japan; it features the smaller (compared to typical Western publications), pocketbook-sized form of the manga comic, black-and-white images on inexpensively mass-produced paper, margin bleed and lack of a gutter surrounding the page, and characters drawn with large eyes and small mouths. The use of margin bleed and cheap paper make the comics feel disposable and ephemeral, with text frequently cut off by the edge of the page; the result is a comic that feels like it is to be consumed, in contrast with the weighty literary presentation of *Louis Riel*. The most important

characteristic of manga that O'Malley has retained, however, is the more fluid relationship in Japanese comics between panel and gutter and ordering than in Western comics. Indeed, there is no rigid or recurring structure in this series, and the number of panels and their layout changes with every page: for example, when panels appear superimposed above other panels to demonstrate the significance of a particular moment. By using this technique, O'Malley is able to play with the notion of border much more overtly than Chester Brown does.

In the *Scott Pilgrim* series, America is an aspirational destination, epitomized through the figure of Ramona Flowers, whose exoticism comes from her outsider status and cultural cachet as an American who befriends the Canadian protagonist, Scott Pilgrim. Ramona's ever-changing colourful hair, her secretive past life, and her ability to use the "subspace highways" that they "don't teach in Canadian schools" all mark her as different from Scott (*Precious Little Life* n. pag.); Scott cannot cut or change his hair out of a superstitious fear of consequences, and everyone in his world already knows all there is to know about him. Where other characters, like the aptly-named Envy Adams, aspire to obtain American citizenship and escape Toronto, Ramona has chosen to relocate to Toronto, marking her again as something Other. She chooses Canada at the same time as she mocks it. With its explicit situating in Toronto, the comic itself is doing the same.

Scott Pilgrim, as a series, is self-consciously Canadian; indeed, it can be read as O'Malley's love letter to Toronto. Within the cultural context of mainstream popular comics, it is rare to see explicit representations of Canada. As Ryan Edwardson notes, comics—like so much other mass media—remain "a cultural arena where New York overwhelms New Brunswick, and one rarely sees a maple leaf" (199). For this reason, the explicit celebration of Toronto and Canadian culture in *Scott Pilgrim* is significant in itself, particularly given the sheer popularity of the franchise. Canadian-ness is represented in the comic by the kind of cultural reference points that writer Douglas Coupland has termed "secret handshakes" of Canadian identity (*Souvenir of Canada*) consisting of ephemera like posters and t-shirts that reference specifically Canadian restaurants, bands, and institutions. These moments are sometimes plot points, as when Casa Loma is used as a big American movie set, but more often are left as Easter eggs for the savvy reader to find, such as Scott's CBC logo tee. As the secret language of the comic, they render the quotidian Canadian landscape cool by making it accessible only to an in-group subset of the comic's readership.[5] In this way,

although the character of Scott Pilgrim thinks himself trapped in a Canada that is much less exciting than the aspirational US, the comic book series *Scott Pilgrim* positions Canada as a cool alternative to its southern neighbour.

Where the major characters of *Louis Riel* see the border as fluid, for Scott and his friends the opposite is true. In his article, "Scott Pilgrim vs. Hegemony: Nostalgia, Remediation, and Heteronormativity," Ryan Lizardi argues that "the difference between Canadian and American characters . . . is never given much weight in the series" (255), but a reading informed by border studies productively reveals the subtle but significant experiences of place for Canadian and American characters. In *Scott Pilgrim*, one does not ever cross the border without a great cost. Ramona, for example, crosses the border as an attempt to escape her past, but her choice visits doom and destruction upon Scott who now must fight the (mostly American) Seven Evil Exes; her border transgression brings with it violence and the disruption of Scott's world. In a later volume, Scott's ex-girlfriend Envy Adams gains success and coolness in the US, but at the expense of her soul. Envy breaks Scott's heart when she leaves, and returns cruelly cold to his plight and his desire to be with Ramona (O'Malley, *Infinite Sadness* n. pag.). Envy's name is aptly chosen, because envy of her fame in the US shapes the response she receives from her old friends. It is also a name she has chosen for herself after leaving Canada, where she was Natalie V. Adams—the nickname Envy, from N.V., is emblematic of the attitude all the Canadian characters in the series have to the US. The other characters are effectively trapped in Toronto, even as they envy and desire the cultural cachet that characters like Ramona as an American, or Envy as an escapee, possess. Scott and his friends see the border—and all it represents—as rigid and fixed. They cannot cross it, and envy those who can (see Figure 2).

And yet O'Malley's use of gutters and panels is so fluid in this book. No two pages have the same layout, and O'Malley allows characters to transgress these non-traditional gutters, as is particularly emblematic of manga. Notably, the character who does this most often is Ramona. In fact, she is the first character in the comic to do so (in response to Scott complimenting her shoes, she sticks one foot out of the panel), simultaneously reinforcing her transgressive power and her power to inspire the same kind of transgression in the other characters. The characters who most wish to emulate Ramona in order to fit in, like Knives Chau, also use this trope commonly. Because at the end of the series we realize that Ramona gives Scott the power to understand himself, Ramona is deeply tied to Scott's understanding of his

Figure 2
From *Scott Pilgrim's Precious Little Life* by Bryan Lee O'Malley, published by Oni Press, Inc. Scott Pilgrim TM & (c) 2016 Bryan Lee O'Malley.

own identity. In this way, O'Malley uses the fluid borders and gutters of his comic to suggest that the limitations by which Scott feels controlled and restrained are ultimately of his own construction. This is the larger message of the comic's structure: what Scott realizes in the end is that his battle has never been with Ramona's Seven Evil Exes but with himself and his own insecurities, represented by the Negascott. The framing of each panel and the comic's fluid notion of gutter, border, and limitation underscore this point. Here, O'Malley uses this pop-manga adaptation to move away from the rigidity of the kind of imposed borders used in Brown's *Louis Riel*, where constructions of national borders are imposition and destiny for the protagonists. Here, the structural borders invite a reimagining of the impermeability of national borders; Ramona and Envy's transnational mobility is never questioned. It simply is.

Indeed, both Ramona's active choice to live in Toronto and Envy's ability to move between Canada and the US at will demonstrate a permeability

of border that is more apparent in the structure than the plot of the comic. Scott and his friends believe themselves to be trapped in Toronto and look upon people who transgress the border as exotic Others, but the structure of the comic itself demonstrates that borders are a flexible construct, and that those who want to traverse them can. As Scott achieves character growth over the course of the narrative, he likewise begins to see his life as less restrictive and more open, and the US becomes less of an impossible destination as his relationship to Ramona becomes more real. Simultaneously, by subtly rendering Canadian culture "cool," O'Malley's visual representation of Canada makes the US less of an aspirational destination. Scott can now cross the border, but he can also choose not to. This use of border is different again from a comic like *Red: A Haida Manga* that requires a radical re-envisioning of the concept of border itself.

Red: A Haida Manga

The most formally innovative of the three comics in this study, *Red: A Haida Manga* by Michael Yahgulanaas, pushes the type of engagement with manga seen in O'Malley's work even further to create a hybrid art form that disrupts any pre-existing notions of the role of borders and gutters in comics. Here, the borders and gutters actively engage in storytelling. The comic itself is created not panel by panel, as in the traditional comic book mode, but as a mural that has been carved up to form a book; it is fine art first and comic book second. When the mural is re-formed with the pages of the book (Yahgulanaas notes that it takes two copies of the comic, once torn apart, to accomplish this), the borders and gutters take on a new life as the outline of traditional Haida animal figures. This mural form of the comic has been shown at galleries such as the Seattle Art Museum[6] and can be recreated by any reader with two copies of the comic, disrupting the border between the accessible art of comics and the refined viewing space of a fine art gallery. In both form and content, then, *Red* is an act of disruption (see Figure 3).

Yahgulanaas is explicit about his desire to disrupt traditional modes of comic book creation in a Canadian context. He notes that traditional Canadian or North American forms are, by definition, part of a larger legacy of European colonialism. In his article "Seeing and Nothingness," Richard Harrison argues that Yahgulanaas is explicitly critiquing "the gutter as a European, culturally-based delineation of empty space" and challenging the original European perception of "Turtle Island" as "a nothingness to be used as the observer sees fit" (68). In moving outside of a North American comic

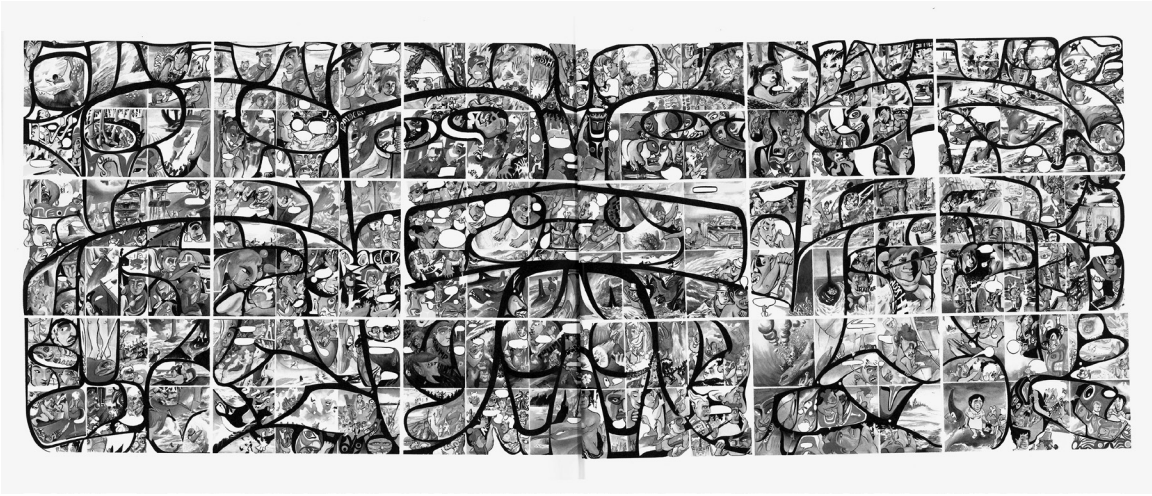


Figure 3
Red: A Haida Manga by Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas, 2014, Douglas and McIntyre. Reprinted with permission from the publisher. www.mny.ca

arts tradition and towards a Japanese one, writing from British Columbia, Yahgulanaas seeks to challenge the colonially imposed borders on his nation by demonstrating a hopeful Western-directed gaze towards Japan rather than an Eastern-directed gaze back across Canada. Raised in a sealing community, his childhood perceptions were shaped by the fond stories his elders told of their experiences in Japan, which represented a physical security Haida people did not experience in Canada:

> [In Japan, they could] walk through the streets just like an ordinary human. They could go to the restaurant, could use public restrooms, they could shop and move freely and live freely as regular humans. Of course, that [was] not the situation here in British Columbia, in Canada, where if you're even allowed in the movie theatre you had to sit in the Indian side. (qtd. in Medley n. pag.)

Japan works here as an imagined space of distance from Canada's colonial history and the racist imperatives that underscore Britain's colonial legacy regarding Indigenous people. Japan, then, is anti-colonial only in relation to the Haida experience; and Yahgulanaas makes use of this imagined geography and constructed history to expose a larger point about using North American comics' traditions to tell Indigenous stories. To borrow Audre Lorde's phrase, Yahgulanaas resists the possibility of dismantling the

master's house with the master's tools. Japan is a useful Other that allows Yahgulanaas to step outside the British colonial frame, but Yahgulanaas does not negotiate Japan's own colonial legacy; it is not germane to his purpose. As a hybrid form, then, Haida Manga is removed from one colonial experience, but not all.

Yahgulanaas goes further than Lee O'Malley's fannish borrowing from manga art styles as a way to create a space of play in the *Scott Pilgrim* series; rather, Yahgulanaas' borrowing is rooted in a political and ideological argument that requires the manga tradition to work. His belief in a deep cultural connection results in a hybrid Haida Manga form where borders and gutters do not merely give metaphorical representation to the colonially imposed Canadian border; instead, the very construct of border is superseded by the distinctive figures of the Haida nation, visually representing the text's larger thematic interest in nation-shaping and the impact of colonialism that consumes the plot of the comic.

Red: A Haida Manga is rooted in Haida mythology. As Yahgulanaas notes, "[o]nce upon a time this was a true story," highlighting the allegorical and historical duality of the story and its role in Haida culture (1). In the comic, the protagonist, Red, allows his anger and thoughts of revenge to draw his community into a deadly alliance with a carpenter whose influence decimates the natural world and inter-tribal relationships upon which the community relies; the community becomes dependant and indebted instead to traders from outside. Red loses the ability to trust and can no longer distinguish between his enemies and his brother (Yahgulanaas 72). The message throughout the comic is that to turn away from the community and its traditional practices is to bring tragedy to the community: that the force of destruction takes the form of the carpenter suggests a connection to Christian missionaries; that the destruction is weaponized and technological suggests the material impact of colonization and its inherent violence.

The structure of the comic, however, forces the reader to consider a path out of colonization and a return to a more fulfilling way of life; the borders and gutters become, rather than the tools of oppression we see in *Louis Riel*, a representation of the lifeline of the Haida people. When viewed in mural form, what is most apparent is not the narrative of the comic but its unique structure: the borders and gutters become the spiritual Haida figures recognizable across Pacific Northwestern Indigenous art. In using the border and gutter lines to represent traditional animals and their attendant cultural significance, Yahgulanaas forces the colonial implications of the border to recede into the

background. This is in turn underscored in the narrative arc, as the border of the comic also comes to represent the through-line of Red's life. As Miriam Brown Spiers suggests, "Red finally, tragically, uses the formline as it was meant to be used: he allows it to control his life instead of attempting to manipulate it, and he demonstrates that he has become aware of his community and the importance of respecting its values" (57). In this moment, Red dies—or at least we infer that he has died. Here our reading does the work of closure, in McCloud's sense, by interpreting Red's death in concert with Yahgulanaas' thoughtful use of the gutter as Red's literal and metaphoric lifeline. But unlike the finality of Riel's death in *Louis Riel*, where death becomes the only escape from the nationalist construct of borders and gutters, in *Red* the protagonist's death represents a turning away from colonial power and a reconnection to traditional practice. Yahgulanaas disrupts expectations of what a border represents in a comics context, and in so doing makes a powerful critique of national borders as they have been imposed upon Indigenous people in Canada. Indeed, Yahgulanaas radically rejects and re-envisions the border as a construct. Here, it makes meaning only when reframed from an Indigenous perspective. The border in *Red* does not rigidly impose a colonial definition on the community but instead offers a person who has, with the help of the colonizers, transgressed against the community a pathway back to self-definition. In this way, the Haida-defined border and gutter is a space of healing and true closure, far beyond McCloud's sense of the term.

Conclusion

These are just three examples of how visual depictions of the border in contemporary Canadian comics serve to reinforce, trouble, and disrupt, respectively, narrative discussions of the same liminal space. There is nothing new to the suggestion that CanLit is particularly engaged with the Canada-US border and its impact on identity, but we can nuance our understanding of these ideas by paying attention to how comics deal with similar constructs. Comics are exciting as a site of discussion for cultural ideas in part because of the space that exists between the textual narrative and the visual depiction: in this slippage, or indeed this gutter, we are required to do the work of closure to make meaning, and also to negotiate the spaces where meaning remains contradictory and open. Attending to how comics artists manipulate these borders structurally is critical work, because engaging with literal borders and their attendant gutters makes explicit our theoretical understanding of the significance of borders in literature. On the

page of a comic, the border cannot be ignored: it is grammar and narrative at once. For border studies scholars, the literal borders and gutters of comics offer a site of inquiry for the irony and slippage that occur in the figurative gutter that comes with the forty-ninth parallel.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks to the generous audience at CACLALS that heard the earliest version of this paper, and to Jennifer Andrews for her comments on the first draft. I am very grateful for the anonymous reviewers and the editors at *Canadian Literature* who strengthened this article with their thoughtful feedback and revisions.

NOTES

1 McCloud offers the example of two panels of a comic: the first shows a man wielding an axe and a would-be victim, and the second shows a scream. In the space between the two panels, the reader must manufacture the murder for him- or herself. While all media make use of the viewer's imagination to a certain extent, in comics this participatory act of meaning-making is the "primary means of simulating time and motion" (McCloud 69).
2 For a good discussion of the history of the Métis relationship to the Canada-US border, see Michael Hogue's *Metis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People*.
3 This history of Canadian comics draws upon my research for "Canadian Comics: A Brief History," published in *The Routledge Companion to Comics* (Gray 62-69).
4 In keeping with manga style's margin bleed, the books in the original run of the *Scott Pilgrim* series are not paginated. Unless otherwise stated, all references come from the first edition of Volume 1, titled *Scott Pilgrim's Precious Little Life*.
5 I had the opportunity to experience this first-hand at the Comics Forum conference in Leeds, UK, in 2012, where few people in the almost entirely European audience knew that *Scott Pilgrim* is Canadian or explicitly set in Toronto, though all were familiar with the comic; those readers who did make this connection were almost exclusively Canadianists or border studies scholars. This suggests the different registers upon which the comic operates, but perhaps more importantly underscores the significant role border studies has to offer critical readings of Canadian comics.
6 I had the pleasure of viewing the mural form of *Red* at this exhibition on April 3, 2015. Seeing *Red* "live" in this format allows the viewer a clear sense of how it exists simultaneously as a piece of visual art and a comic, especially because in the mural form the text is roughed-in with pencil, thereby decentering the narrative and foregrounding the larger work of art.

WORKS CITED

Andrews, Jennifer. "Queer(y)ing Fur: Reading *Fashion Television*'s Border Crossings." *Parallel Encounters: Culture at the Canada-US Border*. Ed. Gillian Roberts and David Stirrup. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2013. 27-46. Print.

Bell, John. *Invaders from the North: How Canada Conquered the Comic Book Universe*. Toronto: Dundurn, 2006. Print.

Bongco, Mila. *Reading Comics: Language, Culture, and the Concept of the Superhero in Comic Books*. London: Garland, 2000. Print.

Brown, Chester. *I Never Liked You*. Montreal: Drawn and Quarterly, 1994. Print.
—. *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography*. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2007. Print.
—. *Paying for It*. Montreal: Drawn and Quarterly, 2011. Print.
Edwardson, Ryan. "The Many Lives of Captain Canuck: Nationalism, Culture, and the Creation of a Canadian Comic Book Superhero." *Journal of Popular Culture* 37.2 (2003): 184-201. Print.
Fisher, Robin, ed. *What Right? Graphic Interpretations Against Censorship*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp, 2002. Print.
—. *What's Wrong? Explicit Graphic Interpretations Against Censorship*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp, 2002. Print.
Gray, Brenna Clarke. "Canadian Comics: A Brief History." *The Routledge Companion to Comics*. Ed. Frank Bramlett, Roy T. Cook, and Aaron Meskin. New York: Routledge, 2016. 62–69. Print.
Groensteen, Thierry. *The System of Comics*. Trans. Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2007. Print.
Harrison, Richard. "Seeing and Nothingness: Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas, Haida Manga, and a Critique of the Gutter." *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 43.1 (2016): 51–74. Print.
Hogue, Michael. *Metis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People*. Regina: U of Regina P, 2015.
Lander, Ben. "Graphic Novels as History: Representing and Reliving the Past." *Left History* 10.2 (2005): n.p. *Left History Online*. Web. 6 Aug. 2015.
Lent, John A. "The Comics Debates Internationally." *A Comics Studies Reader*. Ed. Jeet Heer and Kent Worcester. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2009. 69-76. Print.
Lesk, Andrew. "Redrawing Nationalism: Chester Brown's *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography*." *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* 1.1 (2010): 63-81. Print.
Lizardi, Ryan. "Scott Pilgrim vs. Hegemony: Nostalgia, Remediation, and Heteronormativity." *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* 4.2 (2013): 245-56. Web. 6 Aug. 2015.
McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. New York: HarperPerennial, 2011. Print.
Medley, Mark. "Pacific Notion: The Convergence of B.C.'s Haida with Japan's Manga." *National Post*. 17 Oct. 2009. *ProQuest*. Web. 5 Aug. 2015.
Nischik, Reingard M. *Comparative North American Studies: Transnational Approaches to American and Canadian Literature and Culture*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. Print.
O'Malley, Bryan Lee. *Scott Pilgrim Volume 1: Scott Pilgrim's Precious Little Life*. Portland: Oni P, 2004. Print.
—. *Scott Pilgrim Volume 3: Scott Pilgrim & the Infinite Sadness*. Portland: Oni P, 2006. Print.
Roberts, Gillian, and David Stirrup, eds. *Parallel Encounters: Culture at the Canada-US Border*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2013. Print.
Ryder, Bruce. "Undercover Censorship: Exploring the History of the Regulation of Publications in Canada." *Interpreting Censorship in Canada*. Ed. Allan C. Hutchinson and Klaus Petersen. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1999. 129-56. Print.
Souvenir of Canada. Dir. Robin Neinstein. National Film Board, 2005. Film.
Spiers, Miriam Brown. "Creating a Haida Manga: The Formline of Social Responsibility in *Red*." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 26.3 (2014): 41-61. Print.
Yahgulanaas, Michael. *Red: A Haida Manga*. Canadian 1st ed. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2009. Print.

Sam Weselowski

Seaside Town

These birds seem to ride a breeze
in a light rain.

Is that the truth of birds
riding the breeze in a light rain?

The difference between them
screams.

Beside the sea spilling out
the beach god sits

stronger than any bird—
not the rain screwed blind

glued to the street, not
erotic longing,

nothing at all beating
on the back of the wind

a wet bird.

Janie Beriault

The Sublime and Picturesque Aesthetics in John Richardson's *Wacousta*

Recognized by many as the first Canadian novel, John Richardson's *Wacousta or, The Prophecy; A Tale of the Canadas* (1832) has become an "important national symbol," and its place in the Canadian literary canon has been established in the last twenty years (Cronk xvii). Set in 1763 after the Seven Years' War when most French colonial territories in North America were being ceded to the British, *Wacousta* narrates Richardson's historical reimagining of the siege of Fort Detroit during Pontiac's uprising against British rule. Richardson therefore sets his novel in a period marked by the "uncertainties" of the colonial situation in Canada (Duffy 23). Such spatial uncertainties, coupled with the settlers' anxieties of "cultural assimilation" (Edwards 18) engendered by inhabiting the frontier, manifest themselves in the novel as a climate of "terror" (Currie 148). This paper sets out to demonstrate that *Wacousta* oscillates between the sublime and the picturesque, aesthetic practices that were prominent in what D. M. R. Bentley calls the "mental outfit" of the British settlers in Canada (126). I will argue that the picturesque, as a mode of vision, responds to the sublime landscape by attempting to frame and contain the New World in measurable terms, rendering the passionate and obscure as stable and comprehensible through aesthetic control. Richardson thus employs the picturesque mode to restructure the New World so that it affirms the ascendency of the rational over the passionate. Accordingly, this aesthetic tension extends to a conflict between (and consequently the supremacy of) a communal social vision, associated with the picturesque mode's all-inclusive vision, and the solitary, associated with individuals' passionate and imaginative reactions to objects

and events in accordance with the sublime. In this way, while scholars have often read *Wacousta* through a postcolonially historicized lens, I will situate the novel within eighteenth-century Eurocentric formal aesthetics. I will argue that, contrary to the critical emphasis in recent scholarship, the novel's central conflict is not one of cross-cultural negotiations among the British, the French, and Indigenous peoples, but rather a clash internal to British prospects for establishing colonial settlements in the New World that can itself be resolved into an integrated aesthetic framework. This paper also differentiates itself from popular studies of social visions articulated in early Canadian writing.[1] Although the ways in which the impulses of community and individuality are reflected in *Wacousta*'s aesthetic practice have much in common with Northrop Frye's famous concept of the "garrison mentality" (228), my reading ultimately distinguishes Richardson's vision from Frye's by demonstrating that progression towards social community does not necessarily lead to a breakdown of conventional forms and a breakthrough of "greater freedom," but rather promotes a social (and aesthetic) model that seeks organization (232). Therefore, by reading the novel through the old-fashioned Eurocentric conventions of the sublime and the picturesque against a contemporary preference for more open models of interpretation, this paper will illustrate that *Wacousta*, whose form has been critically underestimated, does not necessitate a resolution of the various incongruous elements, but rather formal aesthetic closure.

Eric G. Walker notes that "the principal domain of the picturesque was landscape art" (8) and so I will begin by establishing *Wacousta*'s landscape as an object of aesthetic contemplation before turning to aesthetic theory (8). In the opening passage of the novel, the narrator asserts the pre-eminence of setting when he states that it is "necessary" for the reader to "understan[d] the localities," the distinct features of the particular place that is Canada, in order to "enter with deeper interest into the incidents of the tale" (Richardson 3). As a result, the narrator claims that he will "sketch a few of the most prominent scenes" (12), a series of compositions to be visually observed, and "impress [the] readers with a panoramic picture of the country," a continuous and comprehensive view of the landscape, in which the "action is more immediately laid" (4). The narrator thereby introduces the narrative in pictorial terms. Richardson further stresses the novel's emphasis on visuality by granting the narrator an awareness of aesthetic practice. At points the narrator claims that "the small plain . . . [was] somewhat elevated, so as to present the appearance of a mound, constructed on the first principles of art" (243),

that of the artistic rule of the "prospect" which "commands" a view (295). Therefore, through the narrator's emphasis on the visual and his knowledge of aesthetic theory, the picturesque and the sublime modes become appropriate frames of reference by which to approach the novel.

According to Edmund Burke, "passion[s]" (72), notably those of "Terror" (80), "Obscurity" (82), and "the Infinite (109)," are products of the sublime aesthetic perception. The sublime, as an overwhelming state, fills the individual's mind so that it can "entertain no other" object (79). This state of feeling can be understood as moving beyond the limits of reason by slipping into what Philip Shaw calls "the absolute unknowable void" (2). Sublimity then refers to "the moment when the ability to apprehend, to know and to express a thought or sensation is defeated," and thus, one experiences that which is "excessive, unmanageable, [and] even terrifying" (3). We encounter all of these effects of the sublime mode in Richardson's novel, where it is used repeatedly to dramatize the fear of the unknown in the overwhelming space of the New World during a "period," according to the narrator, that "was so fearful and pregnant with events of danger" (Richardson 16). The narrator further describes the atmosphere in the novel as one marked by "the dark shadow of the broad belt" (29) of "the semicircular sweep of wild forest" (24) that threw "all that part of the waste which came within its immediate range" into "an abyss, the depth of which was lost in the profound obscurity" (239). This pervading mood is characterized by an impervious and impenetrable darkness that obscures one's vision beyond the fort, as all elements in "immediate range" become imperceptible to the eye, an experience which Madeline, the Colonel's niece, describes as "leaving nothing but a formless and confused picture of the whole" when she attempts to recollect the events "associated with her flight" from the fort (364). While the narrator depicts the setting in terms of a visual representation, that of a "picture," he describes its content as vague and indefinite, and consequently without visual order, which produces a boundless and unintelligible whole that resists the process of being framed.

Richardson's "confused picture" is in accordance with Burke's sublime aesthetic of "the Infinite," which has the tendency to stimulate and "fill the mind with that sort of delightful horror," the most "genuine and truest affect of the sublime" (Burke 109). Burke notes that the infinite can be induced by two artificial forms of infinity: "Succession and Uniformity" (111). While succession renders the infinite by impressing the imagination with the idea of "progress beyond actual limits" (111), uniformity produces "rotund" (112)

forms that yield no "check" to the eye (111). In the above description of *Wacousta*'s setting, the forest is described as an immeasurable "abyss" (239), thus partaking in the principle of succession, while its "semicircular" shape adheres to the aesthetic value of uniformity by providing a continuous and indefinite line of vision with no angles on which the eye can rest (24). In this way, the aesthetic qualities of terror, obscurity, and the infinite that characterize *Wacousta*'s atmosphere align closely with Burke's definition of sublimity.

It is not only *Wacousta*'s setting that adheres to the aesthetic traits delineated by Burke, but also individual characters in the novel who respond to the affective quality of the sublime atmosphere. Namely, the figure of Wacousta, a British officer masquerading as an Indigenous man, elicits sublime fears because he transgresses both racial and spatial boundaries, and thus disrupts a stable sense of place and identity by resisting the process of being aesthetically, physically, and interpretively contained, much like the visual frame of the novel. Wacousta possesses the ability to move between, and surpass the bounds of, physical spaces. Although the members of the garrison believe "it appeared impossible any thing wearing the human form could pass them unperceived" (Richardson 23) Wacousta was "around [them], though unseen" (31). In this sense, the members of the garrison imaginatively transform Wacousta into a spectral presence, participating in what Shaw calls an "experience" that "slip[s] out of conventional understanding," precisely because Wacousta's physical mobility lies beyond the limits of reason (2). While Wacousta is able to transcend spatial boundaries, he also roots his identity in indecipherability by simultaneously inhabiting the familiar and the unfamiliar through his racial ambivalence, which frustrates fixed notions of identity predicated on a stable racial binary between, in this case, white and non-white. The narrator claims that Frederick, Colonel de Haldimar's eldest son, "s[ought] to reconcile the contradictions that existed between [Wacousta's] dress and features and the purity of the English he had just spoken" (Richardson 264). Frederick's desire to interpret, and thus to "reconcile," is a desire to fix cultural difference in a containable visible object; yet, his inability to secure a stable control of the boundary between the familiar and the unfamiliar—the native dress and the British accent—produces in him an uncanny response to Wacousta, who unsettles established racial binaries through what Justin D. Edwards calls a "vision of fluid identity" (7). Wacousta is therefore a boundless figure who escapes the conventions of both spatial and racial fixity by remaining an obscure presence that generates "terror" (Richardson 63) and "almost superstitious awe" in the members of

the garrison (93). In aesthetic terms, Wacousta is an embodiment of what Robert Lecker calls the "force of chaos" (51) that threatens the notion of visual order and that, I will argue, escapes aesthetic containment by remaining an obscure presence for the greater part of the novel.

The narrator also portrays Wacousta as a presence that haunts the "collective imagination" of the garrison by promoting sentiments of "powerful and absorbing dread" in the minds of each member (Richardson 161). Wacousta induces those in the garrison "to indulge in communion with [their] own thoughts" rather than "to communicate them to others" (Richardson 161), as the soldiers' "vague and idle fears" as well as the unexplained horrors can only be represented in the form of the unspeakable, in keeping with the sublime experience which exceeds the limits of expression (308). As a result, the mysterious presence of Wacousta, emblematic of the sublime atmosphere more generally, stimulates an excess of imagination in the members of the garrison and encourages contemplation in isolation. Similarly, Charles, the Colonel's youngest son, describes his experience of Wacousta's presence as "[s]ick, dizzy, and with every faculty of [his] mind annihilated" since the sublime mood provokes and "absorbs [his] mind, to the exclusion of every other feeling" (213). Although in this passage Charles is alluding to Halloway's execution in general terms and not to the emergence of the figure of Wacousta, who triggers the execution specifically, revenge and overpowering emotions are implicated in Colonel de Haldimar's "error," which partakes in the sublime modality (514). As such, in the face of sublimity, Charles is overwhelmed by its powers that debilitate, arrest, and oppress his faculties, which leads to the experience of cognitive failure. The sublime also produces an overactive imagination: when Jack Fuller encounters "the mysterious visitant," he claims to "ha[ve] worked up his naturally dull imagination to its highest perception of the supernatural" (343). Fuller's imagination promotes a non-rational level of experience that violates the boundaries of what is empirically knowable. The sublime thereby fosters excessive imagination, leaving "the inward mind [to] remai[n] unchecked" (34).

While the sublime evokes an excessive emotional response in the members of the garrison, and, consequently, promotes contemplation in isolation that leads to the breakdown of "communionship" (Richardson 16), the figure of Wacousta himself points to a disintegration of social order through his unchecked passions. The narrator describes Wacousta as "lurking within the precincts of the fort with a view to the destruction of all that it contained" (22). He possesses the intention of dismantling the social institution of the

garrison, which would lead to further social chaos, as well as impulses that compel violence, as he claims that "the hour of retribution was at hand, and revenge, the exclusive passions of the gods, shall at length be mine" (491). Richardson therefore depicts excess passion as a problematic response in the New World precisely because this lack of emotional restraint, partaking in the sublime or induced by it, leads to social disorder and violent compulsions.

The picturesque mode, however, functions to check impulses associated with the sublime by reasserting visual control over the scene through an aesthetic restructuring of the New World. Carole Gerson suggests that *Wacousta* mediates between "early American engagement with Romance," such as the fiction of James Fenimore Cooper, and "the waxing British practice of realism," such as the writings of Sir Walter Scott, both of which, I argue, participate in the picturesque aesthetic (Gerson 82). Emerging between 1730 and 1830 with Italian landscape painters such as Salvator Rosa, the picturesque phase was a precursor to Romanticism and became the nineteenth century's dominant mode of vision, understood as the ability to see nature with a painter's eye (Trott 1998; Hussey 1927). The picturesque mode was both realistic and ideal because it strove to imitate and correct "nature" through artistic representation (Hussey 18). Notably, Uvedale Price established the picturesque as a third aesthetic category, in addition to the sublime and the beautiful, by including aspects of both (Glickman 1998). In opposition to the sublime, Price defines the essential qualities of the beautiful as the perfection of smoothness, the uniformity of surface, and the limited variety in features to promote "absolute equality" among them (Price 43). The painter's use of "contrast," combining the smoothness and uniformity of the beautiful with the vastness and obscurity of the sublime, thus became the essential picturesque requisite (Trott 75). While the sublime escapes the limits of representation, the picturesque is limiting in scope because, as Nicola Trott argues, painters "had to decide" (77) when "it ceased to be possible to delineate" (79). In this sense, the picturesque landscape, as a pictorial unit, is best understood as an aesthetic "blend" striving for an all-encompassing, yet representable, vision (Nevius 44).

Although there is no evidence of Richardson's active engagement with landscape painting conventions in his fiction, Cooper and Scott, on whom Richardson modelled *Wacousta*, possess an awareness of the picturesque aesthetic. By the time Cooper wrote *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), argues Blake Nevius, "the prospect" (21) conditioned by his knowledge of European landscape painting aesthetics, "had become integral" to his work (41).

According to Nevius, the prospect establishes "the larger spatial context" as well as "the relative disposition of objects" within it in order to "enhance as well as control" the spectator's perception of the composition (30). Cooper thus understood the picturesque not only as a descriptive mode of representation, but also as an exercise that achieves visual control over the object of representation. Similarly, Walker suggests the Scottish landscape achieved "pictorial fame" through Scott's promotion of picturesque Scotland (12-13). Walker notes that Scott's "frequent invocation of Rosa," in *Waverley* as well as other novels, is "the best evidence we have that [Scott's] pictorial sensibility conformed to orthodox tenets of the picturesque movement in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries" (7).

Whereas Scott's use of the picturesque primarily "serve[d] as a catalyst" for his "historical imagination" notes Walker, I argue that Richardson's picturesque vision allows for the clarification of New World obscurities by checking sublime elements (21). The narrator's shift in modes of perception in the latter half of the novel thus enables him to order the chaotic components found in the first half of the narrative. Notably, the picturesque qualities of the landscape surrounding Fort Detroit can be seen in the following description:

> Darkness was already beginning to spread her mantle over the intervening space, and the night fires of the Indians were kindling into brightness, glimmering occasionally . . . when suddenly a lofty tent, the brilliant whiteness of which was thrown into strong relief by the dark field on which it reposed, was seen to rise at a few paces from the abrupt point of the forest . . . and on the extreme summit of a ridge, beyond which lay only the western horizon in golden perspective. (Richardson 431)

In this scene, the narrator makes use of contrast—the prime pictorial value of the picturesque mode—which adheres to the aesthetic principle of *chiaroscuro*, or contrast produced through "light and shade," imported from Italian landscape painting conventions (Nevius 32). This practice of *chiaroscuro*, seen in the narrator's exercise of "darkness" and the "golden perspective," enhances the spectacle by emphasizing difference within a single frame. The narrator's description also makes use of "roughness and sudden variation" of form, another characteristic of the picturesque, seen in the "abrupt point of the forest" and the "summit of the ridge" set against the "relief" (Hussey 14). According to Christopher Hussey, the use of formal variation "marks the peculiarity of their appearance" and "arouses the mind of the spectator" (15). It is worth noting that the narrator explicitly distinguishes this scene of the Native camp for its picturesque value, as "there was no trace of that blended

natural scenery that so pleasingly diversified the vicinity of the sister fort" (Richardson 285). Such articulation demonstrates that the narrator possesses an awareness of landscape painting as a mode that seeks "diversi[ty]" through internal contrast and variation, and that also strives to correct "natur[e]" through artistic representation. By drawing the reader's attention to Fort Michilimackinac's lack of "blend," the requisite quality of the picturesque which would make it "pleasing" to the eye, the narrator can assert the picturesque value of Fort Detroit, where the novel primarily takes place.

Richardson further establishes the picturesque quality of Fort Detroit when he claims that "gradually the mists, that had fallen during the latter hours of the night . . . convey[ed] the appearance of a rolling sheet of vapour retiring back upon itself, and disclos[ed] objects in succession, until the eye could embrace all that came within its extent of vision" (Richardson 50-51). The "variety of objects, shapes, and hues" that compose a picturesque landscape, notes Gilpin, although "inharmonious in themselves," may be "harmoniously united by one general tinge spread over them" (qtd. in Hussey 52). Such a tinge not only provides a principle of unity in the composition of Fort Detroit by "disclosing" the previously obscure scene of the mysterious appearance of Wacousta in (and the disappearance of Frederick from) the fort that occurred during the "latter hours of the night," but also, by "contrasting a dreamy atmosphere over the scene and softening the contrast of light and shade," yields a vision of an all-embracing landscape (qtd. in Hussey 52). As William Hazlitt suggests, a "mist drawing a slender veil over all objects" is "picturesque" and "ideal" by creating the effect of removing the scene "from the actual and the present," and in *Wacousta*'s case, removing it from the sublime and immediate (qtd. in Nevius 51).

While the tinge unites the incongruous parts of the landscape, the prospect mediates the sublime elements by commanding the view. By making use of the prospect, Richardson's narrator is able to assert visual control of the scene by aesthetically settling the landscape he observes. The picturesque setting noted above is one the narrator claims to have "selected for the theatre of *our* labours" (Richardson 6; emphasis mine). While the static medium of landscape painting directs the observer's eye by providing visual stability through controlling the prospect as a framing device, S. Leigh Matthews argues that the narrative "we" in *Wacousta* asserts "ocular possession" of both the geographic and "psychic space" of the novel by suggesting that "the reader's own gaze will be directed by the narrative one" (138). Martin Jay, writing about perspectival vision in visual art, notes that the painter's "[g]aze . . . was

conceived in the manner of a lone eye looking . . . unblinking, and fixated," and thus static, which reduces the gaze to a single point-of-view (7). The viewer/reader consequently contemplates the visual field from a single vantage point that is exterior to the world the narrator describes. The technique of perspective, which can be understood in terms of Nevius' description of the convention of "the prospect," not only allows the reader emotional and physical stability by viewing the scene from a single, fixed point-of-view, but also distances the reader from the events, which helps to imaginatively contain the threatening sublime elements of the New World environment (30). The effect of the prospect is enacted when the narrator claims that "throughout the obscurity might be seen the flitting forms of men" (Richardson 21). The dispassionate eye of the reader creates a gap between him- or herself as a spectator and the sublime spectacle of the actual and immediate soldiers moving about the scene. In this sense, the eye mediates through distance, which is to say by perspective, by transforming the soldiers into mere "forms of men" while simultaneously capturing the entirety of the scene. A more stable and clearer vision of the Canadian landscape is therefore made possible by what Sandeep Banerjee refers to as the picturesque's "scaling back," a process that renders previously sublime objects "more describable and representable [by] bring[ing] them within the ambit of ordinary existence" (2). Thus, Richardson renders common "scenes with which the European is little familiarised" (3).

The built form of the garrison itself becomes an embodiment of the picturesque mode's all-encompassing and all-commanding desire. The narrator describes a section of the garrison as rising "considerably above the other [buildings]," which "commanded a full view of the lake, even to its extremity of frowning and belting forest" (Richardson 291). Much like the prospect, the fort allows a fixed and stable perspective, what Banerjee calls a visual "anchor," for the members of the garrison to order the landscape, and thus, a perspective that can capture the whole scene in its "extremit[ies]" by delineating limits (5). As occupying the garrison is a form of stasis in a sublime world of flux, the fort enables the officers within the garrison to overlook and visually "circumven[t]" the surrounding scene (Richardson 24). The narrator describes the soldiers as containing the exterior space through ocular control, as "all the circuit of intermediate clearing, even to the very skirt of the forest, was distinctly commanded by the naked eye" (146), while "each [soldier] seemed to embrace every object on which the eye could rest, as if to fix its position indelibly in his memory" (207). By

occupying a stable perspective, the garrison attempts "to fix" and mitigate the scene through distance, much like the narrator. When "the naked eye" fails, the soldiers in the garrison resort to the aid of their "telescopes," further enabling a panoramic observation (407). Hence, as Matthews suggests, the Detroit garrison's "panoptic vision" (137) forms the basis for exercising visual control through a constant and steady perspective that enables "an all-encompassing" view of the forest (138).

The garrison members themselves also produce this visually regulated spectacle by demarcating boundaries between fort/wilderness, civilized/savage, reason/impulse, and British/Other in order to depict the New World in conceivable terms. As several scholars have noted, these binary constructions respond to anxieties concerning the disintegration of purportedly fixed physical, conceptual, and cultural borders by promoting simplistic oppositions that prescribe the domination of the New World (Hurley 37; Duffy 57; Lecker 57). However, they also serve a formal function by visually enhancing the scene through contrast. For example, while the garrison is associated with "vigila[nce]" (Richardson 19) visual orientation, and "noiseless" (21) preparations, the wilderness is associated with sounds and "yell[s] of despair and a shout of triumph burst" (63). Such a construction secures the garrison's control over the conceptual boundary between inside and outside by demarcating limits and promoting absolute sensory difference; the wilderness begins and ends with sounds while the garrison is limited to the purely visual, in addition to adhering more generally to the formal principle of contrast. Similarly, the narrator describes the garrison as "picturesque in effect" through its "square" (32) formation, providing a check for the eye, while the "encampment of the Indians" is described as "round," a form associated with the sublime qualities of uniformity and succession (243). The novel's binary constructions therefore not only enable the articulation of British order in (and domination of) the New World, but also produce a conceivable world by enabling the production of clear boundaries that demarcate difference. In aesthetic terms, the novel's polarizing tendency participates in the picturesque mode by allowing the beautiful (the ordered) and the sublime (the chaotic) to exist simultaneously within a single frame of vision while also reinforcing difference. As Michael Hurley observes the novel's "symmetry reflects the need to control, willfully to check and dominate the impulsive, the spontaneous, or the irrational" by asserting visual (and by extension aesthetic) mastery over the scene (55).

The complete ascendancy of rationality, and thus the checking of the sublime elements, can only be achieved through a restructuring of the sublime into realism, a mode that participates in the picturesque aesthetic. Namely, the narrator recounts the story from multiple perspectives in order to convey an all-encompassing vision of the unfolding events of the siege. As Gaile McGregor has rightly pointed out, numerous "chapters elapse before we are given any explanations about those mysterious events in the forest that provide the impetus for the entire plot" (7)—an impetus, I argue, that can only be revealed through a picturesque framework. McGregor further states that the novel's organization around the siege results in a narrative structure that is "circular" and "static" rather than linear, as the latter half lacks that sense of "movement" found in the first (8). Richardson's aesthetic shift, however, accounts for the unevenness of the novel as he first introduces the "success of a stratagem which," according to the narrator, "forms the essential groundwork of our story" through a sublime modality and recounts it in a realist manner (Richardson 11). This lack of narrative progression can be seen when the narrator claims: "to explain satisfactorily and consistently the extreme severity of the governor, some secrets and personally influencing motive must be assigned; but to these we have intimated, what we now repeat, – namely, that we hope to bear out our story, by natural explanation and simple deduction" (Richardson 416). The novel opens with no explication, just mystery, but the events are "repeated" from alternative perspectives in order to be clarified and accounted for; that is, to be "explained satisfactorily" such that all the parts of the tale cohere. In this sense, these "simple deductions" produced through the picturesque aesthetic will enable the reader to arrive at conclusions through logic and reason, rather than through imagination as an affective response to the sublime elements. Similarly, the narrator states that Wacousta's ambiguous presence and motives for revenge were "dispelled in the course of his narrative" (446). Through the narrator's retelling, the non-rational levels of experience are eradicated, or "dispelled," through explanation. The novel thus turns into realist fiction, a form, according to John Moss, which "attempts to clarify the complexities of human experience" (35). While most of the events are introduced in a sublime manner, they are ultimately, as Manina Jones puts it, "recuperated realistically" (n. pag.). As Jones suggests, Richardson "reconfigures the troubling, unstable world" of the frontier "in the stable terms of realism," thereby reproducing a picturesque aesthetic, one hinged on "natural" representation, which establishes a trajectory towards a unified vision of the siege that is grounded in realism (n. pag.).

The desire in *Wacousta* to impose order onto the Canadian landscape extends to a desire to impose certain forms of political order in the New World. That is, the conflict between the sublime and the picturesque also extends to a conflict between individuality (associated with excess passion) and the social, which can also be seen as a conflict between the solitary and the communal. According to Shaw, the sublime is "a divisive force, encouraging feelings of difference and deference," while the picturesque "encourages a spirit of unity and harmony" (9). In political terms, "the impulse of the one, we might say, is individualistic, even dictatorial, while that of the latter is social and democratic" (9). Although it is more difficult to make a claim for the picturesque as absolutely social, as the sublime and the picturesque cannot be understood as mutually exclusive, it is certain that the sublime "concerns the solitary" (Trott 72) as it confines feelings of terror to the mind of individuals that lead to impulses of "self-preservation," while the picturesque gestures towards social harmony through compassion and restraint of personal feeling to preserve public order (Hussey 57). Some scholars, however, have understood *Wacousta*'s primary conflict as one of cross-cultural negotiations amongst the British, the French, and the Indigenous peoples, rather than a clash internal to British prospects for establishing a colonial settlement in Canada.[2] Yet, the narrator explicitly states that "the cause of the Indians and that of the [French] Canadians became . . . identified as one," (10) while Wacousta, Pontiac's advisor and the leader of the rebellion, is non-Indigenous since "Cornwall is the country of [his] birth" (449). Furthermore, the uprising is not based on a desire to maintain sovereignty, but on Wacousta's desire to achieve revenge for the love triangle between himself, the Colonel, and Clara Beverly, which occurred in Scotland before the Colonel had joined the European fortress in Canada. For these reasons, I agree with Robin D. Mathews' claim that the novel's central concern is about "two views of possible white society," that is, a conflict between "the individual and the community" and not a clash of cultures (295). Mathews notes that Richardson sets his novel after the British conquest of New France, explaining his concern for "the kind of government and social order that is to prevail in Canada," which would in turn account for the political anxieties articulated in the novel (296). Following Mathews, I argue that the first social vision found in *Wacousta* is embodied by both the Colonel and Wacousta, who "remain unbalanced, one-sided, excessive, [and] extreme" in their pursuit of individual ambition even though the Colonel is motivated primarily by his strict adherence to English military protocol and Wacousta by revenge as Hurley has also argued (33).

The narrator describes Wacousta as "a refinement of cruelty" and "a remorseless savage," who finds satisfaction in the suffering of others, which proves "the dire extent to which [his] revenge … could be carried" (Richardson 442). He is one, as Clara claims, "'who ha[s] no pity for the innocent,'" and who is thus predisposed to inflict violence on others in his quest for personal revenge (525). While the narrator portrays Wacousta as compelled by passion in his actions, the Colonel is described as logical and rational in his. The narrator claims, "Colonel de Haldimar was not one given to indulge in the mysterious or to believe in the romantic. Every thing was plain matter of fact," which demonstrates that his perception and actions are based on empirical evidence and reason (423). However, while the Colonel is "[w]ithout ever having possessed any thing like acute feeling," and as such deemed dispassionate, his strict and "severe" (417) governance, in accordance to "the Articles of War," is also excessive in nature and formalism, and consequently, unreasonable (35). In the New World marked by terror, the Colonel demonstrates behaviours that are governed by emotion and impulses of self-preservation, much like Wacousta. For example, the Colonel's intention to grant clemency (a compassionate act associated with a social awareness of another's anguish and remorse) to Halloway—a prisoner found guilty of treason for opening the fort's gate (and thus violating the boundary between inside and outside) during his guard—dissipates with the appearance of Wacousta (425). As a result of his emergence onto the scene, the Colonel is overcome by passion and turmoil such that "all idea of the kind was chased from his mind" (425). While the Colonel does not possess the same violent impulses as Wacousta, although "misjudged" in his measures and "not absolutely cruel," he does react passionately to the appearance of Wacousta, which displays the same instinctive behaviour (426).

This emphasis on individuality (the pursuit of one's own self-interest) as a mode of social conduct and organization is most notably seen in members of the garrison seeking military advancement. Captain Blessington claims, "'this insatiable desire for personal advancement—is certain to intrude itself; since we feel that over the mangled bodies of our dearest friends and companions, we can alone hope to attain preferment and distinction'" (26). The members of the garrison profit from the death of fellow members, as they themselves attain a higher rank "over [others'] mangled bodies," and thus, indulge in personal interest rather than that of the collective in their ambitious military framework (26). Murphy, a solider who is emblematic of this individualistic disposition, claims "'it sames to me, I say, that promotion

in ony way is all fair and honourable in times of hardship like thase'" (26-27). He cannot recognize the moral implications, as all is "fair," in his desire for social climbing; even obtaining "honour" at the detriment of other soldiers he deems just. While Murphy's personal conduct is rooted in self-interest, the Colonel's governance is also in keeping with this notion of individualism, as he also believes in a system of personal advancement. As Wacousta is escaping, the Colonel yells "'[q]uick to work: and mark, who first seizes him shall have a promotion on the spot,'" which asserts the ascendency of his personal revenge on Wacousta over the interest of the garrison (527). The Colonel and Wacousta therefore both represent a shared vision of social order, one associated with the sublime.

Charles and Frederick, however, represent a more democratic order, understood as the second social vision articulated in the novel. Charles claims, "for my part, I say, perish all promotion for ever, if it is only to be obtained over the dead bodies of those with whom I have lived so long and shared so many dangers" (27). He believes in a common bond with the other members of the garrison in times of uncertainty and war. While he is able to check his professional ambitions for the sake of the social, he cannot control his emotions as he suffers from excessive sensibility. He is repeatedly told by Blessington, "'consider you are not alone. For God's sake, check this weakness!'" (210). In the New World, there is no tolerance for unrestrained and inordinate passion. Characters must be restrained in both professional ambition and personal feeling for public order and for "sympathy for the mass" to prevail, and thus, Charles must die for the ascendency of the social to succeed (100). As such, after the death of both Wacousta and the Colonel, Frederick had "become the colonel of the–regiment," which enabled him to establish a new order, one rendered social by keeping "the rampart . . . unguarded" (518). The novel's end thus *gestures* towards a more democratic form of social order, one based on a midpoint between two extremes—that of Wacousta and the Colonel's individualism (sublime) and that of a state of complete social equality (beautiful) as a form of governance that cannot be found in the New World—in keeping with the picturesque mode as an aesthetic blend. It is worth noting that the emergence of Frederick as Colonel, while accompanied by a breakthrough of the individual who "pull[s] away" from the group and moves towards a reconciliation between man and nature by trespassing the boundary between fort and wilderness, is not accompanied by a breakdown of conventional forms as anticipated by Frye (228). Frederick still seeks a social (and by extension aesthetic) model

based on organization. In this way, *Wacousta* distinguishes itself from Frye's diagnostic that an "anti-social" (228) mind seeks order, while the individual seeks "greater freedom" (232). Richardson demonstrates that in the New World, societal impulses are associated with organization and not freedom, as Frederick brings order to the otherwise chaotic, which is to say free, sublime landscape.

Michael Buma states, however, that "the closing moment of *Wacousta*," that of Frederick becoming Colonel of the regiment, "foregrounds the limits of [Richardson's] vision. By the novel's end, the cultures have arguably been brought into coexistence rather than community" (147). Buma further argues that "*Wacousta* never fully resolves the tension it proposes between the stable and unified colonial vision . . . and the various disruptions that trouble it" (148). The picturesque mode accounts for this lack of resolution at the level of plot, as the sublime and the picturesque are not mutually exclusive aesthetic categories such as the sublime and the beautiful; the sublime exists within the representable frame of the picturesque, and thus, the picturesque aesthetic embraces the contradictory nature of the New World. As a result, the tensions between the fort and the wilderness, the British and the Indigenous people, and consequently "the gothic romance and the realist novel" (Northey 18), do not require resolution but rather formal aesthetic integration, as the picturesque describes rather than explains. This formal closure enabled by the descriptive tendency of the novel partakes in what Jay calls the "de-narrativizing impulse in perspectival art" (15). Like the landscape painters who "accept the parts as given and form them into a whole" (Nevius 30), Richardson in his fiction unites the various incongruous elements to form an aesthetically harmonious whole, a frame of the picturesque ideal which is a blend of the beautiful (the ordered) and the sublime (the chaotic).

NOTES

1 Refer to studies by Northrop Frye, Gaile McGregor, and Marcia B. Kline of social visions of Canada articulated in nineteenth-century fiction.

2 Edwards claims that the novel is preoccupied with the frontier as "a space of physical conflict based on cultural difference," while the narrative "gestures towards a merger of European and Native American culture through the eradication of discourses of difference that have historically separated them" (7, 8). Matthews argues that *Wacousta* "exposes the imperfections of the imperialist vision" and "interrogat[es] some of the cultural notions that uphold the intensity and facility of [the imperialist] gaze" (138). Similarly, Buma suggests that *Wacousta* is Richardson's attempt at a "vision of intercultural unity" (147).

WORKS CITED

Banerjee, Sandeep. "'Not altogether Unpicturesque': Samuel Bourne and the Landscaping of the Victorian Himalaya." *Victorian Literature and Culture* 42.3 (2014): 351-68. Web. 21 Aug. 2016.

Bentley, D. M. R. *The Gay]Grey Moose: Essays on the Ecologies and Mythologies of Canadian Poetry, 1690-1990.* Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 1992. Print.

Buma, Michael. "John Richardson's Unlikely Narrative of Nationhood: History, the Gothic, and Sport as Prophecy in *Wacousta*." *Studies in Canadian Literature* 36.1 (2011): 143-62. Web. 21 Aug. 2016.

Burke, Edmund. *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. New York: P.F. Collier & Son Company, 1757. Print.

Cronk, Douglas. Introduction. *Wacousta or, The Prophecy; A Tale of the Canadas*. By John Richardson. Ottawa: Carleton UP, 1990. Print.

Currie, Noel Elizabeth. "From Walpole to the New World: Legitimation and the Gothic in Richardson's *Wacousta*." *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* 6.2 (2000): 145-59. Web. 21 Aug. 2016.

Duffy, Dennis. *A Tale of Sad Reality: John Richardson's* Wacousta. Toronto: ECW, 1993 Print.

Edwards, Justin D. *Gothic Canada: Reading the Spectre of a National Literature*. Edmonton: U of Alberta P, 2005. Print.

Frye, Northrop. *Mythologizing Canada: Essays on the Canadian Literary Imagination.* Ed. Branko Gorjup. Toronto: Legas, 1997. Print.

Gerson, Carole. *A Purer Taste: The Writing and Reading of Fiction in English in Nineteenth-Century Canada.* Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1989. Print.

Glickman, Susan. *The Picturesque and the Sublime: A Poetics of Canadian Landscape*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1998. Print.

Hurley, Michael. *The Borders of Nightmare: the Fiction of John Richardson*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1992. Print.

Hussey, Christopher. *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View*. 1927. London: Cass, 1983. Print.

Jay, Martin. "Scopic Regime of Modernity." *Vision and Visuality*. Seattle: Bay Press, 1998. 3-23. Print.

Jones, Manina. "Beyond the Pale: Gender, 'Savagery,' and the Colonial Project in Richardson's *Wacousta*." *Essays on Canadian Writing* 54 (1994): 46-59. Web. 15 Apr. 2014.

Kline. Maria B. *Beyond the Land Itself: Views of Nature in Canada and the United States*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1970. Print

Lecker, Robert. "Patterns of Deception in *Wacousta*." *The Canadian Novel: Beginnings*. Ed. John Moss. Vol. II. Toronto: NC Press, 1984. 47-59. Print.

Mathews, Robin D. "The Wacousta Factor." *Figures in a Ground: Canadian Essays on Modern Literature Collected in Honour of Sheila Watson.* Ed. Diane Bessai and David Jackel. Saskatoon: Western Production Prairie Books, 1978. 295-316. Print.

Matthews, S. Leigh. "The New World Gaze: Disguising the 'Eye of Power' in John Richardson's *Wacousta*." *Essays on Canadian Writing* 70 (2000): 135-61. Web. 21 Aug. 2016.

McGregor, Gaile. *The Wacousta Syndrome: Explorations in the Canadian Landscape*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1985. Print.

Moss, John. *Patterns of Isolation in English Canadian Fiction*. Toronto: McClelland and Steward, 1974. Print.

Nevius, Blake. *Cooper's Landscapes: an Essay on the Picturesque Vision*. Berkley: U of California P, 1976. Print.

Northey, Margot. *Haunted Wilderness: The Gothic and Grotesque in Canadian Fiction*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1976. Print.
Price, Uvedale. *An Essay on the Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful; and, on the Use of Studying Pictures, for the Purpose of Improving Real Landscape*. London: J. Robson, 1794. Print.
Richardson, John. *Wacousta or, The Prophecy; A Tale of the Canadas*. 1832. Ed. Douglas Cronk. Ottawa: Carleton UP, 1990. Print.
Shaw, Philip. *The Sublime: the New Critical Idiom*. New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.
Trott, Nicola. "The Picturesque, the Beautiful and the Sublime." *A Companion to Romanticism*. Ed. Duncan Wu. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998. 72-90. Print.
Walker, Eric G. *Scott's Fiction and the Picturesque*. Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universitat Salzburg, 1982. Print.

Maleea Acker

Fealty of the Short, Dark Feeling

I've been experimenting with which additives
make the black crater inside myself
shrink or grow. The recipes amaze.

Loneliness fills it with what I imagine
potash looks like, a particularly tender person
hollows the sides like a November pumpkin.

I'm like a porch dog on the top step
arrowed toward the world. Occasionally
I slump down and make a half-hearted nest

in the grass. Mostly my interiors are clearcuts
on some northwestern island southern people
think is perpetually covered in snow and

eastern people think is evidence
of our weakness. We're just a minority here,
amongst the brightening alder stems

and the occasionally uncut fir standing
like a starved sheriff in the field. My west
is a peculiar mix of fermented berries

and machinery parts covered in moss
that makes the cogs shine like onyx,
which I have always wanted to put

in a poem cage, and adorn like a Christmas
palm. I know I will never be good.
My worry machine is not the shape

of a country in the Americas. It does not purr
as the machete's blade rises. It's a soft
multiple feeling like being alone

on a lakeside walkway in the midst
of 100 families, then returning weeks later
on someone's arm and not even recognizing

the place. A dog finds the entrance
to the crater, enters as through a
rabbit tunnel, her tail faintly swaying.

The invincibility of appearances
is where failure becomes universal,
something even you are doing. It's where

the poem cage's front viewing window
opens to the public and everyone
can see the prey I eat wasn't caught by me.

Paul Barrett

Paraphrasing the Paraphrase

OR What I Learned from Reading Every Issue of *Canadian Literature / Littérature canadienne* and *Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature canadienne*

Forty years after its publication, the insights and theoretical implications of Frank Davey's "Surviving the Paraphrase" have become truisms of Canadian literary study. Davey critiques thematic criticism for its acts of paraphrase wherein literary texts are reduced to a single theme or statement. According to Davey, the thematic "critic extracts . . . the paraphrasable content and throws away the form. He attends to the explicit meaning of the work and neglects whatever content is implicit in its structure, language or imagery" (3). Davey attacks thematicism's basis in "Arnoldian humanism," which he identifies as an anti-literary "tradition in which the artist speaks, unconsciously or consciously, for the group." (2). Indeed, in the wake of Davey's publication, it became a customary rhetorical move in Canadian literary scholarship to declare the seriousness of one's study by aligning oneself, even implicitly, with Davey and dismissing thematic criticism in its historical and contemporary forms. Whereas thematic criticism once represented an effort to "institutionalize Canadian literature and to establish a close rapport between it and what was assumed to be the character of the Canadian nation-state" (Kamboureli 19), critics such as Smaro Kamboureli and Russell Brown have since shown that "it has not been so much thematicism that has governed Canadian criticism but the critics' obsession with the idea of it" (Kamboureli 20). Brown explains that "while this critical approach largely disappeared, *attacks* on Canadian thematic criticism continued and became more public" (658; emphasis original). He describes the "emergence of an orthodoxy" both within and beyond the academy where "accusing a work of thematicism was a useful

way to dismiss a critical study" (664). Moreover, as Imre Szeman points out, "there are far fewer texts of 'thematic criticism' than one might imagine from all the worries about it" (30). As such, a return to Davey, paraphrase, and anti-thematicism might seem a retrospective reflection upon another time in Canadian critical writing. However, despite the waning import of thematicism to contemporary debate, Davey's dismissal[1] of the merits of thematic criticism remains a negative structuring presence within the field and an implicit starting point for many contemporary critics.

What if the critical consensus is wrong? What if Davey's attack on paraphrase is misdirected and the intellectual tradition that grounds anti-thematicism is not assured? More accurately, what if there is value in the paraphrase of literature, genre, canon, and criticism that has gone heretofore unremarked upon by virtue of its identification as the kind of thematicism that Davey warns us against? What critical possibilities emerge from the polemical assertion that paraphrase provides unique insights that are otherwise obscured by Davey's combination of close reading, new criticism, and attention to the dialectical emergence of form and content? What new observations can we make about Canadian literature if we adopt, even as a negative hypothesis, a criticism of paraphrase in order to survive "Surviving the Paraphrase" and come out from under Davey's shadow?

My provocation, and the reason I open with this discussion of paraphrase, is that emerging computationally assisted forms of textual analysis blur the lines between received notions of close reading and paraphrase in a manner that rebukes much of Davey's critique. These two techniques make it possible to place paraphrase and close textual analysis into a troubled, yet productive, dialogue. In what follows, I engage in digital forms of close and distant reading of two major Canadian literary journals to demonstrate how the emergence of the methods of digital humanities (DH)[2] provides new opportunities for literary and cultural paraphrase by disrupting the distinction between paraphrase and close reading. This disruption is most apparent in the use of topic modelling algorithms to *read* a large corpus of texts.

Topic modelling is a computational method developed first by computer scientists which has become aligned with Franco Moretti's concept of "distant reading," whereby the critic uses an algorithm to identify subtle themes in a large corpus of documents through analysis of word repetition, collocation, and documents' shared terms. Topic modelling takes as its input a large collection of texts and provides, as output, a series of topics (defined as a collection of keywords relevant to that topic) that describe, in varying

degrees of proportionality, that collection of documents. Topic modelling is a kind of *automated paraphrase* as it begins with the mathematical assumption that a collection of documents can be interpreted as a statistical distribution of topics or themes. Indeed, Russell Brown's description of thematic argument as a "reading act that follows from observing the existence of patterns that seem to have significance or to delineate a range of significance" (672) is also a fair description of topic modelling. The advantage of topic modelling, however, is that the themes are derived from reading a broad corpus and not projected outward from a selected group of texts. Advocates such as Mark Steyvers and Tom Griffiths argue that it provides a necessary wide view of a discourse or corpus which can guide deeper interpretations and which would be otherwise unavailable to an individual reader.

Where some forms of DH scholarship align more closely with traditional literary analysis (such as text encoding or tracking an author's use of a particular term) and can be conceived of as merely using new tools to automate traditional methods of analysis, topic modelling is more controversial because it is an allegedly non-directed, hypothesis-free form of analysis. One does not use topic modelling software to search for a given theme or topic in a collection of works but rather the critic runs the algorithm over the corpus and sees what terms group together.[3] Skeptics argue that this method transforms the critic from exegetical ponderer or directed inquisitor into something akin to a beachcomber seeking fortune with a metal detector. Furthermore, the algorithmic complexity of topic modelling, with its basis in Bayesian statistical modelling,[4] is unfamiliar to most literary scholars. Topic modelling thereby becomes something of a theoretical and methodological black box, and critics are left to ponder the linguistic and symbolic artifacts that the model generates.

From a technical perspective, topic modelling attempts to "infer the underlying topic structure" (Blei "Modeling" 10) of a collection of documents.[5] The model typically uses a form of Bayesian probabilistic inference known as Latent Dirichlet allocation in order to assign words to topics and thereby topics to documents. In the most general of terms, where familiar forms of probability model a phenomenon (such as the rolling of a die), Bayesian probability attempts to model states of knowledge or belief; it is also unique in its capacity to cope with uncertainty in probability. Within a Bayesian framework, a topic is formally defined as a "distribution over a fixed vocabulary" (Blei "Probabilistic" 78), and the topic modelling process attempts to identify how topics are distributed in a corpus. David Blei explains:

> the goal of topic modeling is to automatically discover the topics from a collection of documents. The documents themselves are observed [in the sense of being known data], while the topic structure—the topics, per-document topic distributions, and the per-document per-word topic assignments—is *hidden structure*. The central computational problem for topic modeling is to use the observed documents to infer the hidden topic structure. This can be thought of as "reversing" the generative process—what is the hidden structure that likely generated the observed collection? ("Probabilistic" 78; emphasis original)

The language of "discover" and "hidden structure" can be misleading, suggesting that these topics are *there* in the documents and not observations or interpretations of the texts. This controversial point brings into sharp relief the simultaneous technical, hermeneutical, and exegetical implications of topic modelling. Yet such figurative language is simply Blei's means of explaining the relationship between the documents, the known elements, and the unknown topical structure. The task of the topic modelling algorithm is to analyze the known elements in order to "discover," or more accurately, assert, the hidden topical structure.

From a hermeneutical perspective, topic modelling practices precisely the forms of paraphrase that Davey critiques. In its attendance to content over form, "The movement . . . is towards paraphrase—paraphrase of the culture and paraphrase of the literature" (Davey 3). Topic modelling's hypothesis, that documents exhibit some identifiable topic, risks advancing the same pernicious assumptions involved in paraphrase that Cleanth Brooks warns against; namely, that texts "constitute a 'statement' of some sort, the statement being true or false" (196). Indeed, the model assigns a percentage score for a given topic in a particular document as a measure of the degree to which the document exhibits that statement. Topic modelling therefore leaves itself open to Davey's critique of paraphrase as it "extract[s] . . . the paraphrasable content and throws away the form," and in this sense the "critical process produced by these assumptions is reductive" (3). In fact, topic modelling goes further than reducing a text to declared themes by actually reducing the text to its mere linguistic elements.

To better demonstrate the utility and hermeneutic value of this form of paraphrase for Canadian literary criticism, I have engaged in a topic modelling analysis of two major Canadian literary journals. I have collected digitized editions of every issue of the journals *Canadian Literature/ Littérature canadienne* and *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en littérature canadienne (SCL/ÉLC)* and analyzed these collections using the topic modelling software MALLET.[6] Topic modelling these two exemplary

journals provides a meaningful topography of the field of Canadian literary scholarship that can be employed to identify subtle themes in both scholarly discourse and literary production. These journals are particularly important starting points for distant reading of the field of Canadian literature, as an analysis of their content provides a critical view of the changing shape of Canadian literary scholarship over the past sixty years. *Canadian Literature* began as a journal in 1959 and *Studies in Canadian Literature* was launched in 1976, so it is expected that the journals' varied histories would be reflected in their topics. For instance, a temporally organized topic model of these journals would provide a means of comparing trends within a corpus across time periods. While it is beyond the scope of this article, topic modelling enables readers to trace the frequency and usage of a critical term or discourse to identify its shifting registers across journals and time periods. Furthermore, topic modelling also enables readers to identify individual texts that are central to a literary field but whose influence has gone unnoticed in subsequent scholarship. Finally, my analysis of *Canadian Literature* and *SCL/ÉLC* will identify unlikely connections between authors/texts as well as previously unobserved thematic and formal connections between texts that suggest new groupings of genre organized along thematic and aesthetic lines.

One substantial difference between this topic modelling experiment and the type of paraphrase that Davey critiques is that I am analyzing the field of scholarly work while Davey excoriates the paraphrasing of literary works themselves, particularly as those acts of paraphrase purport to identify "'our imaginative life,' . . . 'national being,' and . . . 'cultural history'" (2). I am not engaged in a topic modelling analysis of the entirety of Canadian literature (yet), but rather of a particular corpus of the field of scholarly analysis commenting upon that literature. My project might well be considered as *paraphrasing the paraphrase* and therefore might also be considered annoyingly "extra-literary" rather than "anti-literary" (2). Yet this act of critical paraphrase does engage Davey's thesis, as the division between literary culture and its criticism is always porous—particularly in Canada, where literary culture is so dependent on academic and government institutional support. Canadian literature is shaped in its dialogue with, interpretation of, and resistance to criticism of that literature; indeed, critics shape what they purport to interpret. My goal is therefore not to necessarily prove Davey wrong so much as to say that while Davey found thematic searching problematic in critical writing, I find it helpful in meta-critical

writing, particularly as digital forms of analysis blur the distinctions between paraphrase and close reading.

Finally, my decision to paraphrase the paraphrase is also motivated by the feasibility of topic modelling literary journals. Articles in *Canadian Literature* and *SCL/ÉLC* are available in digital format and can be converted into a format suited to topic modelling. Digitizing the entirety of the field of Canadian literary production is not only practically impossible but also would require arbitrary, yet binding, decisions about which texts to include within the borders of the canon. Such a paraphrase of the literature itself would be motivated more by the impossible desire for completeness, to be able to view the entire field at once, and thereby settle the question of interpretation by making some final decision about Canadian literature's actual meaning. In place of that project of Potemkin completeness, my paraphrasing the paraphrase is wilfully arbitrary and selective, yet this arbitrariness is both an unavoidable limitation of the project as well as a necessary condition for asserting the exegetical dimension of digital forms of reading and interpretation.

Two major objections to DH work are that it transforms exegetical discovery and critical analysis into a degraded scientism and that it naturalizes an analytic framework that is deeply indebted to forms of neoliberal and corporate rationalism. Stanley Fish rebukes DH methods precisely because they are "dictated by the capability of the tool. . . . Because the patterns are undetectable, you don't know in advance what they are and you cannot begin your computer-aided search . . . in a motivated—that is, interpretively directed—way" (n. pag.). Fish argues that where traditional forms of analysis are motivated by an interpretive hypothesis, digital forms rely merely on what patterns the tool detects; as such, interpretation devolves into pattern detection. However, in Fish's traditional form of exegesis, his analysis does not begin with the "interpretively directed" series of questions but rather with the act of reading. The digital pattern detection that he critiques is analogous to the act of reading in that both frame their exegetical objects in a manner that enables the critic to pose the interpretive questions that constitute the critical act. The first step in both traditional and digital forms of analysis is to read the text, and therefore the difference between the two modes of interpretation is one of degree, not kind.

Tom Eyers critiques the method of DH work, arguing that it practices a kind of "abstract objectivity," and is part of a general "proliferation of positivist methods . . . another face of the neo-liberalization and corporatization of the

university" (n. pag.). Eyers worries that DH replaces theoretical and methodological frameworks with "quantitative fireworks" that offer a mirage of "alluring transparency afforded by the sharp technological lenses" (n. pag.). Contrary to Fish's and Eyers' assertions, I argue that DH work need not be an instrumentalist, pseudo-objective process of "running the numbers"; rather, digital tools are decidedly "motivated" and "interpretively directed." In the development and selection of the tool, the critic makes a number of interpretive decisions that affect the results. Furthermore, these tools are embedded in networks of power that structure the way in which knowledge is constructed. Indeed, selecting a particular tool requires justifying one framework of interpretation out of a number of possible choices.[7] As such, where traditional forms of literary interpretation often occlude the "frame of analysis," the novelty of digital humanities modes of reading renders the analytic framework all the more explicit.

Both Fish and Eyers fall prey to what Alan Liu identifies as the "fallacy that there are immaculately separate human and machinic orders, each with an ontological, epistemological, and pragmatic purity that allows it to be brought into a knowable methodological relation with the other" (416). For Liu, hermeneutics does not occur at the border between machine and interpretation—a dyad that keeps the purity of the machine intact—but rather pervades all DH critique such that the ideological content and textuality of the machine, the algorithm, and the tool are foregrounded and rendered sites of interpretation. This runs contrary to Fish's and Eyers' suggestions that DH work transforms exegesis into a degraded kind of scientism that affirms some banal thesis. In fact, the opposite hypothesis appears true: DH work brings into view the forms of power, symbolic capital, and representation of the machine, corroding its alleged instrumentality and neutrality in order to render visible its ideological frames and mechanisms of operation.[8]

In place of this machinic fallacy that conceives of the text and the machine as "immaculately separate," I follow Tanya Clement in her use of the notion of "differential reading" as a kind of dual-focused lens of interpretation suitable to topic modelling and DH more generally. Clement argues that differential reading "positions close and distant reading practices as both subjective and objective methodologies" (n. pag.), where the DH critic oscillates between the computer-assisted forms of reading that treat texts as objects and the close reading practices that reframe objective data as subjective interpretation. Within this methodology the critic moves

dialectically between close and distant reading, reading the singular passage against the grain of the corpus and vice versa. Susan Brown describes this as "[w]orking at the gap between humanities research questions and digital humanities development," which "allows digital tools and research results to emerge from a dialectical relationship, allowing the research process to change in concert with the production of new modes of engaging in research" (218). Brown's notion of "[w]orking at the gap" employs humanistic inquiry to defamiliarize the digital tool by rendering it textual. Differential reading enables close and distant, human and machine, forms of reading to reframe one another dialogically while contending with the seeming incommensurability of both as a condition of interpretation. As such, differential reading identifies both the limitations of the tool as well as the exegetical weaknesses of close reading and paraphrase.

In what follows, I model a differential reading of the two journals under consideration in order to demonstrate how topic modelling can uniquely identify meaningful links between texts that would go unobserved with a traditional close reading practice. First, I compare the topic models of *Canadian Literature* against those of *SCL/ÉLC* to identify differences between the two journals. The most dominant topics in the respective journals may indicate the unstated editorial and ideological frameworks and guidelines of these journals.[9] Secondly, I combine the two journals into one corpus and compare the various models of the combined journals, asking what differences emerge when comparing a smaller topic model to a larger model. Finally, I use the topic models themselves as starting points for close reading of particular articles to assess the capacity of topic modelling to offer grounds for unique observations of a literary field.

Comparing the ten most dominant topics in forty-topic models of *Canadian Literature* and *SCL/ÉLC* reveals a number of almost universal literary topics with little identification of Canada as organizing space or term (indeed, the term "Canada" is not present in either model) (see Table 1). A number of terms are shared between the most dominant topics of both journals: "world," "time," "human," "place," "sense," "mind," "man"; these might be thought of as a kind of basic vocabulary of literariness itself.[10] Where *SCL/ÉLC*'s second-most dominant topic links notions of "literary," "culture," and "writing" with "nation," "discourse," "theory," and "politics," no such explicitly national and cultural concerns emerge in *Canadian Literature*, where the closest approximation is in the language of "history," "writing," "words," and "power."

Table 1
The ten most dominant topics in *Canadian Literature* and *SCL/ÉLC* using a forty-topic model.

Topic	*Canadian Literature*	*SCL/ÉLC*
1	life man make kind men find things book day good literature war human thing give love world people mind	world time place nature sense human reality experience vision art words things real present mind man meaning word power
2	time world sense art image past life nature fact reality experience point meaning human tradition individual order made dream	literature literary cultural culture writing social critical history english political contemporary role national nation criticism texts discourse theory politics
3	history language family toronto culture writing mother political english place works critical words past subject present community white power	character fiction story characters time life fact toronto past part events future scene lives instance figures david short contrast
4	book writers literary writing years published time literature university public people long part national made writer small great history	narrative identity story readers past read suggests subject desire experience relationship process reading york act difference argues position notes
5	woman part end notes body collection figure women complex letter margaret opening clear simply michael final water forces bear	toronto years century made published american time british women author early letters country great young bentley public states moodie
6	story stories fiction children young characters american world read people time back home david play life hero black place	day white life water home death night head man earth dark dead house city long light back eyes river
7	death man love review vision land book nature life place world sun theme literary present imagination earth images romantic	life father love man woman mother death narrator men young family child wife desire children women order society husband
8	french social society century review english british man historical god author indian study london west novels art modern political	people writing book kind write things writer read writers back lot time thing story english stories place good sense
9	story narrative stories book life women readers social identity cultural collection reading fiction characters narrator home lives author father	language body subject words space female writing symbolic voice dance photograph bodies speaking order women theory flow trans feminist
10	poem poetry words page lines poetic line verse language god water sound word voice atwood images back read landscape	poem poetry speaker poetic smith lines line love stanza scott katie verse crawford page alfred poetics persona max pratt

Ordering the topics according to their presence in the corpus (moving from more to less prevalent topics) roughly aligns with a gradual shift from universalist notions of the literary to more precise and interesting groupings of terms specific to the field and the journal. *Canadian Literature* is predominantly concerned with what might be described as the more formal dimensions of textuality, with topics exhibiting words such as "fiction," "literary," "present," "images," "romantic," "identity," "modern," and "political." *SCL/ÉLC* moves far more rapidly from notions of "literary" and "cultural" to specific images of "day," "dead," "light," "body," and "dance." The last topics for both journals in Table 1 are concerned with verse, yet the topics begin to reveal the specific way in which poetry has been analyzed in the respective journals: Atwood is dominant in *Canadian Literature*, whereas essays in *SCL/ÉLC* are more attentive to Crawford's *Malcolm's Katie* and the work of F. R. Scott. To move from these cursory observations to a more meaningful differential reading of the field, I trace a key term in the model back to the articles themselves.

Combining the two journals provides an opportunity to compare the individual models with a synthesized model that reads both journals as one corpus, arguably providing a more comprehensive view of the literary terrain. With a selection of eighty-five topics, Table 2 shows the ten most dominant topics and their corresponding probability of the combined journals:

Table 2
The ten most dominant topics of both journals in an eighty-five-topic model.

Probability	Topic Contents
0.88179	time words sense point language experience meaning present part order reality nature kind structure process writes works act literary
0.60057	place life world past time home land sense landscape living city back space memory great change toronto myth modern
0.58315	good make matter free found made full century day personal half nature makes long find reason true original case
0.55607	narrative ed subject writing reading suggests discourse read argues voice narrator texts representation process order desire position narratives means
0.54824	world art man human vision artist image eye mind fact give hand images snow eyes imagination early appears reality

Table 2 continues on next page

Table 2, continued
The ten most dominant topics of both journals in an eighty-five-topic model.

Probability	Topic Contents
0.54799	toronto london public york letter thomas figure marriage friend family success ottawa popular private james middle mary heart career
0.5449	story life characters fiction father stories mother child narrator young children character family narrative lives novels readers death person
0.52523	love death woman house man book night life earth poem light voice sun face fire men image head eyes
0.45362	history political social culture cultural historical people world power community society american past colonial politics important role century post
0.44536	life man english great john country french men american society people social time early war british george history fact

The second topic's attention to "place," "home," "land," "landscape," "space," "toronto," and "myth" suggests that these articles engage Northrop Frye's infamous question of the relationship between Canadian identity and space. Based on the dominance of this topic (as represented by its probability), we could posit that either Frye's intuition—that Canadian writers are concerned with the experience of alienation from the surrounding space—is correct or that he continues to frame debates in the field. A temporally organized topic model, one which compares the dominant topics by year or decade, might offer a historical periodization by revealing whether Frye's influence has waned in the decades subsequent to his writing. Regardless, the topic model has therefore provided new questions with which to return to the corpus; the next step is to move from the topics to the articles themselves to understand the particular composition of each topic.

The presence of the term "modern" in the second topic suggests intriguing possibilities concerning the function of modernism and modernity in shaping this broader concern with space. "modern" did not appear in the forty-topic model of *SCL/ÉLC* and is only present in the eighth-most dominant topic in the *Canadian Literature* model. The elevation of this term to the second topic of the combined model renders it a point of discursive confluence between the journals. While not all instances of the use of the term "modern" refer to aesthetic modernism, there may be evidence of a possible reframing of Canadian modernism as decidedly spatial. To what extent, for instance, does this

combining of attention to domestic and rural spaces alongside questions of the modern accord with Glenn Willmott's thesis that Canadian modernist texts tend to deconstruct the movement from country to city (152), or Dean Irvine's argument that Canadian modernism is characterized by A. J. M. Smith's notion of "eclectic detachment" (9)? Tracing this thread to the articles themselves[11] reveals a recurrence of the words "land," "landscape," "space," and "memory," all engaged with questions of the modern. A few key quotations from these articles[12] reveal a repeated concern with modernity as it is staged in the sites of rural Newfoundland, the historic and contemporary prairies, the creeks of Saskatchewan, the rivers of Japan, and the Trans-Canada highway. Indeed, Kristen Warder begins her article with reference to Robert Wardaugh's recent question "When is the prairie?"—a question that is both an acknowledgement of and rejoinder to Frye's question "Where is here?" Warder's claim that Shane Rhodes' writing is "dismantling the facile binary of rural pastoralism and urban modernity" (8) supports Willmott's thesis and reveals a spatial modernist dimension in Rhodes' writing. Kathy Mezei's argument that "[o]ut of this bricolage of elements and carefully contrived dissonance [Anne] Wilkinson constructs a dwelling place for her poetic imagination" (164) together with her observation that Wilkinson "speaks continually of her psychic and physical dislocation" (173) may link A. J. M. Smith's notion of "eclectic detachment" to Frye's concern with space. In addition to providing a counter-corpus demonstrating unexpected links between a diverse range of texts, this move from distance to close reading (and even closer when we return to the novels and poems themselves armed with new interpretive frameworks) and reading these spatial articulations of the modern alongside each critic's engagements with the aesthetic and political dimensions of modernism provides new insight into Canadian articulations of what Chana Kronfeld terms "marginal modernisms."[13] A differential reading of this topic reveals new stagings of the articulation of modernism in Canada in the rural sites of Newfoundland, Saskatchewan, and the Prairies. Furthermore, there are also unexpected transnational connections that recast these spaces not as degraded facsimiles of Europe but as linked via a kind of affective chain of equivalencies with the forests of Japan. By returning to the texts themselves armed with these new questions, the interested critic could identify alternative routes by which these marginal modernisms have circulated across Canada and transnationally.

In addition to comparing the topics to the articles themselves, changing the number of topics produces new models and thereby further grounds for differential readings. In a one-hundred-topic model of the two journals, topic

twenty is about Davey himself: his name is a keyword in this topic alongside others such as "Bowering," "Frye," "Prairie," "Vancouver," "Science," "Tish," "Ostenso," "Macphail," and "Leseur." It is encouraging that the topic modelling algorithm managed to identify a "Tish" topic and the mention of Ostenso, Macphail, and Leseur provoke an analysis of Davey, his contemporaries, and these earlier poets. Tempering that enthusiasm, however, the topic also includes the keywords "Roche," "Jalna," and "Whiteoak," suggesting a link between the largely forgotten Mazo de la Roche's *Jalna* novels and the aforementioned Tish poets; this is more likely mere coincidence than evidence of a meaningful pattern. Of course, this is precisely the function of differential reading: to move from the distant reading of the topic to investigate whether the topic presents a new and insightful frame for understanding the texts themselves or whether its grouping of texts and terms is little more than coincidental. In this case, the latter is likely the case, particularly given that a slight reduction in the number of topics to eighty replaces the references to *Jalna* with "Mouré," "Garde," "Olson," and "Body," all of which suggest far more provocative possibilities for a differential reading of the Tish poets.

To return to my original series of questions, while topic modelling may not get us out from under Davey's shadow entirely, it does demonstrate the manner in which DH work destabilizes received notions of reading as well as the relation between close reading and paraphrase. Davey's critique of paraphrase and its attendant heresies is less convincing when viewed through the framework of differential reading which conceives of close and distant reading as dialectically informative. Topic modelling forms of paraphrase generate alternate corpora which will inform directed close readings across a discourse that would have been impossible with traditional forms of reading and research. If we follow Russell Brown's argument that "[c]ultural generalizations are only heuristic tools" (668) and that "[a] statement of theme can be thought of as the creation of a metonym that enables discussions of texts and permits useful comparisons between . . . texts" (673), then the value of topic modelling as a kind of reflexive paraphrase becomes apparent. Topic modelling is *willfully reductive* in the ways that Davey warns against, yet it reduces only in order to foreground themes that would go otherwise unnoticed by an individual reader. This is not the classic form of thematicism and paraphrase that aimed to excavate a national identity or in which "the artist speaks, unconsciously or consciously, for the group" (Davey 2). As such, topic modelling is neither indebted to nor a symptom of the "Arnoldian humanism" (2) that Davey sees in these acts of thematic paraphrase. Topic modelling paraphrases cultural

production not to assert a stable cultural or national identity but to open and re-examine received notions of identity, culture, and textuality. Paraphrase thereby becomes a tool to raise new critical questions while avoiding the banal conclusions of thematicism. A differential reading practice of these themes requires that critics read the theme against the individual texts in order to assess the efficacy of the model. Furthermore, differential reading enables a reflection on methodological practices that subjects the algorithm and the digital tool to a hermeneutics of suspicion.

In this respect, the digital humanities *is*, as its critics suggest, a Trojan horse. However, it need not be a Trojan horse in the sense that Fish and Eyers imagine, nor for what Len Findlay calls "the neoliberal arts" (n. pag.), wherein the humanities become a mere training ground in the knowledge economy. Instead, digital humanities forms of reading can be a Trojan horse where a new form of humanistic critique is smuggled into the processes of computation and positivism, where the ontological certitude of data is challenged, and the roles of human inquisitor and computational tool are re-examined. I agree with Diana Brydon's assessment that the "humanities need a new humanism" (47), one that responds to the limitations of humanist inquiry by not abandoning the categories of humanism or the humanities but by subjecting them to the very processes of critique they engender; the digital humanities may provide an inroad into just such a reflexive form of humanism. Furthermore, in many respects, Canadian literature is an effective field for "working at the gap" between the digital and the literary, particularly as it nurtures a recurring crisis of its own existence and is regularly worrying the terms of its own enunciation. Susan Brown argues that "[m]arginality, liminality, and hybridity— all of which concern gaps and unstable affiliations with identity and community—provide valuable vantage points for engagement with shifting technologies" (219); in this sense, Canadian literary study's marginality and continuous state of crisis makes it a productive place to assess the crisis of the humanities, digital and otherwise.

NOTES

1 Russell Brown's useful analysis of the critique of thematicism in Canadian literature in the 1970s and 1980s shows that while Davey's text is exemplary, his work is one of many contemporaneous critiques. See, for instance, Barry Cameron and Michael Dixon's "Mandatory Subversive Manifesto: Canadian Criticism vs. Literary Criticism" in a special issue of *Studies in Canadian Literature*.

2 Of course the digital humanities is a diverse and contested field that includes text mining, markup, corpora analyses, and computationally-assisted forms of reading (to name only a few of its methods).

3 This is a somewhat necessary oversimplification. The critic does not merely run the algorithm, but must make a number of critical decisions that will determine the structure and content of their model. The first crucial decision is the particular algorithm to use in the creation of their model: Latent Dirichlet allocation is the most common, but other options include Probabilistic Latent Sampling Indexing, Non-Negative Matrix Factorization, and Gibbs Sampling. Secondly, the critic must choose the number of topics that they want the model to produce.

4 For a comprehensible and clear introduction to Bayesian probability and "data science" in general see Grus (2015).

5 For a reasonably clear introduction to topic modelling, see Blei's "Probabilistic Topic Models" (2012). The video and slides of Blei's lecture at the Machine Learning Summer School (2012) and his lecture at Google Tech Talks provide lucid explanations of topic modelling for a general technical audience. For an explanation of topic modelling from a humanities perspective see Ted Underwood's excellent "Topic modeling made just simple enough."

6 I am deeply indebted to the editors and staff of both journals for making these archives available online and thereby enabling my research. It would be impossible to engage in this form of research were these journals not already digitized and easy to access. I am hopeful that this project and subsequent distant reading projects will encourage other journals to digitize their archives and make them available.

7 Perhaps the most significant technical and methodological decision for topic modelling is the user's selection of the number of topics that the modeller should generate. The user does not merely request that the software investigate a corpora and return the implicit topics of that corpora. Rather, the user inputs the number of topics the model should generate; this choice has a profound effect on the content of the topics. Choosing too few topics results in a small number of overly general topics, while choosing too many results in a large number of overly specific topics. While there are mathematical methods for assessing the most appropriate number of topics for a given corpus, there is also a degree to which the user selects the number of topics that will generate the output that best suits the user's hypothesis. The user massages the results in order to reduce the amount of topic leak (where similar terms appear in multiple topics) as well as chimera topics (where multiple topics are incorrectly grouped together into one). These seemingly banal choices that maximize topic coherence deny the possibility that these anomalies may reflect a meaningful pattern within the corpora. Indeed, the fetishizing of coherence and consistency (see Newman, Bonilla, and Buntine) within topic modelling work may foreclose the interpretation of trends and topics that appear incoherent but are in fact meaningful textual characteristics. Identifying such algorithmic constraints of topic modelling and their theoretical and methodological implications is a necessary condition of differential reading as it provides a framework for understanding how technical conditions shape digital reading practices. In addition to these technical decisions, the selection of corpora also has methodological implications. *Canadian Literature* and *Studies in Canadian Literature* are my chosen journals to study because they are both the most representative of Canadian literature as a field as well as the easiest to digitize. Other journals such as *English Studies in Canada*, *Canadian Poetry, The Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, *ARIEL, Queen's Quarterly*, and *University of Toronto Quarterly* were not singularly focused on the field of Canadian literature or were simply too difficult to digitize. *Essays on Canadian Writing* is an obvious exclusion from my project; however, digital editions of this journal prior to 1993 are not readily available. Each of these limitations indicates both the experimental and incomplete nature of this project while gesturing towards future work that may provide a deeper understanding of the field.

8 For examples of this kind of work see Bethany Nowviskie's "Digital Humanities in the Anthropocene" (2015), Roopika Risam's "Beyond the Margins: Intersectionality and the Digital Humanities" (2015), Tara McPherson's "Why Are the Digital Humanities So White? or Thinking the Histories of Race and Computation" (2012), Johanna Drucker's "Humanities Approaches to Graphical Display" (2011), Miriam Posner's "What's Next: The Radical, Unrealized Potential of the Digital Humanities" (2015), and the work featured on the *Postcolonial Digital Humanities* website.

9 Of course these models do not account for the manner in which editorial agency steers the content and theme of the journals. Nor do they account for the practical limits of production, changes in the peer review system, where authors choose to submit their work, and other important dimensions of how a journal comes to exhibit particular thematic content. A compelling extension of my research would organize topic models along editorial lines in an effort to identify changes in topical content resulting from changes in editors and to read those models against stated editorial guidelines.

10 Topic models rely on a list of stopwords: words that are ubiquitous functional words with a structural, rather than a lexical, function (e.g., "the," "and," "it,") should be excluded from the model. One might argue in favour of adding this generic literary language to the stopword list in order to foreground the more unique and substantive terms of the field, particularly given the prevalence of terms like "story," "writing," "literary," and so forth. A comparative reading of a model that includes these terms alongside one which excludes them might produce compelling results; however, I have included these terms in my topic models in order to provide as accurate a depiction of the two journals as possible.

11 Some of the articles for which this topic is the most represented include Kristen Warder's "(Un)Settling the Prairies: Queering Regionalist Literature and the Prairie Social Landscape in Shane Rhodes' *The Wireless Room*," J. N. Nodelman's "Gabrielle Roy's *La route d'Altamont* and Canadian Highway Narrative," Wanda Campbell's "Every Sea-Surrounded Hour: The Margin in Maritime Poetry," Kathy Mezei's "Home, the Unhomely, and the Everyday in Anne Wilkinson," Gregory Maillet's "In a Boat on the River Nowhere Writing Home: The Spiritual Poetic of Tim Lilburn," Lyle P. Weis' "Bipolar Paths of Desire: D.C. Scott's Poetic and Narrative Structures," and Issue 71 of *Canadian Literature*.

12 Warder: "Rhodes challenges the nostalgic identity of the prairies as a place still dominated by a traditional way of life by dismantling the facile binary of rural pastoralism and urban modernity; this rural area is not as pristine or traditional as it first appears. Even in the tranquil countryside seemingly 'laid out in pre-history,' modern life intrudes, engendering a rebirth in the landscape" (8); Nodelman: "This sense that a coherent enunciation of some kind lies off to the side of the road, just a little out of reach from inside the car, is of paramount importance regarding how narrative reworkings help produce the articulated spaces of modern highway travel" (221); Mezei: "Like other modernist women poets, however, her poetry at times appears to waver between the language and subject of domesticity expressed through the everyday and the decorative and the mythic and symbolic as well as the abstract, historic, and monumental. Her ambivalence towards the domestic and the everyday reflects that of modernism" (160); Maillet: "This breathless awareness is not modern, though, and section two concludes with 'Could be Feb. 14, 1244, Could be North Japan,' another statement of the affinity between the creeks and rivers of Saskatchewan and medieval Japan, as Lilburn becomes a poet of Zen paradox, 'under the ground, moving / my arms to the stars'" (9-10).

13 Curiously, if one shifts the focus of reading by increasing the number of topics to one hundred, the most dominant topic becomes an amalgam of the two most dominant topics in the eighty-five-topic model and the term "modern" does not appear until the eighty-

third topic. This significant movement of a single term, from the second to eighty-third most-represented topic, indicates how selecting the number of topics has a substantial effect on the results of the model and the subsequent hermeneutic possibilities that the model presents. This confirms the intuition that topic modelling does not provide evidence or data for an argument but rather a particular perspective by which to playfully mis-read a corpus. A differential reading that wished to trace this thread would compare the articles which best represent this topic with those that best represent the "modern" topic of the eighty-five-topic model to understand this shift in terms.

WORKS CITED

Blei, David. "Modeling *Science*." *Columbia University*. Web. 15 Nov. 2015.

—. "Probabilistic Topic Models." *Communications of the ACM* 55.4 (2012): 77-84. Web. 20 Nov. 2015.

Brooks, Cleanth. *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1947. Print.

Brown, Russell Morton. "The Practice and Theory of Canadian Thematic Criticism: A Reconsideration." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 70.2 (2001): 653-89. Print.

Brown, Susan. "Don't Mind the Gap: Evolving Digital Modes of Scholarly Production Across the Digital-Humanities Divide." *Retooling the Humanities: The Culture of Research in Canadian Universities*. Ed. Smaro Kamboureli and Daniel Coleman. Edmonton: U of Alberta P, 2011. 203-32. Print.

Brydon, Diana. "Do the Humanities Need a New Humanism?" *Retooling the Humanities: The Culture of Research in Canadian Universities*. Ed. Smaro Kamboureli and Daniel Coleman. Edmonton: U of Alberta P, 2011. 233-62. Print.

Cameron, Barry, and Michael Dixon. "Mandatory Subversive Manifesto: Canadian Criticism vs. Literary Criticism." *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en littérature canadienne* 2.2 (1977): 137-45. Print.

Campbell, Wanda. "'Every Sea-Surrounded Hour': The Margin in Maritime Poetry." *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en littérature canadienne* 33.2 (2008): 151-70. Print.

Canadian Literature / *Littérature canadienne*. Archives. *Canadian Literature: A Quarterly of Criticism and Review*. https://canlit.ca/full-issue/back-issues/. Web. 20 Dec. 2016.

Clement, Tanya. "Text Analysis, Data Mining, and Visualizations in Literary Scholarship." *Literary Study in the Digital Age: An Evolving Anthology*. Ed. Kenneth M. Price and Ray Siemens. *MLA Commons*, 2013. Web. 15 Oct. 2015.

Davey, Frank. "Surviving the Paraphrase." *Canadian Literature/littérature canadienne* 70 (1976): 5-13. Print.

—. *Surviving the Paraphrase*. Winnipeg: Turnstone, 1983. Print.

Drucker, Johanna. "Humanities Approaches to Graphical Display." *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 5.1 (2011): n. pag. Web. 20 Dec. 2016.

Eyers, Tom. "The Perils of the 'Digital Humanities': New Positivisms and the Fate of Literary Theory." *Postmodern Culture*. 23.2 (2013): n. pag. Web. 1 Dec. 2015.

Findlay, Len. "Academics on Empty? Academic Freedom, Collegial Governance, and the Failure of Academic Leadership in Canada." *Athabasca University*. Web. 5 Dec. 2015.

Fish, Stanley. "Digital Humanities and the Transcending of Morality." Opinionator, *New York Times*. 9 Jan. 2012. Web. 10 Sept. 2015.

Godard, Barbara. "Crawford's Fairy Tales." *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en littérature canadienne* 4.1 (1979): 109-38. Print.

Grus, Joel. *Data Science From Scratch*. Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly Media, 2015. Print.

Irvine, Dean. Introduction. *The Canadian Modernists Meet*. Ed. Irvine. 1–17. Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 2005. Print.
Kamboureli, Smaro. "Introduction: Shifting the Ground of a Discipline: Emergence and Canadian Literary Studies in Canada." *Shifting the Ground of Canadian Literary Studies*. Ed. Kamboureli and Robert Zacharias. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2012. 1-36. Print.
Kronfeld, Chana. *On the Margins of Modernism*. Oakland: U of California P, 1996. Print.
Liu, Alan. "The Meaning of the Digital Humanities" *PMLA* 128.2 (2013): 409-23. Print.
Maillet, Gregory. "In a Boat on the River Nowhere Writing Home: The Spiritual Poetic of Tim Lilburn." *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en littérature canadienne* 30.1 (2005): 226-44. Print.
McPherson, Tara. "Why Are the Digital Humanities So White? Or Thinking the Histories of Race and Computation." *Debates in the Digital Humanities*. Ed. Matthew K. Gold. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2012. 139-60. Print.
Mezei, Kathy. "'And We Are Homesick Still': Home, the Unhomely, and the Everyday in Anne Wilkinson." *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en littérature canadienne* 30.1 (2005): 160-80. Print.
Mimno, David et al. "Optimizing Semantic Coherence in Topic Models." *Proceedings of the Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing* (2011): 262-72. Web. 5 Oct. 2015.
Moretti, Franco. "Conjectures on World Literature." *New Left Review* 1 (2000): 54-68. Web. 1 Oct. 2015.
Newman, David, Edwin V. Bonilla, and Wray Buntine. "Improving Topic Coherence with Regularized Topic Models." *Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems*. 2011. Web. 21 Nov. 2015.
Nodelman, J. N. "Gabrielle Roy's *La route d'Altamont* and *Canadian Highway Narrative*." *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en littérature canadienne* 33.1 (2008): 211-28. Print.
Nowviskie, Bethany. "Digital Humanities in the Anthropocene." *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities*. 30.1 (2015): 4-15. Print.
Posner, Miriam. "What's Next: The Radical, Unrealized Potential of the Digital Humanities." *Miriam Posner Blog*. 27 July 2015. Web. 20 Dec. 2016.
Risam, Roopika. "Beyond the Margins: Intersectionality and the Digital Humanities." *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 9.2 (2015): n. pag. Web. 20 Dec. 2016.
Steyvers, Mark, and Tom Griffiths. "Probabilistic Topic Models." *Handbook of Latent Semantic Analysis*. Ed. Thomas K. Landauer et al. Routledge, 2014. 424-40. Print.
Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature canadienne. Archives. *SCL/ÉLC*. https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/SCL/issue/archive. Web. 20 Dec. 2016.
Szeman, Imre. "The Persistence of the Nation: Interdisciplinarity and Canadian Literary Criticism." *Essays on Canadian Writing* 65 (1998): 16-37. Print.
Underwood, Ted. "Topic modeling made just simple enough." *The Stone and the Shell*. 7 Apr. 2012. Web. Oct. 15 2015.
Warder, Kristen. "(Un)Settling the Prairies: Queering Regionalist Literature and the Prairie Social Landscape in Shane Rhodes's *The Wireless Room*." *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en littérature canadienne* 32.2 (2007): 115-31. Print.
Weis, Lyle P. "Bipolar Paths of Desire: D.C. Scott's Poetic and Narrative Structures." *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en littérature canadienne* 12.1 (1987): 35-52. Print.
Willmott, Glenn. *Unreal Country*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2002. Print.
Wood, Brent. "No-Man's Land: Mythic Crisis in Gwendolyn MacEwen's *The T.E. Lawrence Poems*." *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en littérature canadienne* 29.2 (2004): 141-62. Print.

Shazia Hafiz Ramji

"Astronaut Family"

for my friends who have left Vancouver

"Growth and development" sounds like
something my mom used to worry about
when I was little. Now I say it
when applying for grants. Before that
one of my favourite dead people told me
that it begins with language. Since then
I have found lots of dead friends
saying the same thing in different ways.
What was once my mom's, then mine,
then mine through the words of others
are now the words of the forthcoming
Lululemon on Hastings Street, Escala luxury
homes in Burnaby. This is the quality of dust.
It filters through us, because we're made of it,
the language I mean, my friends know it too
when they land in Los Angeles, Montreal,
New York. No wonder we bought
New Balance before parting ways,
making excuses for the comfort worn by our grandparents—
this is the quality of dust: it takes us dancing
into houses and galleries until six in the morning,
it keeps us here, this expensively repressed sympathy
in sneakers and secret locations that separate us,
like when I message you on Facebook, and it's three in the morning
but seven for you, but you gotta go because you're writing
a condo ad for work, even in Brooklyn and Toronto, even though
it started here where we began to love each other, and I think that we still do
because we come back every summer, and the smiles come increasingly quick—
which is not to say that we're eager to meet, or that this is the sudden light
of friendship, but more than this—this is the construction of an act of love.

Readable and Charming

Tappan Adney; C. Ted Behne, ed.
The Travel Journals of Tappan Adney: Vol. 1, 1887-1890. Goose Lane $16.95

Tappan Adney; C. Ted Behne, ed.
The Travel Journals of Tappan Adney: Vol. 2, 1891-1896. Goose Lane $16.95

Reviewed by Misao Dean

The two volumes of *The Travel Journals of Tappan Adney* are charming books, filled with whimsical stories about animal behaviour, quick sketches of birds and wildlife, and honest observations of wilderness and Indigenous peoples in the New Brunswick of the 1890s. Adney—who is perhaps best known for his historic study of Indigenous watercraft, *Bark Canoes and Skin Boats of North America* (1964)—was a self-taught naturalist, writer, and artist who first visited New Brunswick in 1887 at the age of nineteen, and over the next nine years documented his adventures hunting, fishing, and camping in the areas of the Tobique and Mamozekel Rivers in handwritten journals. In later life he transcribed these and added details and corrections; the resulting texts have been edited by C. Ted Behne, a retired writer and bark canoe builder, and reproduced in attractive paperback volumes including a generous selection of the original hand-drawn maps and sketches.

Adney was a strange duck. Like his contemporary Ernest Thompson Seton, he attempted to make a living as an amateur naturalist and illustrator at the very moment when these fields were professionalizing. Adney was a prodigy, achieving admission to the University of North Carolina at the tender age of thirteen, but he never completed a university degree. So Adney sold his stories and illustrations to magazines like *Harper's* and *Outing*, capitalizing on the new popularity of stories that featured outdoor adventure and animal life. He met Charles G. D. Roberts and his brother Goodridge during Roberts' tenure as a professor at King's College in Windsor; this led to later friendships with Bliss Carman and Arthur Stringer during the 1890s, when Adney worked as a freelancer in New York. A trip to Alaska and the Yukon for *Harper's* led to the publication of a successful book on the Klondike gold rush in 1900, on the strength of which Adney married his New Brunswick sweetheart and moved to Montreal. He continued his research in the fields of ethnography, Maliseet language, and bird and animal behaviour, at one time acting as a consultant on ethnology for the McCord Museum at McGill, but he was in debt and unable to complete the ambitious projects he imagined. His extensive research on Indigenous canoes and boats was completed and published after his death by Howard Chapelle.

The *Travel Journals* are written with an endearing simplicity and freshness. Adney recounts hunting and prospecting trips taken with a group of young men like himself, and gives in their own words stories about being treed by a moose, or lost a few hundred feet from a campsite, or chased

around a campfire by a bear. He admits his initial fear of being left on his own in the woods, and sketches a mink that steals the remains of his fish dinner. He writes with respect about the Maliseet craftsman, Peter Joe, who taught him to make a canoe, and about members of the Bear family who assisted in his research into the Maliseet language. In this, Adney's *Travel Journals* contrast favourably with the travel writing of contemporaries like Seton and Theodore Roosevelt, who often seem pompous and condescending toward their "native guides." The main limitation of this edition is its lack of academic bibliographic information; this is a book designed for readers of popular history, and academics will have to go to the original manuscripts for research purposes.

Secrets, Lies, Worlds Unknown, and the Writer's Plight

Samuel Archibald; Donald Winkler, trans. *Arvida.* Biblioasis $19.95

Larry Tremblay; Sheila Fischman, trans. *The Orange Grove.* Biblioasis $17.95

Reviewed by Anne Marie Miraglia

The Orange Grove is an excellent translation of the Québécois novelist and playwright Larry Tremblay's fifth novel *L'orangeraie* (2013), which obtained several awards before it was adapted for the stage and performed in April 2016. Reminiscent in its three-part structure and in its lyrical style of both the fable and theatrical tragedy, *The Orange Grove* reads like a poem. All three parts bear the names of boys whose identity and struggles raise profound questions and much ideological reflection. Part I, "Amed," places twin boys, age nine, in an unidentified war-torn country in the Near or Middle East; Part II, "Aziz," locates the surviving twin, now twenty years old, in the "Latin quarter" of a distant land of snow where he refuses to play "Sony" (Part III), a seven-year-old boy in a play written by Mikhaël, a theatre teacher.

In succinct, poignant sentences, *The Orange Grove* tells not only the story of brotherly love and complicity between Aziz and Amed, but most importantly it tells the story of misguided martyrdom and the manipulation of family honour and religious faith by a fanatical combatant intent on inciting hatred and revenge against the "dogs" who purportedly launched the bombs killing the boys' grandparents. The boys' father is made to choose which of his twin boys will wear the belt of explosives to vindicate his grandparents' brutal death, the destruction of homes, the confiscation of lands, and gain for himself a martyr's place in heaven. *The Orange Grove* raises numerous questions while describing the cruelty and absurdity of all wars. Which of his sons will Zaled choose to sacrifice? How does his wife, Tamara, react to the possibility of losing both sons? Do the boys obey their father and respect his choices? And how does the sacrifice of one twin impact the other? Suspense and reversals abound in this craftily constructed auto-representational novel.

Part III, ("Sony"), however, raises new questions—these concerning the writer's art and the portrayal of wars and horrors never experienced by the writer himself: "You don't know what you are talking about," yells the surviving twin to Mikhaël who, in doubting his own intentions, tries to encourage his student to tell his painful story himself. Samuel Archibald's *Arvida* also cleverly tackles questions about the art of writing worlds unknown and the blurring of lines between fact and fiction. Fourteen entertaining and compelling short stories involving ghosts, monsters, a haunted house, mysterious disappearances and enigmatic returns, hockey games with the Rocket himself, botched attempts at human smuggling and attempted murder, cult-like self-mutilations, and stories of

suicide are threaded together primarily through colourful portrayals of "an Arvida [Archibald's hometown] that wasn't entirely fictional." Like Marcel Proust and his madeleine-induced experience of involuntary memory, Archibald brings to life the past, worlds inhabited, dreamed, or simply imagined by various male and female narrators. "Honestly," admits the narrator of the three "ARVIDA" stories evoking Proust, "after a while you can't tell a real story from an invented one anymore, but I know that's all the literature I'll ever get out of a McNugget. And that's where I always end up. McNuggets aren't madeleines, forgetting trumps memory, and you can't write all your life about how hard it is to tell a story." Thus in all three "ARVIDA" stories, the narrator begins with the sentence "My grandmother, mother of my father, often said: 'There are no thieves in Arvida,'" but recounts a tale of pastries stolen by his father as a child before relating grand stories of larceny, gambling, heavy drinking, and decadence.

The "BLOOD SISTERS" (I, II, and III) stories recount, in the third person, unconfirmed incidents or dreams involving the sexual abuse of female children by adult men. In "In the Fields of the Lord BLOOD SISTERS I," one of the shortest stories of the collection, revives a woman's memories of the little girl she had been at her grandmother's funeral and of her discovery on that day of her grandmother's estranged twin sister. But she "dares not to think of Jim," her grandmother's cousin who killed himself months before the funeral. She clearly recalls that the three of them would play cards at the kitchen table but can only wonder: had he not killed himself, would he have taken the little girl she used to be to the blueberry fields where "[he] would have kissed her on the mouth, saying that she was the only one for him," and would he "have blushed and said that it wasn't good for her to ask him to touch her the same way you touch a woman or that he touched other girls"?

"The Animal BLOOD SISTERS II" recounts, also in the third person, the story of two sisters aged fourteen and twelve, whose father takes them on many adventures (in a boat and in a small plane) to explore the world around them but fails to provide valuable life lessons: "it's tempting for a father never to teach [his girls] anything and to hope nothing will ever happen to them and to try to protect them from the world instead of showing them how to live in it." One of his daughters then accepts a horse ride in the fields of the Lord with the handsome Monsieur Robertson.

In the story "Paris in the Rain BLOOD SISTERS III," a woman at a funeral parlour tells the corpse before her that she, a "damaged little girl," is happy he is dead and that she has come to understand that "God is love": "He loved us, strange bed mates, you the burly man and me the child, he loved your hands on me and your sweaty underclothes, he loved my cold feet and my icy nose."

Although writers frequently question their art and their abilities to tell stories that "are untellable, or suffer from being told, or self-destruct in the very act of being formulated" (Archibald), it is clear that both the writers and translators of *The Orange Grove* and *Arvida* have produced texts that reveal most eloquently their unquestionable talent in the presentation of the complexities of the human spirit, of the worlds we inhabit, and of those that inhabit us.

Space in [Ab]sence

Juliane Okot Bitek
100 Days. U of Alberta P $19.95

Nicole Markotić
whelmed. Coach House $18.95

Sheryda Warrener
Floating is Everything. Nightwood $18.95

Reviewed by Crystal Hurdle

Each of the three cover images urges decoding/translation. Bitek's is a close-up of calligraphy in an undetermined language—from Julie Mehretu's *Invisible Sun* (*Algorithm 5, second letter form*)—a more vibrant depiction of coding than the black and buff-white of Markotić's (*Floating Data* from Laurie Frick's art installation *Quantify-Me*). The explicit, brightly coloured image of intersecting circles with their planetary texture/relief (from the Lunar and Planetary Institute) sets the tone of Warrener's book. The poetry books seem to ask "what to make of the space where those circles // [of a Venn diagram] overlap" (Warrener). Her "Absence accumulates" could be thoughtful commentary for the other collections, too.

whelmed, Markotić's fourth poetry collection, ambitiously explores the English language devoid of customary prefixes. With cynicism and humour similar to Ambrose Bierce's *The Devil's Dictionary*, Richard Lederer's *Anguished English* series, or Lederer's *The Cunning Linguist*, but with greater academic intent, it is closest to bpNichol's *The Martyrology*, alluded to in "a headstone rephrased St One" from the word-poem "prehend" in the "re-" section. Yeats and Dickinson are mentioned, as is Swift—homage? The unique book is coy, insightful, charming, dense, and perhaps too much of the same thing repeated. It holds a catalogue of words, minus prefixes, such as "chievous" without the "mis-" or "sadaisy " adrift from "up-." The "dexed," a list of words defined, is a poem unto itself, inviting the reader to determine which prefixes might have come uncoupled from which words. The last segment, "prorogued," includes "snickety," "undrum" ("buttered philological bacles"), and "trocity." In "post-," "humously" is "the last, last error, motivated by burial. an afternoon of asundering vowels and pie whimsy. not so funny now, what? er . . . um . . . it . . . soil, more than bread and cheese. poned piano positions. I mean it: haste and haster. er." Licious!

Aristotle, mentioned in Markotić's "ergy" ("en-"), is alluded to in Bitek's absolutely-must-read *100 Days*, an astonishing debut poetry collection, one hundred poems for each day of the Rwandan genocide, examined twenty-odd years later by a "Canadian/Ugandan poet." "Day 19" begins *in medias res*—"So this is what the Greek storyteller foretold // first the pity-inducing event"—and ends "& now it is time for catharsis," the voice simultaneously weary and mocking—the mere telling will do nothing. Bitek's Author's Note mentions the initial posting on social media—to accompany photos by Wangechi Mutu—of poems inspired by stories of Rwandan poet Yolande Mukagasana. Pieces are stark and plangent with simple concrete imagery and sensory detail. Pantheistic personification—"nature chattered on" and "earth sobbed"—is striking. Loss runs deep, but "beauty is always undeniable." A first-person narrator, sometimes plural, adopts varying roles of spouse, parent, sibling, witness, survivor, interrogator, with each story sadder and more haunting than the last—the child who can't remember the feeling of her mother plaiting her hair, a sister whose laugh alone propelled the family into laughter ("my sister is not here / I wonder if she remembers laughing / I wonder if she remembers anything"), those who look like the dead loved one, "three so far." How complicit is Christ? Erasure transforms "Savage" to "saved," questioning the concept of reconciliation.

The table of contents begins with the sense of a countdown in two directions:

1 Day 100
2 Day 99
3 Day 98.

Will moving backward from "Day 100" (disturbing) bring closure or a sense of a beginning? The book furthers the sense of relentlessness never-ending, one day as horror-filled as the one before or the next. The University of Alberta Press has produced a tall, beautiful book. It is pleasant to hold and leaves more than the usual amount of white space on a page. Absence. "Day 53" is an abecedarium, mentioning "echoes" of war in other countries:

Tonga
Uganda
Vietnam
Wales
there were echoes in
xenophobic attacks everywhere
Yugoslavia
Zimbabwe.

While specific, the book's range is far-reaching. The simple image of the cut flowers at commemoration, "all dead from the moment they were cut . . . just like the children," haunts.

Poems, lyric and prose, are literally and figuratively all over the map in *Floating is Everything,* Warrener's second collection, with wide-ranging epigraphs, from David Letterman to Elizabeth Bachinsky ("Repetition is not rhyme, missy"). "Trace Objects," one of the three long poems that show Warrener at her best, successfully explores loss in the face of familial death: "Who inherits the sound when I'm no longer around?" ends a section. The enigmatic "[t]here's an underside to everything!" means much. Poignantly, the poet/narrator discovers her name taped to the bottom of a dusty figurine, heir to porcelain. Poems feature or allude to visual art and music. "A Sudden Gust," based on a Jeff Wall photo, excellently explores dislocation and the origins of poetry.

Less successful is "Half-Deflated Heart Balloon" with its self-conscious run-ons and occasional wordiness, and the odd forced simile: "My chest / lifts like a page from // the daily calendar I've forgotten / to rip off." However, these are exceptions in an otherwise strong collection. The poem "Pluto Forever" was published in *Best Canadian Poetry in English 2013*. The well-researched "Long Distance" innovatively imagines the Soviet astronaut Polyakov adjusting to life on earth after 438 days in space. What "[t]ethers" him after the return to the quotidian? How soon his sense of power descends into a Willy Lomanesque plight. (Three pieces follow this pleasing long poem, which would have better ended the section of the same name and the collection as a whole.) Polyakov's words have the effect of runes: "[b]lack asterisk on the page its own smashed galaxy."

What to do *because* (and not if) humanity and faith are suspect, and even language fails? Bitek wonders, with a question posed as a statement, "if there was a sky / how could it witness what it did / & still maintain the calm hue." In "lorn" ("for-"), coincidentally, Markotić writes, "to bargain a dreary release that refunds that lugubrious sky hook." Warrener's "memory search task" (from "Long Distance") begins, "Today is made up of a million silver hooks perturbing the sky," and ends, "I half-expected the world to reveal something of itself to me just now but it's only the minuscule hooks of the imagination rearranging air." In all three worthwhile collections, revelation is elusive, but perhaps the mere possibility, not to mention being alive, is enough?

Writing Regions

George Bowering
Writing the Okanagan. Talonbooks $24.95

Don Gillmor
Long Change. Random House $30.00

Tom Wayman
The Shadows We Mistake for Love.
Douglas & McIntyre $19.95

Reviewed by Joel Martineau

In the 1992/1993 academic year I participated in a 400-level course about Canadian novels. The professor had an avid following, the course was over-subscribed, and visitors to campus often sat in. Most meetings were standing room only. Terms such as "meta-fiction," "postmodernism," "self-reflexivity," and "histories" peppered our discussions. Only one author appeared on the fall *and* the spring reading lists: George Bowering. *Burning Water* had earned the Governor General's Award for Fiction in 1980, and it provoked the most heated responses among the twelve works we read. *Caprice* had appeared in 1988 to less acclaim, but when we read the novel that spring it became, for me, an all-time favourite.

Writing the Okanagan encourages such reminiscing. The volume collects pieces from thirty-nine Bowering works written throughout his illustrious career, beginning with his first novel, *Delsing* (1961, unpublished), and ending with a speech he presented at Ryerson University then published in 2015. He introduces each of the thirty-nine selections with a page or two contextualizing his career to that point and describing the impetus that motivated the particular work. As always, Bowering positions himself prominently in his writing, so the current introductions connect the long-ago pieces into a writerly autobiography. Personal photos add to the sense of continuity and progress, illustrating the overlap of individual, academic, and writer.

The pieces selected from Bowering's prodigious oeuvre all pertain to some degree to the Okanagan Valley, a fascinating microclimate situated inland from the British Columbia coast. Bowering was raised in the Okanagan when the valley featured small orchards, many operated by Portuguese or Italian Canadians encouraged to settle there by federal immigration policies, and when communities took pride in their baseball teams. Bowering's parents—the father of English stock, the mother a learned Bostonian—took to the region in colourful ways, and their influences imbue the early writing. Bowering's fondness for the region (and baseball) never wanes. As academia leads him to urban centres, he returns to the Okanagan with his family for annual visits and special events, such as a high school reunion. While the selections ooze nostalgia, they also construct a compelling history that honours the simpler ethos that followed World War II, even as the Okanagan region now reinvents itself into a magnet for international capital that transforms the family-run orchards into "boutique" and "estate" wineries specializing in tourism. Bowering is no curmudgeon regretting change; he is wistful for the place and period that launched his lifetime path.

Soon after that 1992/1993 academic year, I found myself standing in front of large classes of first-year students who were taking some required 100-level English course. Many resented being there; they would have preferred another science, or perhaps computer science, course. My goal became to win them over quickly by illustrating that they need not fear literature, that they could "relate" to texts, that they could make sense of (some) poetry, and especially that they could write about their responses. Tom Wayman became an ally. At the time, he wrote "work poetry" about everyday people performing everyday jobs—nimble poems that typically argued for workers' rights and gender equality. I found his poems

in chapbooks and odd little anthologies, included a few in my course packs, and had great success delivering them to students who gained enough confidence to tackle the next text.

The Shadows We Mistake for Love reveals another side of Tom Wayman. It collects fourteen short stories, most previously published in literary journals, into a hefty volume focusing on the West Kootenay region in southern British Columbia. The Kootenay lakes and valleys run north to south, paralleling the Okanagan Valley but a mountain range or two farther east, more distanced from the province's urban centres, and traditionally inclined towards more marginalized social and economic spheres. Wayman's attention to the everyman morphs into study of a particular subculture: the hippie or back-to-earth movement galvanized by anti-war sentiment in the Vietnam decades. Late in the 1960s and in the 1970s, youths flocked to the Kootenays, often adopting communal or alternative living arrangements. Wayman's linked stories limn a fascinating history as this generation matures and their initial zeal yields to ensuing responsibilities—providing for progeny, for example.

The stories burst with details that coalesce into a study worthy of a major novel. Characters we come to know in one story provide context in another; places that we picture from one angle reappear from another; buildings and businesses become foci for comparisons; and, crucially, issues raised are revisited. Wayman appreciates the beliefs and dreams that bring his cast to the Kootenays, but concentrates on the ways that time conditions their hopes. In the novella-length title story, a University of British Columbia graduate student travels to the region to visit a friend and becomes intrigued by environmental issues and the dashing spokesperson for these matters; she disregards warnings about his history as a serial seducer, has their child, and finds herself a single parent and sole provider for her son, her unfinished Masters thesis long forgotten. In the magnificent "Three Jimmys," three like-named friends build and operate the first motel in the region, an incipient enterprise that becomes a local icon and treasured platform for their friendship—until a jealous spouse undermines their partnership. After a chain buys and mismanages the motel, changing its name, the story ends with a promising turn as new owners buy the business and restore its original name. In "Many Rivers," a Vietnam veteran immigrates and starts a war surplus and agricultural supply outlet that seems to clandestinely service the region's thriving marijuana economy. He attracts local youths with dark tales of his glory days as a warrior, but remains shadowy and furtive. The thrust of the story isn't the mystery man, but the effect he will have on the impressionable (or not) locals.

Don Gillmor undertakes an epic project in *Long Change*: the 351-page novel sketches a history of exploration and deal making in the oil industry, beginning with wildcatting in Texas in 1951, ranging to Alberta and the Beaufort Sea in the ensuing decades, and becoming increasingly global at the turn of the century, with forays to equatorial Africa, Azerbaijan, and the Barents Sea. He channels this saga through protagonist Ritt Devlin, who begins working as a roughneck at age fifteen in Texas and soon migrates—with a posse in hot pursuit—to Alberta, his locus of operations as he becomes an increasingly significant player in the increasingly crucial and global industry. The novel portrays the pursuit of oil as a twentieth-century enactment of man attacking nature with greed as the driving force, politicians and international capital the devil's dealmakers.

Devlin—note the anagrammatic connotations—represents oil, a manifestation of capital, always restless, always willing to meet the devil down at the crossroads,

always willing to sell its soul. Remarkably, Devlin is also synecdochic for Alberta. The province functions as a stage for the potential and ascendance of the resource; it also complies with the lies, arrogance, and bluster typical of rapacious resource extraction. When fracking coal seams becomes the latest lucrative technology and consequently rampant, an eleven-year-old boy living on a ranch in the foothills south of Calgary finds dead frogs in a pool on the property. A few weeks later, the family's drinking water becomes effervescent; the boy develops a rash; his mother takes him to the hospital (the father died when the boy was three), where initial tests are inconclusive. She contacts the Environment Ministry and the oil company drilling wells nearby. Both stonewall, so that she has to enlist the media to air her concerns.

Gillmor turns punchy phrases, such as "[t]hat is oil's great gift. It makes men dream," or "[t]he North was the future, the tense every politician is happiest in." Occasionally, technique slides towards cliché: "there were two detectives in the room, wearing cheap suits and hard expressions." However, *Long Change* works with a large canvas that admirably represents the vicissitudes of the industry. When an interrogator addresses Devlin, "You're oil, is that right," and Devlin replies, "We're all oil," the novel reminds us that we are all complicit. I strive to be energy efficient, but that is a culturally relevant concept. I recognize that North Americans use vastly more than our share of the world's resources, and that our consumption of fossil fuels remains particularly reprehensible.

An Intertextual Approach to Women's Stories

Rebecca Bromwich and Monique Marie DeJong, eds.
Mothers, Mothering and Sex Work.
Demeter $29.95

Reviewed by Lourdes Arciniega

Rebecca Bromwich and Monique Marie DeJong have compiled a thought-provoking and timely anthology addressing the often marginalized, seldom heard, and precarious experiences of sex workers who are also mothers. The editors apply a multidisciplinary lens to an often "binary political debate," in the hopes of highlighting the complexity of the issues and players involved, which cannot, and the editors argue should not, be compartmentalized into rigid categories. By presenting their case through essays, short stories, photographs, drawings, and personal accounts, the editors not only elicit a more comprehensive understanding from readers, but also generate a more empathetic response. The stories are not limited to the North American experience, but also feature tales of the sex trade in Africa and South America, finding similarities in women's roles, prejudices, and lack of agency through a globalized perspective.

This anthology contributes to an emerging field on maternal studies that explores the complexity of the traditional, nurturing mother role, as it moves women from a passive, domestic setting into a public, activist forum. Focusing on sex workers who are mothers implies not only a transgressing of boundaries, but also a delineation of a new space for study, a new "venue to explore and appreciate the maternalities of sex workers as subjects," as the editors argue. There is often mention of a need for sex workers to create two different personae in order to survive. Sex workers need to keep home life separate from street life, to live life as a constant negotiation and redesigning of these

two roles, often to the detriment of their mental and physical health.

One of the key perspectives addressed by several of the contributors is the violence and constant erosion of self-confidence entailed in sex work. How does their upbringing, their own experience of motherhood, lead sex workers into this trade? More importantly perhaps, are there avenues and resources for them to escape a job that preys on their vulnerability and keeps them in a constant state of fear? Indeed, the contributors call attention to a confusing and conflicted law system that does not often act in the best interest of the sex worker by not consulting them with regards to laws that directly affect their livelihood.

The anthology forges new ground in academic feminist writing by approaching the well-known polarization of women as "virgins" or "whores" from a new perspective, as the sex worker is the cultural embodiment of both of these roles. By addressing the ways in which women's labour, be it as mother or as sex worker, serves a patriarchal agenda, it is possible to call attention to how women's identities, sexual desires, and social roles as reproducers continue to be repressed by a hegemonic social structure. To contest this binary, the anthology explores in a detailed and compelling manner the traumas and social shaming associated with sex work. Therefore, several of the contributors note how women look to representations of motherhood to redefine themselves, to regain control of their narrative, and to reinvent their social identities.

With its interdisciplinary nature and appeal, this anthology becomes a provocative and useful springboard for further cross-disciplinary research. In fact, the collection itself is a model of intercultural engagement where art, sociology, psychology, and civil action can provide the basis for successful dialogue, and, more importantly, provide guidelines for practical agency that could impact the lives of women workers.

Mind and Body

Nicole Brossard; Angela Carr, trans.
Ardour. Coach House $18.95

Jan Zwicky
Wittgenstein Elegies. Brick $20.00

Reviewed by Myra Bloom

In Raphael's famous fresco *The School of Athens,* Plato and Aristotle are depicted walking side by side, the former pointing up at the heavens, realm of the immutable forms, the latter pointing down to the empirical world. This image captures the relationship of Jan Zwicky's *Wittgenstein Elegies* to Nicole Brossard's *Ardour*. While diametrically opposed in topic and technique, both works are preoccupied by the link between language and reality: a revised version of Raphael's painting would depict Zwicky in Plato's pose, her upward gesture announcing the cerebral nature of the undertaking, while Brossard's downward motion would, by contrast, return us to the sensual body. To the extent that these two works emblematize their writers' respective philosophies, *Wittgenstein Elegies* and *Ardour* provide insight into two very distinct traditions of Canadian poetry.

Zwicky's poems, like those of her contemporaries Anne Carson and Robert Bringhurst, mine the Western philosophical tradition for creative inspiration. *Wittgenstein Elegies* is an enduring affirmation of her intellectual sensibility: originally published in 1986, the collection has been newly revised and reissued by Brick Books on the occasion of the publisher's fortieth anniversary. The predominant speaker in the book's "collage of voices" is the German philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), whose writings form its main intertext. In the new edition, Zwicky has included in the margin the names of the particular speaker and work being referenced to aid the reader. Although poetry may seem an incongruous mode for a

philosopher so concerned with the precise relationship between language and meaning, Zwicky reveals the distinctly poetic underpinning of Wittgenstein's thinking. She also reminds us, by including passages from his protege, the Austrian poet Georg Trakl (1887-1914), of Wittgenstein's commitment to art. As Zwicky explains in the afterword, her ultimate goal is to refute positivist readings of Wittgenstein's writings that see them as systematizing language; by contrast, she wants to show "how profoundly he experienced the moral dimension of language's relation to the world."

She does this mainly by juxtaposing poetically rendered excerpts of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and the *Philosophical Investigations,* two works that are typically read as expressing opposite understandings of language. The posthumously published *Philosophical Investigations* is traditionally seen as rejecting the idea, set forth in the *Tractatus*, that language can be reduced to its purest elements and thus completely described; the late Wittgenstein, it is held, realized that language could only ever be understood in the context of its usage. In undermining this oppositional narrative, Zwicky was at the vanguard of a scholarly re-evaluation that has, since the publication of *Wittgenstein Elegies* in 1986, led many philosophers to find a greater continuity between the two works. In Zwicky's collection, this continuity is apparent in passages such as the following, attributed to the *Tractatus*:

> Objects are simple signs. They are named
> by simple signs. They are only named.
> Signs are their representatives.
> We can only speak about them, cannot
> put them into words.

In signalling the accidental nature of language, Zwicky prefigures the moral stakes that will be distilled in her rendering of the *Philosophical Investigations*:

> Can one learn this knowledge? Yes, some
> can.
> But not by taking courses. It has rules
> that form no system: life alone
> learns to apply them right.

If the rules of language are ultimately arbitrary and intersubjective, it is incumbent upon people to make ethical choices about their discourse: "None can speak the truth who have not mastered their own souls," states Zwicky's Wittgenstein; "our words are a refinement of our deeds." Moreover, if language always points toward its own limits, then the job of poetry is to move ever closer to the "unsayable itself / directly echoed."

Nicole Brossard is similarly interested in the relationship between word and world, although she approaches the issue from a very different social and ideological position. One of Quebec's pre-eminent writers and literary theorists, Brossard's formalist poetics encodes the female body and lesbian desire in its explosion of rigid generic and syntactic structures. Where Zwicky looks to philosophy for her poetry, Brossard's poetry enacts her philosophy. In *Ardour*, capably translated by Angela Carr, Brossard creates what Kate Zambreno has aptly named a "grammar of desire":

> tonight can i suggest a little punctuation
> circle half-moon vertical line of
> astonishment
> a pause that transforms
> light and breath
> into language and threshold of fire

More than an extended metaphor, Brossard's elision of sexuality and language corresponds to an understanding that experience and expression are intimately linked. She productively mines the tension between the assertion that "living is / necessarily all *à l'intérieur du langage*" and the observation that "we are speechless with / every kiss." Like Zwicky's Wittgenstein, Brossard is acutely aware both of the power of language to define reality and of "all that's

unspeakable," the vast realm of human experience that exceeds linguistic definition.

Brossard contrasts the "ardour" of the sensual world with the looming threat of global catastrophe, the "grey taste of excess consumption." Against this horizon, we must "immerse our ardour / in questions and cherries / this way of staying the shadow." Poetry, as the vehicle for negotiating word and world ("questions and cherries"), is positioned as the privileged defence against "the shadow" of late capitalism, patriarchy, and other social perils. Although dedicated to dismantling the very syntax that Wittgenstein was committed to defining, Brossard, like Zwicky, ultimately affirms the ethical dimension of language.

Don't Forget Foucault

François Caillat; David Homel, trans.
Foucault Against Himself. Arsenal Pulp $17.95

Reviewed by Dan Adleman

Foucault Against Himself is Arsenal Pulp Press' admirable adaptation of François Caillat's recent documentary film of the same title. Each major chapter of the book is essentially the transcribed text of Caillat's interview with a scholar featured in the film. Arsenal also enlisted the late author's friend and interlocutor Paul Rabinow to write an engaging foreword that probes the complex relationship between Foucault's heterogeneous oeuvre and his often fraught life circumstances. To his credit, in what could be perceived as a slight dig at the filmmaker, Rabinow ultimately insists on the irreducible opacity of Foucault's subjectivity and on critics' constitutive inability to speak artfully thereto.

One highlight of the book is Caillat's interview with literary theorist Leo Bersani, who first invited Foucault to lecture at Berkeley in the mid-1970s. Bersani provides a number of insightful anecdotes laced with theoretical observations about Foucault's work and life. At one point, he speculates provocatively that Foucault's discovery of "new relational modes" in California's then-hedonistic Bay Area "stimulated his historical and philosophical production" in a fashion that would not have been possible had he remained within the stultifying confines of the Parisian *Collège de France* nexus at the time.

In another interview, French art historian Georges Didi-Huberman dwells on Foucault's modelling of an "archaeological" modus operandi for "orient[ing] yourself within thought." He goes on to characterize his own approach to art history as immensely indebted to Foucault's archival methodology and aesthetics in seminal texts like *The Birth of the Clinic* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. In a comparison that would have made Foucault bristle, Didi-Huberman observes, "What he wrote about Manet . . . doesn't interest me. We could say the same thing about Freud. When he discusses a Leonardo da Vinci painting, he's not at his most fascinating. But when Freud looks at hysteria, he gives a veritable lesson in seeing. . . . [Likewise,] when Foucault describes what the clinical gaze is, for me that's a basic lesson for art history."

As a general introduction to Foucault's life and work, *Foucault Against Himself* strikes a competent balance between biography (at times bordering on hagiography) and popular philosophy; nevertheless, there are two significant problems with Caillat's approach. Firstly, the filmmaker circumscribes the field of scholarship to a small handful of Foucault's popular books and shows little evidence of having read much else. Given his own stated intention of tracking Foucault's constantly metamorphosing understanding of power, it is difficult to forgive him for overlooking the entire *Collège de France* seminar series (especially his genealogy of neoliberalism in *The Birth of Biopolitics*) and neglecting to discuss Foucault's influential concepts of "biopolitics" and "biopower."

Secondly, if Caillat were to immerse himself in Foucault's body of work and the broader field of Foucault scholarship, he would quickly relinquish the premise that it would benefit scholars to view him as a thinker who, in his work and life, was fundamentally "against himself." This has been commonsensical doxa (about not only Foucault but everyone) for so long that critics could only scratch their heads at Caillat's posture of having made an incisive intervention on the Foucault archive.

Moreover, against the grain of his insistent questions about "which Foucault" ("the militant" or "the scholar") engaged in a certain political action or wrote a certain text, it is hard not to hear Foucault's own spectral response from the end of "What is an Author?": "Behind all these questions we would hear little more than the murmur of indifference: 'What matter who's speaking?'"

Poetry Actually

Dina Del Bucchia and Daniel Zomparelli
Rom Com. Talonbooks $19.95

Kathryn Mockler
The Purpose Pitch. Mansfield $17.00

Reviewed by Carl Watts

The Purpose Pitch, Kathryn Mockler's third poetry collection, is described on its back cover as both drawing from "contemporary poetic traditions" and taking the form of "brutal police reports, invented biographies of real people, Google search results, and celebrity-interview mash-ups." *Rom Com*, a collaborative effort by Dina Del Bucchia and Daniel Zomparelli, "both celebrates and capsizes the romantic comedy." These descriptions say a lot about our present poetic moment of diffuse conceptualism; Mockler at once lifts from and generates the genres described, while Del Bucchia and Zomparelli work with characters and clichés so plentiful as to require a large degree of authorial assembly. Perhaps some avant-garde purists would refer disparagingly to these blends of selection and versification as "conceptual lite" poetry; regardless of their pedigree, however, these collections deal yet another blow to mainstream-versus-experimental binaries.

The Purpose Pitch is most effective when its snarky drollery yields depressingly comprehensive insights. Take, for example, statements such as "the English teacher is not a credible source because she wants to kill herself," or exhortations to "World" such as "I'm sure you've racked up a pretty pension. If you don't like your job anymore, just quit." Yet while Mockler's previous collections didn't always add a formal wallop to her directness, here her multivalent candour uses the prosaic to advantage. In "Poetry—You're Popular, Okay," an assault on the proudly embattled genre, strings of monosyllables mark the poet's complexes as especially banal and petty: "Don't get your nose so out of joint all the time. . . . One day you might have a street named after you."

Mockler's use of found text also works in tandem with her darker themes. "April 30-May 31, 2014" consists of eleven pages of police alerts relating to sexual assault. The sequence resembles the infamous fourth section of Roberto Bolaño's *2666*, but the inclusion of Canadian localities (as well as the very need to reiterate the prevalence of violence against women) enhances the repulsive power of Bolaño's precedent. Mockler also brings patterns out of her raw data. After dozens of alerts that begin with constructions such as "A WOMAN WAS" or "POLICE SAY," two entries on the final page begin, "A 22-YEAR-OLD TORONTO MAN IS FACING" and "A TEENAGER HAS BEEN ARRESTED," respectively; one realizes at this point that only four of the sixty-seven entries have implicated the perpetrators by marking them as initial grammatical subjects. Whether it's employing this kind of stricter conceptualism or just strafing sharp lyrical insights

with ready-made phrases, *The Purpose Pitch* consistently makes the case that it is Mockler's strongest work.

Rom Com's concept, if it could be described as such, is simple: Del Bucchia and Zomparelli employ verse, prose, lists, quizzes, and found text to converse with the tropes of their book's titular genre. It's a product not of the Internet Age as much as a vaguely consistent postwar era of mass packaging and advertising. The authors have stated that their writing process was deeply collaborative, but many poems resemble the work of one more than the other. It's hard not to see Del Bucchia behind a questionnaire such as "Ever Wondered If You Might Be the Best Friend of a Romantic Lead?" Poems such as "Montage," with lines such as "Change clothes, change accessories, change your hairstyle, change the colour of your hair, change styles, change your clothes," recreate the sequence- and permutation-based poems that cropped up throughout Zomparelli's *Davie Street Translations*.

Most of the collection, however, consists of more seamlessly blended verse and prose treatments of particular actors, characters, and films. The result is a wry jocularity that sometimes slides into vulnerability, much as Mockler's poems do. But where Mockler disarms with an awkward honesty that doesn't seem remotely performative, Del Bucchia and Zomparelli are comparatively guarded. "What's Your Number" expresses semi-embarrassment at "Drinking wine and researching ex-boyfriends online / while listening to the kind of music sold at Starbucks," and "Places to Meet the Love of Your Life" mentions a "wedding to which you're not sure why you were even invited"; the creative-class positioning and the assurance that the speaker is on the invite list give the impression that nobody's really losing face here. This cautiousness matches the surface-level interiority of the romantic comedy, but, given that the story of the authors' collaboration is built into the final product, it leaves something to be desired nonetheless.

Rom Com also works in text from Wikipedia and approximations of Twitter-style word games, as in the "Vagina Edition" of "Porn Parodies":

> There's Something about Vaginas
> Notting Vagina
> Groundhog Vagina
> Silver Linings Vagina

But while post-Flarf humour may be the collection's centrepiece, the series "Sonnets for Supporting Roles" is at times far more visceral than the jokier sections' moments of weakness. "Muriel, *It Could Happen to You*" pulls this off with a sympathetic reading of its supporting character:

> another working-class woman can swoop in
> take your husband who was always
> more infatuated with your womb
>
> than with your fire.

Ultimately, though, this difference is one of quality, not kind. These poems too build themselves out of rote rom-com fodder; that they're at home with the collection's more blatant borrowings suggests that such intuitive variants of conceptualism are far from radical or parochial. But, as Del Bucchia and Zomparelli imply, perhaps there's little to be gained from assuming the mainstream can't be appealing.

Unsettling "Belonging"

Stan Dragland
Strangers and Others: Newfoundland Essays. Pedlar $23.00

Kathleen Winter
Boundless: Tracing Land and Dream in a New Northwest Passage. Anansi $29.95

Reviewed by Jeff Fedoruk

Upon receiving an invitation to be an onboard writer on a Russian icebreaking vessel travelling through the Northwest

Passage, Kathleen Winter's first thought is towards the Passage's storied colonial history:

> I thought of Franklin's bones, of the sails of British explorers in the colonial age, of a vast tundra only Inuit and the likes of Franklin and Amundsen and a few scientists had ever had the privilege of navigating. . . . I thought of my own British childhood, steeped in stories of sea travel. I thought of Edward Lear's Jumblies, who went to sea in a sieve. I thought of Queen Victoria and Jane Franklin, and of the longing and romance with which my father had decided to immigrate to Canada. I thought of all the books I'd read on polar exploration, on white men's and white women's attempts to travel the Canadian Far North.

And while the journey she subsequently takes unsettles this to an extent—through the teachings of Inuk guide Bernadette Dean and Greenlandic-Canadian guide Aaju Peter, as well as from the land itself—Winter ultimately struggles to shake the colonial roots from which she was raised. *Boundless* is nevertheless a rewarding rumination on the challenges that settler-Canadian writers and readers face in the current cultural moment of decolonization in Canada.

Decolonization is not so much a theme as an undercurrent in Winter's writing. She maintains a narrative open-mindedness throughout her travels, allowing the voices of the various guides and experts to speak for the places and people that she is encountering. From Aaju Peter, she learns the Indigenous names of animals, plants, and rock formations, along with the pedagogical desire for resurgent Indigenous Knowledge in Nunavut. From Bernadette Dean, she learns of Inuit cultural traditions and of colonial appropriations of these cultures that manifest in museums across North America. The most enduring lessons, however, seem to come from the land itself—the synthesis of Winter's various experiences gestures towards land-based epistemologies. After various historical, geological, and cultural tours, and while on the deck of the vessel, Winter begins to feel that "[t]he land is a body, and . . . it has something like speech," acknowledging the "elemental force" that "had begun to exert an influence." That Winter's narrative ends with a trip to Ottawa to support Chief Theresa Spence's 2012 hunger strike in protest of Northern Indigenous living conditions is certainly a testament to the influence of Indigenous Knowledge. But while she concludes that "[a]ll land is sacred," she still cannot shake the colonial impulse with which she began her voyage. For all the decolonization she undergoes, she remains fixated on retracing the storylines of John Franklin's failed Northwest Passage expedition, and is positively bubbly when she learns that his logbook was being kept in one of the settlements that she passes through, Gjoa Haven. Her uncritical stance on the "national and international headlines" that follow the logbook's reveal is at odds with her prior realization that "[n]o matter how well-meaning the passengers, could we claim to stand apart from questions of invasion, privilege, and trespass?" Winter's narrative retains its pedagogical potential if such ambivalence is read critically. Otherwise, *Boundless* comes across simply as an addendum to the colonial exploits that Winter initially cites, or as a memoir featuring the land as an agent of self-discovery.

Whereas *Boundless* often reflects back on Winter's British childhood and Newfoundland youth, Stan Dragland's volume of essays in *Strangers and Others* continues to dwell in the colonial and literary present of Newfoundland, within a familiar Canadian literary context. Here, Dragland provides detailed readings of standout works in contemporary Newfoundland literature that speak to what he considers to be a lack of national

attention towards these texts. This volume features a broad literature review in its first chapter, followed by closer readings of Paul Bowdring's novel *The Night Season*, poet Agnes Walsh's *In the Country of My Heart*, Wayne Johnston's historical novel *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*, visual artist Vicki Tansey's St. John's installation *House of Clouds and Other Ephemerals*, and Lisa Moore's *February*. The content of these works differs greatly, but as Dragland asserts in his introduction, all concern an "insider/outsider tension that is not felt only by the resident stranger"—indeed, part of the inspiration for Dragland to write these essays in the first place is to build on the literary impulse he felt when moving from Southern Ontario to Newfoundland. In studying local literatures as an "outsider," he has found a locus of cultural expression unique from the rest of the country.

Most compellingly, *Strangers and Others* offers a formulation of Canadian literary identity that is not quite local, nor post-national, nor regional. As the last "province" to join Confederation, Newfoundland has developed its literary tradition somewhat independently from the canonical thrust of the nation's more central forces. Dragland is the first to admit that he comes from the school of literary studies in Canada that strove to formulate a definitive Canadian cultural identity in the 1970s, and in relocating to Newfoundland, he feels "an impetus for asking the old questions with a new enthusiasm." Even in this "new unsettled context," however, his perspective remains primarily white and primarily settled. In his reading of Johnston's novel, for example, Dragland draws attention to the term *colony* as it appears in the novel's title, but the idea of "colony" throughout *Strangers and Others* appears solely with regard to Newfoundland as a colony of Canada. This is problematic because Canada is itself a colony; such colonial trappings overwrite the cultural production of the Mi'kmaq and other peoples who are indigenous to the territory now known as Newfoundland (Dragland's references to Rudy Wiebe's *The Temptations of Big Bear* fall outside of this collection's primary focus). It is therefore a risk for settler writers to take up the question of belonging in Canada today without fully acknowledging Indigenous and diasporic relationships to the land—especially when national and international movements such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Idle No More, and Black Lives Matter are reframing Indigenous-settler and diasporic relations on multiple scales simultaneously.

Fictions of Resistance

OmiSoore H. Dryden and Suzanne Lenon, eds.
Disrupting Queer Inclusion: Canadian Homonationalisms and the Politics of Belonging. U of British Columbia P $29.95

Michael L. Ross
Designing Fictions: Literature Confronts Advertising. McGill-Queen's UP $24.95

Reviewed by Julian Gunn

At the end of the 2003 HBO production of Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*, Prior Walter—the white, patrician, gay man living with AIDS—proclaims the advent of gay citizenship in the United States: "The world only spins forward. We will be citizens. The time has come." It's a potent declaration. It is also intelligible as an advertisement for a social justice narrative in which state citizenship is the ultimate goal of queer struggle. In the years since the broadcast of *Angels*, much critical work has been undertaken to highlight the ways in which assimilation is neither a universal queer good nor, indeed, a universal queer possibility.

What opportunities, then, arise within cultural and political work—writing plays and novels, creating TV series, assembling critical anthologies, enacting protest—for

creating effective resistance to the narratives of power? Two recent books of criticism explore the challenge of creating resistant discourses. Michael L. Ross' *Designing Fictions* surveys anti-advertising novels and TV. *Disrupting Queer Inclusion: Canadian Homonationalisms and the Politics of Belonging,* edited by OmiSoore H. Dryden and Suzanne Lenon, interrogates the legal and social boundaries of queer Canadian belonging.

Designing Fictions proposes that, over the past century, anti-advertising art has been compromised both by the novel's commodity status—the widget of mass publishing—and by the appeal to authors themselves of lucrative advertising jobs. Ross, Professor Emeritus of English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University, has earned a reputation for meticulous scholarship: *Designing Fictions* comprises attentive literary studies of paired texts, primarily novels, from the last hundred years. Ross uses the vexed friendship of Henry James and H. G. Wells to frame an origin story for two strains of anti-advertising thought, noting that "James's objections to advertising were aesthetic, while Wells's were social and economic." Scholars of Canadian literature will enjoy Ross' analysis of Margaret Atwood's advertising satire in *The Edible Woman,* which—like the TV series *Mad Men*—occupies its own chapter.

Designing Fictions' introduction is subtitled "Baudrillard's Dream," and there are some astringent references to the Frankfurt School, but the critical compass of *Designing Fictions* is Stuart Ewen's *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture.* Ross cannily identifies the way that commodity culture might corrupt a novel's critical strategies. A further layer of response criticism exploring the way these books were promoted, reviewed, and read would complement the literary analysis; where Ross includes such information, it is illuminating. For example, revealing Christopher Morley's gift for self-promotion connects Morley's depiction of détente between art and commerce in *The Haunted Bookshop* with his reliance on advertising to publicize that novel.

If these literary and cultural works attempt to resist advertising culture, what kind of resistance do they propose? They tend to suggest alternative discourses as more truthful or authentic. Wells uses science; Morley and Orwell high literature; and Atwood ludic non-sense. Across eras, Ross finds that success is elusive: advertising's corrosive discourse tends to win out. What, then, might successful resistance look like? Would we know it when we saw it? How can resistance be generated and maintained in the face of the amorphous and amoral practices of advertising—or of a nationalism that employs the strategies of commercial promotion to position national identity?

Disrupting Queer Inclusion: Canadian Homonationalisms and the Politics of Belonging is part of UBC Press' Sexuality Studies Series, which "focuses on original, provocative, scholarly research examining . . . the complexity of human sexual practice, identity, community, and desire." The essays in *Disrupting Queer Inclusion* probe queer belonging and citizenship in Canada. Dryden and Lenon have curated a group of searching takes on Jasbir K. Puar's conceptual frame of homonationalism, which names the invention of a "good queer (Canadian) citizen" whose acceptance, even celebration, is used to support the claim that Canada is a queer-positive nation. This collection explores the dangerous deployments of such a claim: to obscure the tolerant country's foundation in colonial violence; to impart the symbolic entitlement to interfere politically or militarily with states deemed less enlightened; and to justify internal policies of exclusion based on less valorized categories like religion and ethnicity.

Disrupting Queer Inclusion explores this

analytic model through a variety of national constructions, including citizenship, privacy, visibility, individualism, and economic theory. Sonny Dhoot's "Pink Games on Stolen Land" considers the 2010 Vancouver Olympics' creation of Pride House in the context of colonial occupation, comparing the gesture to "pinkwashing" in Israel. In "A Queer Too Far," editor Dryden conducts an elegant close reading of the Canadian Blood Services donor questionnaire, which constructs—through negation—a "too queer" subject, inadmissible for blood donation not only through same-sex contact, but also via contact with an abstracted "Africa" constructed as a threat to national purity.

Such critique of the mainstream politics of acceptance calls out for alternate models of struggle that recognize all "queered" configurations of bodies and desires. In this vein, Naomi de Szegheo-Lang's "Disruptive Desires" sketches an alternative praxis of fluidity and contingency, and Marty Fink's "Don't Be a Stranger Now" offers a study of queer prison-based cultural production, in the form of newsletters, zines, and blog sites like Tumblr. Like Ross, the creators of these "disruptions" find the possibilities for resistance vexed; for example, Amar Wahab observes how predominantly white fetish communities, once cast as sexual outlaws, may contribute ideologically to the exclusion of queerly raced bodies. Ultimately, both *Designing Fictions* and *Disrupting Queer Inclusion* may remind readers that no one strategy, vocabulary, or stance is sufficient; resistance must be as protean as power itself.

Contemporary Classics

Marilyn Dumont
A Really Good Brown Girl: Brick Books Classics 4. Brick $20.00

Dennis Lee
Riffs: Brick Books Classics 3. Brick $20.00

Reviewed by Neil Querengesser

Brick Books has since its inception published more than its share of excellent and enduring Canadian poetry. Its recently inaugurated Classics series features new editions of the best of its best. Designed by Robert Bringhurst, all books in this series are beautifully printed on high-quality paper, each with its unique typeface and, appropriately, each with its unique cover picture of a brick "made from Vancouver Island clay and aged in the coastal rainforest." In their careful physical construction, these books are a fittingly respectful tribute to the quality of the poetry contained within them, especially the two volumes reviewed here.

I am reading *A Really Good Brown Girl* about a year after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its report, and very soon after the establishment of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. I am also writing after the recent tragic murders of two teenagers from Whitefish Lake First Nation in Alberta, allegedly killed by a friend jealous of their promising future. While many positive changes in Canada's Indigenous communities have occurred over the last several years, many systemic injustices still exist; the sobering themes that underlie much of Dumont's book resonate as strongly today as they did twenty years ago at the time of its initial publication in 1996. As Lee Maracle puts it in her introduction to this edition of *A Really Good Brown Girl*, a book that has already been reprinted thirteen times and whose poems have been

abundantly anthologized, "No other book so exonerates us, elevates us and at the same time indicts Canada in language so eloquent it almost hurts to hear it." The book indeed struck a deep chord of recognition in Indigenous readers across the country; Dumont comments in her afterword that while writing the poems was cathartic for her, it was apparently also so "for many others who, after readings, approached me with pages of the collection dog-eared." It may also strike a deep chord of recognition in those non-Indigenous readers who are willing to be seen and spoken of from a perspective not their own.

The poems range widely over many overt and subtle aspects of the speaker's experience—including expressions of love, hate, fear, and other emotions common to everyone—but they are also completely rooted in her experience as a Métis woman in twentieth-century Canada. At times one can almost see the page wrinkle wryly, as in these words from "Circle the Wagons":

> There are times when I feel that if I don't have a circle or the number four or legend in my poetry, I am lost, just a fading urban Indian caught in all the trappings of Doc Martens, cappuccinos and foreign films . . . .

The closing lines of "Leather and Naughahyde [sic]," where the speaker is tacitly but unmistakably dismissed by the "treaty guy" upon his surmising her "diluted blood," slap stingingly at her Métis—and female—identity. Her heart-rending ode to Helen Betty Osborne, the story of whose horrific murder should never be forgotten, stuns with the power of outrage woven into its carefully measured lines and phrases. The satirical clout of often-anthologized poems like "Letter to Sir John A. Macdonald" and "The Devil's Language" continues to resonate powerfully today. But Dumont's poetic brilliance also extends to tenderly empathetic explorations of the nuances of relationships among family and friends in such poems as "Fireflies," "The Sky Is Promising," and "My Mother's Arms," the tender lullaby lines of which "bathe [her] in love." *A Really Good Brown Girl* tells the truth—unerringly, sometimes painfully, sometimes beautifully—but always with consummate integrity.

Riffs is the third incarnation of one of Dennis Lee's most influential works. First published as a series of sixty-seven sections in *Descant* 39 (1982), it appeared as an eighty-eight-section volume by Brick Books in 1993. The present edition is based on a reprinted and somewhat revised sequence included in Lee's retrospective *Nightwatch* (1996). In his introduction, Paul Vermeersch locates *Riffs* at the centre of Lee's career both chronologically and stylistically, calling it "the book that unites his various voices and lyrical personae" and that provides "the key to understanding the evolution of one of the most extraordinary bodies of work in contemporary English poetry." *Riffs* grew out of Lee's middle-aged love affair and its aftermath, the individual lines later supplanting, through the prolific spontaneity of their nocturnal composition, the affair's erotically addictive qualities. Lee remarks in the book's afterword, based on a 1993 interview with Donna Bennett and Russell Brown, that the original *Descant* publication—with which he was not entirely satisfied—had to gestate over a decade until he discovered that the key to balancing its lyric spontaneity and narrative linearity lay in the device of turning the real love affair into a fictitious, adulterous one by recasting his partner as a married woman, and by interposing deliberately constructed connecting poems between the spontaneous riff lyrics. The resultant sequence, with its inventive and compelling jazz cadences, is poetically compelling and convincing, keeping the reader amidst the affair's sensations but also achieving periodically the necessary distance to carry it to its inevitable, but ultimately graceful, conclusion. The hunger he suffers for his partner is apparent in such vivid lines as these:

. . . there's this
gravitational yank across the city: I would
drive through walls to get near you
just to be near you . . .

And these, an extended verbal improvisation:

I
had no hope of you, your

lissome stretch in bed, your
wit your gab your *areté* your life-on-the-line

embrace, sweet lean to graciousness your
curve in the mind your melt your
fathoming goodness . . .

The jealousy, pain, and regret that he feels during later stages of the relationship's disintegration are no less effectively portrayed. The final cadence, conjuring the breaching "dolphins of need," is brilliant. With their nod to the eighty-eight keys of the piano, the sections achieve an overall harmony evincing a fine combination of both inspiration and craft.

Transmissions and Translations

Raoul Fernandes
Transmitter and Receiver. Nightwood $18.95

Helen Hajnoczky
Magyarázni. Coach House $18.95

Reviewed by Philip Miletic

Language is a funny thing. We grow up with it as we grow up in it. Perhaps we may be exposed to only one language, but often other languages sit on the peripheries of the tongue and/or ear and are learned to varying degrees of success. And throughout all this time, we use language to make ourselves understood to others as much as to make sense of ourselves. Helen Hajnoczky's *Magyarázni* and Raoul Fernandes' *Transmitter and Receiver* each approach this aspect of language from different angles, attempting to move beyond any perceived communication breakdowns and to revel in the communication that occurs between people, machines, things, cultures, and languages.

The title of Hajnoczky's second book, *Magyarázni*, is a Hungarian term that translates as "Make it Hungarian." Certainly, throughout *Magyarázni*, Hajnoczky makes the English language Hungarian, attempting to make connections between the two languages as one does when one grows up with two languages—with slippages of meaning ("blurred / and bubbling"), similarities between sounds and spelling ("All to tell, not too dull" and "Altatódal"), and the confusion when learning both ("no letters, but caught / in your throat, you can / read your heart so well"). The poems are organized alphabetically, each poem beginning with a letter from the Hungarian and/or English language and accompanied by beautiful Hungarian-inspired drawings that are visual poems of each letter. This organization further elicits resonances between the two languages—in orality/aurality, visuality, and the meaning of words. But Hajnoczky is also interested in the silences, the "rift, this fault line along the / continents." When the poems reach W, Y, and Z, there is no corresponding title in Hungarian because they are not "true Hungarian letter[s]." And the first poem, "Pronunciation Guide," contains many parenthetical remarks—"Not used in English." By opening and ending the book with these rifts and silences, Hajnoczky draws attention to the work and navigation that goes into mediating between two languages—carrying over a non-English cultural heritage into the English language—and the tensions that this work and navigation produce; it is a process, like *Magyarázni* itself, that requires you to "[w]ait for your / letters to bloom." The "you" in *Magyarázni* does not, as Oana Avasilichioaei claims, make the reader Hungarian, but it does cause readers to consider their positionality and the cultural backgrounds that have influenced their English, as well as to acknowledge

Hajnoczky's excellent work of making the English language Hungarian.

Fernandes' *Transmitter and Receiver* takes a broader approach to language—it is more concerned with communication. But what makes his book a compelling debut is its nuanced attention to communication—verbal and non-verbal—and to the fact that all living and non-living things in the world are both transmitters and receivers. This notion may be obvious, but I will admit that I sometimes think of "transmitter" and "receiver" as separate (and I blame a century of broadcasting for this). But whether or not you find the notion obvious, Fernandes approaches the subject in ways that surprise and delight; each poem considers aspects of quotidian communication in the world that are often overlooked. The opening poem does not begin with words, but rather place and image:

> You have this thing you can only explain
> by driving me out to the port at night
> to watch the towering cranes moving
> containers
> from ship to train.

Further in the book, there are poems about traces of communication in books ("the oil of our hands, the oil and sweat / of our shaking, paper-cut hands"), the struggles of writing poetry and communicating an experience or object poetically, the thoughts of an ATM as it communicates with people withdrawing money, and the communication that occurs with film, nature, objects, and life events. Despite its broad subject, *Transmitter and Receiver* is cohesive in the intimacy carefully created by Fernandes and in its attention to the relationality of communication. *Transmitter and Receiver* is more than an endearing and beautiful account of human communication—it is an intimate collection about an interconnected and communicating world.

Each of these texts provides a study of the relationality of communication—in *Magyarázni*, the relationality between English and Hungarian, and in *Transmitter and Receiver*, the relationality of communication between humans, animals, and things in the quotidian world. Each book reminds us that language is a funny thing.

Creative/Collective Resistance

Jon Gordon
Unsustainable Oil: Facts, Counterfacts and Fictions. U of Alberta P $45.00

Liza Piper and Lisa Szabo-Jones, eds.
Sustaining the West: Cultural Responses to Canadian Environments.
Wilfrid Laurier UP $42.99

Reviewed by Lucia Lorenzi

To whom do we turn to understand our relationship to petroculture and its non-negotiable impact on our environment? To whom do we look to imagine long-term solutions to our dependence on bitumen? If not politicians, policy makers, and those directly involved in the oil industry, then who? Jon Gordon, in *Unsustainable Oil: Facts, Counterfacts and Fictions,* as well as the numerous contributors to Liza Piper and Lisa Szabo-Jones' edited collection *Sustaining the West: Cultural Responses to Canadian Environments,* argue that we ought to turn to the humanities as one of the richest sources of critique and of creative resistance to dominant discourses about petroculture.

Jon Gordon's work is a necessary addition to the rich body of scholarly works on petroculture. Building on the work of Rob Nixon and Stephanie LeMenager, *Unsustainable Oil* not only positions literature about bitumen as a counter-discourse to corporate efforts to defend the idea of "sustainable development" of bitumen in Canada, but does so precisely by putting these works into conversation with governmental and corporate narratives about

the possibilities for the future. At the heart of Gordon's analysis is the argument that literature performs a "downward counterfactual function"—that is to say, it exposes the grim realities of bitumen extraction—but that in doing so, it also reaffirms the possibilities for other types of futures. Gordon begins his text with a narrative of his experiences flying to Orlando for a family vacation. In doing so, he not only questions the carbon footprint of such a trip—a thought that many of us might have also had in the course of our own travels, however fleetingly—but also the forms of violence involved in extracting the bitumen that powers these forms of mobility. Gordon queries: "How can the suffering be avoided? . . . What do we do with the guilt this creates? How can we forgive each other? Ourselves?"

While Gordon does not claim to have all the answers, he proposes that we turn to works of literature (plays, poetry, short stories) as a means of re-imagining the narratives that we tell ourselves about our embeddedness in petroculture. More specifically, Gordon works to trouble the term "sustainable development," asking readers to consider the realities of a resource that is both limited in quantity and heavily implicated in environmental damage, and to dwell in the "impossibility" of our current bitumen-dependent existence. Gordon's analyses of texts, ranging from Warren Cariou's "An Athabasca Story" to the collective *The Enpipe Line* project, demonstrate that literature performs not only a necessary diagnostic function (namely, to articulate the environmental and social costs of our dependence on bitumen), but also a vital prognostic function, through which we can begin to restore our understanding of the intimate relations between humans and their environment, and our hope for a post-bitumen future.

Liza Piper and Lisa Szabo-Jones' collection *Sustaining the West* takes a similar approach as Gordon's work does, insofar as it positions the work of the humanities as integral to conversations about scientific research and environmental policies. The collection, which has its roots in a three-day workshop organized by Piper and Szabo-Jones in Edmonton in 2011, not only offers a diverse and wide-ranging set of artistic and theoretical perspectives on Western Canada, but also does so in a fashion that speaks to the necessity of truly interdisciplinary and collective action. As Piper notes in her introduction, the various pieces in the collection were commented on and responded to by individuals working in "a different discipline or creative practice from those who were presenting." This commitment to interdisciplinarity offers a vital countermeasure to the ways in which different disciplines often find themselves siloed in their individual approaches to the environment, and, as such, *Sustaining the West* speaks to the power of collective resistance.

The focus of the collection is, as per its title, the West. However, this category is broadly conceived not as "a particular place" but as a "range of different environments." Central to the collection's success in addressing Western environmental concerns is the ways in which it explores how ideas of the West are bound up in notions of progress, ones which are often girded by colonial and capitalist ideologies. As indicated by the organizational headings of the volume, this range of "environments" at stake in ecocriticism and ecoactivism are not only material ones (as expressed in Part 3: Material Expressions), but also intellectual ones (Part 2: Constructing Knowledge) and relational ones (Part 1: Acting on Behalf Of). A cogent example of this approach to the idea of the West is Warren Cariou's essay "Wastewest: A State of Mind," in which he positions Western waste not only as an environmental toxin, but also as an ideological framework that exists in staunch

opposition to Indigenous ways of knowing. What would it mean for us, as Cariou posits, to "regain a sense of proximity to our waste, and thus a responsibility for it?" Other essays in the collection similarly explore the layered multiplicities of environmental concerns, and do so by presenting a vast range of poetic and scholarly voices.

Environmental work is difficult work. It is difficult because of the ways it often conflicts with and runs up against corporate and/or academic interests, and difficult because it must engage with a crisis whose effects are both currently unfolding and as of yet unforetold. Both *Unsustainable Oil: Facts, Counterfacts and Fictions* and *Sustaining the West: Cultural Responses to Canadian Environments* take on this challenging work, and in doing so, demonstrate that a rich critical and creative network of humanities-based artists and critics is integral to both ecocritical conversation and ecological action.

Quand le destin dépasse la vie

Daniel Grenier
L'année la plus longue. Le Quartanier 27,95 $
Reviewed by Daniel Laforest

On n'écrit plus guère de romans qui visent à embrasser des destins en entier. À qui croirait que c'est là un manque d'ambition de la part des écrivains, il nous faut répondre que non. Les écrivains ont tous de l'ambition à revendre. Mais ils sont rares, très rares, à posséder le talent requis pour dépeindre non pas simplement l'idée d'un destin, mais avant tout le sentiment qui l'accompagne et qui est celui d'une vie vécue d'un bout à l'autre à l'intérieur d'un monde lui-même emporté dans sa course. Daniel Grenier a ce talent. Il le possède avec une évidence éclatante, et même déconcertante. Déconcertante car *L'année la plus longue* est un roman qui procure ce qu'il y a de plus précieux au lecteur. Et ça n'arrive pas tous les jours. Je parle de l'étonnement devant une forme de récit neuve et de la stupéfaction conséquente dans la rencontre d'une intelligence si clairement *littéraire* — c'est-à-dire si consciente de l'art qu'elle accomplit dans la langue et dans l'imagination — sans pour autant que n'émane d'elle autre chose qu'une grande générosité. Avec *L'année la plus longue* le critique n'a plus trop envie de jouer le jeu des amarres culturelles. Littérature québécoise? Bien sûr. Canadienne? Mais oui. Et l'américanité, la francophonie? Oui, tout ça aussi. L'art est maitrisé à son comble. Daniel Grenier est un écrivain crucial. Et *L'année la plus longue* est son premier roman. Ne l'ont précédé qu'un recueil de nouvelles (remarqué il faut le dire) et un court récit, publiés également au Quartanier. Alors de quoi s'agit-il? Grenier a imaginé un dispositif qui relève quelque peu du surnaturel mais qui malgré cela n'affecte en rien le réalisme de son histoire : il a transformé la nature du personnage romanesque. En faisant naître deux des siens, Aimé et Thomas, un 29 février, il a quadruplé leur durée de vie, pour peu qu'on accepte que le scandale de la mort et des générations puisse devenir aussi arbitraire que la convention des calendriers bissextiles. Qui plus est le premier personnage est l'ancêtre de second, ce qui donne un tour génétique à l'affaire dont l'issue du récit fera un usage qui rappelle *Les particules élémentaires* de Michel Houellebecq. Le personnage d'Aimé nait dans des conditions miséreuses à Québec au lendemain de la Conquête anglaise. Sa survie est moins un miracle que l'image d'une résilience que les années innombrables de sa vie viendront concrétiser. Il se retrouve plus tard aux États-Unis, devient témoin de la Guerre civile et de ses massacres, accompagne pour un temps l'exil vers l'Ouest des nations autochtones évincées par le colonialisme sauvage. Il change plusieurs fois de noms et donc — Amérique oblige — d'origine

culturelle prétendue. Il fonde une association occulte pour rassembler ceux nés en marge du temps comme lui. Il voit passer l'existence entière de plusieurs femmes mais n'en aime peut-être au final qu'une seule. Il se fatigue enfin, s'efface, mais ne *vieillit* jamais vraiment. J'ai parlé de destin mais sans doute le personnage d'Aimé est-il trop hors-norme pour cela. Il a plutôt la dimension d'une légende, ce qu'il devient d'ailleurs contre son gré à travers l'obsession de son descendant Albert qui traque les documents épars sur lui, et surtout à travers son petit-fils Thomas, héritier du don pour la vie longue et personnage qui fera entrer le roman dans l'avenir (l'histoire se referme en 2047). Voilà pour le canevas du livre. Mais il y aurait tellement plus à dire : l'attention de Grenier pour les identités marginales, surtout autochtones, son impressionnante culture historique (Nouvelle-France, Conquête, loyalistes, Sécession américaine, tout y est avec un rendu irréprochable, un rythme passionnant), ses envolées ici lyriques, là philosophiques, ses descriptions de la violence, etc. En somme Daniel Grenier a de toute évidence écrit un livre pétri d'histoire — traversé par le souffle du temps lui-même — mais il a aussi écrit le meilleur roman du territoire paru depuis des décennies. *L'année la plus longue* est un grand roman de l'Amérique. C'est un grand roman tout court. Il faut le lire.

Citizen Lyric

Susan Holbrook
How to Read (and Write about) Poetry.
Broadview $24.99

Astrid Lohöfer
Ethics and Lyric Poetry: Language as World Disclosure in French Symbolism and Canadian Modernism.
Universitätsverlag Winter €58.00

Reviewed by Michael Roberson

In the introduction to her instructional guide, *How to Read (and Write about) Poetry*, Susan Holbrook draws two conclusions about the ethics of reading poetry. She posits:

> If language contours the way we think, then, all the language coming at you every day . . . is shaping who you are and how you see the world. If poetry can ignite awareness of letters and words in you, . . . then perhaps you can be more conscious of that shaping, become a more critical thinker about your world as you participate in it as a citizen.

Not surprisingly, Astrid Lohöfer's argument about the ethics of lyric poetry rests on a similar supposition about the demands and effects of poetry's formal qualities—qualities that by virtue of engendering ambiguity and complexity equip poetry with the "ability . . . to unmask and challenge existing values and beliefs" and, through the process of attending to those qualities, "to effect changes in [the] moral and political mindset" of readers. In other words, for both Holbrook and Lohöfer, an effective poetry (hopefully) results in an affective ethics.

While these beliefs about the ethics of poetry might represent the only point of convergence between Holbrook's instructional guide and Lohöfer's academic study, these beliefs raise the ultimate question about how form constitutes meaning in poetry. Holbrook does state and demonstrate how formal aspects must substantiate claims about meaning, but I think she does not

emphasize it enough. On the one hand, I applaud her intention to demystify poetry, where poetry's constitutive features do not hide meaning, but make meaning, and where part of poetry's longevity, charm, and reward arise out of poetry's resistance to acquiescing. On the other hand, I criticize her missing the opportunity to explore and demonstrate how poetry does not preclude any ways of approaching, and how interpretation can be both logical and experimental, but ultimately as satisfying as solving a mathematical equation. The challenge in writing a book about how to read, and eventually write about, poetry arises from attempting to describe a matter-of-fact engagement with something that defies such an engagement, and from remembering to assume the mentality of a non-literature person reading something foreign.

How to Read (and Write) about Poetry offers a loose "how to"—more summary than instructional guide—at the beginning, followed by an introduction, a series of ten chapters on different formal or thematic concerns, a brief guide about meter, and a section about writing, with a sample essay. Overall, Holbrook's formal and thematic selections—which range from canonical to experimental, and include a balance of gender, time frame, and race—represent a fairly concise and thorough picture of poetry. While I appreciate her discussions of exemplary poems and the "Research Tips" she offers to enhance reading, the probing questions she offers to initiate conversation about further examples often seem like missed opportunities to practically apply "new skills." Her chapter on sonnets, by example, ends by asking students to "[c]onsider the ways the following poems engage with the traditional form." Why not ask students to apply certain concepts—quatrain vs. octet, rhyme scheme, romantic conceit—to the variations so as to help reassure students that they understand how they make meaning?

With *Ethics and Lyric Poetry*, Astrid Lohöfer makes a valuable contribution to sluggish conversation about the ethics of poetic form. As expected from a published dissertation, her thorough review of discussions about ethics and aesthetics, the ethics of reading, and the ethics of lyric poetry in particular, offers a valuable resource. In those discussions, she identifies the downfalls of both what she refers to as the "neo-Aristotelian" and the "postmodern" approaches to an ethics of literature and reading. The former envisions literature as demonstrative of, if not prescriptive about, how to live morally and considers the reading of literature instructive in that regard. The latter envisions literature as any other discourse, hindered by the inevitably ambiguous, unreliable, and ideologically determined nature of all language, and considers the reading of literature illustrative in representing that fact, and thereby consciousness-raising about being suspicious of any normalizing discourse. Few proponents of either approach have done justice to accounting for the ethics of lyric poetry, specifically how formal devices like lineation, rhyme, irony, and metaphor augment how lyrics can function ethically. In what amounts to a third and synthetic approach, Lohöfer turns to Martin Heidegger and Paul Ricœur to argue how the particularities of lyric poetry, primarily metaphor, enable poetry "to provide alternative views of reality that move beyond established ways of thinking and understanding." Lohöfer uses this approach in the second half of her book to offer nuanced readings of Baudelaire and Rimbaud, on the one hand, and F. R. Scott and Dorothy Livesay, on the other—readings that demonstrate lyrical language problematizing and broadening how the world might be seen.

Like much of the criticism that engages a history of poetry and ethics, Lohöfer's discussion provides a cursory account of how that relationship changes over time. She

leaps, for example, from the Greeks to Kant, and then to Nietzsche. Understandably, that lineage shows the gradual division between ethics and aesthetics in philosophy—a division that accounts for readings of Symbolism and Modernism that her readings hope to correct—but I would have liked a more thorough history outlining the changing definition of both poetry and ethics. And while her Continental bias, and the demands of a dissertation committee, force her reliance on Heidegger and Ricœur, why does she not even mention P. B. Shelley? In his *Defence*, he characterizes the language of poets as "vitally metaphorical; that is, it marks the before unapprehended relations of things." Is this not essentially her definition of both ethics and lyric poetry—the difference between which Lohöfer often muddies? In fact, she does not explicitly define ethics except as a function or result of a metaphorical heuristic, i.e., an expanded vision of the world via lyrical language. She works so diligently to apply Heidegger and Ricœur without, it would seem, recognizing or exploring how she amalgamates the ethical approaches she criticizes.

Literature as Politics

Michael Keren
Politics and Literature at the Turn of the Millennium. U of Calgary P $34.95

Gillian Whitlock
Postcolonial Life Narratives: Testimonial Transactions. Oxford UP $31.95

Reviewed by Asma Sayed

Both Michael Keren's and Gillian Whitlock's scholarly works, although dealing with different genres—fiction and nonfiction, respectively—offer us interesting and engaging perspectives on the study of humanitarian crises—genocide, poverty, violence, terrorism—and argue that literature can be an important medium for social activism and political engagement and awareness.

Whitlock's *Postcolonial Life Narratives: Testimonial Transactions* brings together the fields of postcolonialism and life narrative. It is a study of slave narratives, letters, memoirs, journals, biographies, and testimonial narratives from Africa, Canada, Australia, the Caribbean, and India. Drawing inspiration from postcolonial scholars such as Frantz Fanon, Robert J. C. Young, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Edward Said, and Achille Mbembe, and from others in the field of life writing, such as Sidonie Smith, Julia Watson, Kay Schaffer, and Bart Moore-Gilbert, Whitlock moves "beyond nation and narration to track transnational and transcultural passages of life narrative, its volatile currency and value, and its changing technologies of the self." Whitlock draws various narratives together through

> contiguity, co-location, chronology, appropriation, and remediation to pursue an active engagement with textual transactions and social activism: the politics of abolitionism, anti-apartheid, indigeneity, feminism, environmentalism, refugee rights, for example.

Whitlock contends that life narratives are critical to understanding human rights and to expanding cultures of care and sympathy. As she rightly asserts, subaltern voices usually struggle to be heard. As such, she includes voices from varied cultures, including slave narratives associated with abolition and emancipation campaigns, South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission testimony and memoir, testimonies of Dalit activism, and Indigenous testimony about the Stolen Generations and residential schools in Australia and Canada. Moving beyond the Enlightenment archetype of selfhood which represented a Western, white man, and in an attempt to decolonize the subject, the book focuses on many marginalized pieces of writing. For instance, she compares *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*

and Captain Watkin Tench's *A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay*, and argues that while the two narratives draw from different experiences, they both call on readers to bear witness to developments in the "New World." Many other case studies—such as biographies of Saartjie Baartman, Woollarawarre Bennelong's letter, and testimonies of rape survivors, among others—are analyzed in a postcolonial context. Whitlock's research makes an important contribution to the study of literature as a site of social change and activism. The groundbreaking scholarship offers readers a new perspective from which to study life narratives.

In *Politics and Literature at the Turn of the Millennium*, Keren discusses fictional writing in a socio-political context. He brings together the seemingly disparate fields of politics and literature and suggests that fiction can help with understanding political issues and may be a good pedagogical tool to use in social sciences classrooms. Keren focuses on novels by some of the top-notch novelists of our times: José Saramago, Cormac McCarthy, Gil Courtemanche, Anosh Irani, Haruki Murakami, Günter Grass, André Brink, John le Carré, Sayed Kashua, David Grossman, Margaret Atwood, and Yann Martel. In his introduction, Keren elaborates on theoretical frameworks within which he situates his study: John Kenneth Galbraith's concept of the "technostructure," Amitai Etzioni's model of the "active society," and Karl Deutsch's ideas about the "learning capacity" of political organizations. Keren claims that these three scholars "pointed the way and set the conditions for social progress based on human knowledge and creativity." He suggests that political scientists can use literary texts to teach political theory in more accessible and interesting ways. He gives some examples: Franz Kafka's works can be used to teach Max Weber's ideas about bureaucratic structures; George Orwell's portrayal of totalitarianism may aid understanding of Carl Friedrich's political theories; Milan Kundera's novels could help with the explanation of the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe. Keren offers many more examples, and reasons that while novels present imaginary worlds and do not have the same kind of content as scholarly essays, they help "provide insights into the existing order and a standard for [political order's] evaluation." Keren is very clear in his approach; he is in no way suggesting that political theories are not valuable on their own. Rather, he argues, imaginary works may afford alternative representations, and "the aesthetic qualities of literature may be used to enrich political inquiry." The novels that Keren discusses all have political relevance. For example, in his discussion of *The Cripple and His Talismans*, he looks at how Irani, a South Asian Canadian novelist, uses magical realism to highlight the world of Bombay's poverty-stricken slums. Keren suggests that Irani's work allows for an alternative understanding of the politics of the slum, as opposed to what readers may get through United Nations reports, urban studies, and documentary films.

While each book takes a different theoretical approache, they both provide useful pedagogical tools for introducing literary works in interdisciplinary courses. For example, both testimonial literature and novels can be used in political science or gender studies courses. Keren's and Whitlock's books will be of interest to scholars working in the areas of postcolonial literature, humanitarian literature, ethics of care, and the social sciences in general.

Three Very Different Kinds of Laughter

Bryden MacDonald
Odd Ducks. Talonbooks $17.95

Morris Panych
The Shoplifters. Talonbooks $17.95

Marcus Youssef and James Long
Winners and Losers. Talonbooks $16.95

Reviewed by Shelley Scott

For those familiar with Bryden MacDonald's intense and unconventional earlier plays, such as *Whale Riding Weather* (nominated for the Governor General's Award in 1994), his newest work, *Odd Ducks*, will come as a surprise. Commissioned and premiered in 2012 by the Chester Playhouse Summer Theatre Festival in Nova Scotia, and dedicated to the playwright's mother ("She loves a good laugh"), *Odd Ducks* is described on the cover as "a romp." That's as good a description as any for this breezy, light-as-air comedy about four forty-something patrons of the Odd Duck Pub in the east coast village of Tartan Cross. The east coast setting and the familiar, humorous bickering bring to mind Daniel MacIvor's *Marion Bridge*, while the emphasis on easily accessible entertainment evokes the popular comedies of Norm Foster or any number of television sitcoms. Much of the play's enjoyment would come alive in production—in, for example, the use of frequent "snippets of jukebox pop songs"—and would rely on skilful comic actors to make the four characters likeable as they move seamlessly from enacting various moments in their history together to addressing the audience directly. We are told repeatedly that Ambrose is both charming and irritating, an unemployed "roguish man-child" who dresses and behaves like a rock star, but it would be up to the actor to demonstrate that level of charisma. Ambrose's foil and drinking buddy is solid, unexciting Freddy, who can't seem to get a break at work or with women. Freddy lends Ambrose money and listens to his self-absorbed monologues with increasing exasperation. The two "boys" are paralleled by the "gals," Mandy and Estelle. Ambrose carries on an affair with Mandy, trophy wife of a rich invalid named Walter, whom we hear offstage but never see (he has some of the play's funniest lines) and who dies early on. Ambrose then breaks up with Mandy at Walter's funeral, precipitating the play's big "incident": Mandy gets drunk and shoots Ambrose at the Odd Duck—although, this being the kind of comedy it is, she in fact only grazes him with a BB gun. There to comfort Mandy is her maid, Estelle, a lesbian with a mysterious past in the big city. Estelle's sexuality, and some hints in the script, lead to the over-the-top finish: Freddy rejects Ambrose's sexual advances and the two "boys roll around beating the snot out of each other: clothes get ripped," while "the girls make out passionately: clothes begin to fall away." One could argue that MacDonald employs a useful strategy by winning over a summer theatre audience with the antics of conventional, recognizable characters and then inserting potentially risqué queer content, but any mildly subversive agenda is secondary to having "a good laugh."

Morris Panych's latest comedy, *The Shoplifters*, features a similar cast—two men, two women—but aims more explicitly for a social message along with the laughs. Premiered in 2014 at the Arena Stage in Washington, DC, *The Shoplifters* was a New Play Award winner from the Los Angeles-based Edgerton Foundation, which allows extended rehearsal time for American productions. The play had its Canadian debut in Calgary the next year. Panych's play takes place in one location in real time and, unlike the other two plays under consideration here that engage with the audience, it adheres to strict realism and a conventional structure of scenes divided by blackouts within two acts. Veteran security guard

Otto and overzealous new guard Dom have apprehended veteran shoplifter Alma and her extremely nervous accomplice Phyllis, and the play unfolds in a series of interrogations and conversations between various combinations of the four. Dom—who is certainly comic but also a bit scary and out of control—tries to convert Phyllis to Christianity, while Alma tries to convert her to a greater sense of social activism and personal daring. Phyllis, however, is content with her modest life circumstances and leaves the scene at the end of the play no different than when she entered; similarly, Dom is content to continue in his simplistic understanding of right and wrong, albeit as a parking lot security guard. Otto and Alma reveal their long-standing cat-and-mouse game as guard and criminal has been, at least in part, played for the benefit of each other. They become a romantic couple in the course of the play; he has protected her throughout her career of theft and in turn, she makes sure he gets to keep the job he was about to lose for his liberal attitude towards thieves. Alma has been stealing in order to provide affordable sandwiches in her low-income neighbourhood, and both Alma and Otto have come to see that have-nots taking from a wealthy corporation may have justification. Perhaps the political message and economic argument could be made more pointed in performance, but social critique remains muted by the fast-paced banter and low-stakes character arcs.

Winners and Losers by Marcus Youssef and James Long is a much different kind of comedy than the first two plays, one in which uncomfortable laughter at witty banter devolves into shock at the personal attacks we witness between the two performers. The impact on the spectator comes from what Jenn Stephenson, in her introduction, calls "authenticity effects." Youssef and Long play themselves—Marcus and Jamie—and the play's performance is a re-creation of a transcribed dialogue they improvised, with some parts of the show still open to improvisation. Premiered in Richmond, British Columbia, in 2012, the play has since been performed many times internationally, co-produced by the two artists' own companies, Neworld and Theatre Replacement. We as readers or viewers are initially amused by their offhand and arbitrary pronouncements on a range of random topics; we are participating in a kind of game or event. Stephenson places the play in the contemporary practice of Theatre of the Real: the two actors do real things, like play Ping-Pong and drink beer, so that when they eventually turn to a critique of each other as a winner or a loser, it feels personally real and truly dangerous. In its indictment of male competitiveness, the play recalls Daniel MacIvor's *Never Swim Alone*, and the structure is reminiscent of *The Noam Chomsky Lectures* by Daniel Brooks and Guillermo Verdecchia. While race and class issues are central throughout, one could argue that the final, most damaging accusations are about personal relationships between parents and children, so that, ultimately, one wonders what overarching point has been made for the audience to take away. The play feels thrilling and new in a way the other two plays under consideration do not, but in each there is an attempt to overthrow the expected: Estelle and Mandy and Alma and Otto overcome class differences to find love. Perhaps in *Winners and Losers*, too, we see the friendship between the real-life Marcus and Jamie as a testament to the ability to collaborate and create, even across acknowledged (real-life) differences.

Oratories Serve

Lee Maracle; Smaro Kamboureli, ed.
Memory Serves: Oratories. NeWest $24.95

Reviewed by Susan Gingell

Stó:lō-Métis orator, author, and unabashed feminist Lee Maracle announces in the subtitle of *Memory Serves: Oratories* its difference from previous volumes in NeWest's Writer as Critic series. Of course, the book's materiality means it cannot literally be what its subtitle professes, thus provoking from the outset questions about the nature of the genre. Maracle's Preface explains her multistage process for producing the speeches "turned-essay[s]," though the "new kind of prose" she claims to be writing may not be altogether novel, considering the history of print textualizing of orature from all contexts, and Indigenous people's writing down of Indigenous "storying up" globally. However, in foregrounding the oral as Maracle does, she points to her thinking's foundations and Stó:lō-derived method of working, enriching our sense of oral-written hybridity beyond style and content to process. Moreover, when editor Smaro Kamboureli explains that their editing process included the pair reading texts aloud to each other, she reveals another loop in the dance between oral and written that produced *Memory Serves*.

The book is more meta-oratory—a coming to theory, to use Maracle's own formulation in her best-known essay "Oratory" (included here)—than it is *literary* criticism or theory. But then Maracle's Stó:lō-based senses of how stories and songs/poems are created and of what the works do differ from Western understandings of the author and creative process, and from any takes on literary function and value, centred aesthetically or didactically.

Stó:lō, Maracle tells readers, produce works communally from an oral base and with frequent feedback loops, but with the primary teller's or singer's/poet's individual stamp. Stó:lō oratories provide ample opportunity for listeners or readers to co-create, arise from an ethics of non-intervention and caretaking of all sentient beings and their environments, and are more concerned with transformation than conflict and resolution. These creations are meant to prompt reflection on whether the direction of an individual and her people accords with who the individual and people understand themselves to be, and what they formulate as "the good life." The ramifications for Maracle's view of what constitutes an appropriate response to Indigenous literature are that such a response depends on critics having a firm grounding in the oratory of the authors' cultures, including its genres, and requires consideration of the literature's efficacy in stimulating thought about how individuals and societies govern themselves to support wellbeing for all.

While Maracle does valuably address her own and other Indigenous writers' work, repeatedly lauding that of other women, her most detailed and enlightening critical comments are ironically focused on male creations. Observing that Tomson Highway's *The Rez Sisters* "makes us want something more from our lives . . . not just [to] resist the oppression, but also the . . . being stuck," she praises Highway's "revolution[ary]" re-making of the Trickster of oral tradition into a "transformer" who "inspires a different less cataclysmic, social relationship between Canada and Indigenous women." The sole oratory she dedicates to a single work centres on *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*, by male filmmakers at Inuit production company Isuma, which she values for being directed to Inuit but collaterally serving all Indigenous people. It does so by "mapping the death of cultural belief and community" that occurs when the shaman Aua complies with the Danish anthropologist's request to "download" stories, thus changing the way Aua's

family relates to the very stories that sustained them. In both cases, Maracle focuses on Indigenous oratory in new media serving communities through the transmission and transformation of Indigenous knowledge in contemporary contexts.

While Maracle privileges Indigenous-to-Indigenous communication, she writes that *Memory Serves* is a book "my community . . . [and] Canadians" need. Her volume serves our mutual needs in identifying a path to peace and reconciliation through shared cultivation of the non-interventionist caretaking ethic, though Maracle is clear the settler state must make reparations for appropriation of Indigenous resources and other damages. It serves by writing down Indigenous "storying up" of events, and by providing Indigenous peoples with arguments for "rematriation" and Canadians with considerable insight into another way of being and creating. The book also richly serves scholars interested in memory; ecological thought; colonization and decolonization; resilience and reconciliation; the interface between orature and writing; and Stó:lō philosophy and culture, especially the verbal arts. We can be grateful, then, to Kamboureli for prompting Maracle to gather and re-work the book's seventeen "oratories." Readers would have been even better served, however, by more careful copy-editing—or more robust responses to it—and by a chronological arrangement and/or complete dating of the oratories to enhance understanding of the development of Maracle's thought.

Struggles For and With Indigenous Poetics

Neal McLeod, ed.
Indigenous Poetics in Canada.
Wilfrid Laurier UP $29.59

Mareike Neuhaus
The Decolonizing Poetics of Indigenous Literatures.
U of Regina P $29.59

Reviewed by Nazeer Patel

This non-Indigenous reviewer approached two works—Mareike Neuhaus' *The Decolonizing Poetics of Indigenous Literatures* and a collection of essays edited by Neal McLeod, *Indigenous Poetics in Canada*—cognizant of the fact that the meaning and purpose of Indigenous poetics are creative acts that, regardless of how earnest and engaged the reviewer, are centrally concerned with issues and concepts that can never be fully appreciated or understood by non-Indigenous readers. But this does not mean that these books should only find Indigenous audiences, or that their work on Indigenous poetics is intended only for a specific group. Instead, both works demonstrate that "engagement" with Indigenous poetics is fraught with difficulties and challenges (especially for non-Indigenous readers) and demands more than a cursory understanding of what Indigenous poetics means. It is in this spirit that I hope to converse with these works.

Both books have great relevance for Indigenous peoples in Canada who continue to live in an existential and practical colonial project. Both raise several important questions that, when taken individually, address the meaning and purpose of Indigenous poetics; but when taken in their totality, these questions point to a central concern. Namely, how do Indigenous poetics confront and challenge the colonial project, and lead not only to a spiritual (artistic) emancipation, but to real political and individual agency? For at its heart,

Indigenous poetics is not simply aesthetic expression, but like all good art, it has a political imperative. McLeod confirms this: "Indigenous poetics is inherently political because it is the attempt to hold on to an alternative centre of consciousness, holding its own position, despite the crushing weight of English and French." This is relevant for Indigenous peoples, especially considering that the attempted colonial destruction of their cultures was facilitated by the wilful nullification of Indigenous languages. The first step toward "decolonization," then, necessitates the re-acquisition/re-affirmation of Indigenous languages. Neuhaus' contribution is most welcome here.

Neuhaus raises important questions: what is Indigenous poetics without Indigenous languages? How can Indigenous stories and poetry fully articulate an Indigenous experience using the colonizer's language? The short answer is they cannot. Neuhaus thus seeks a corrective to this problem by offering the following definition of Indigenous poetics: "I think of Indigenous poetics primarily as a way of making sense of Indigenous expressions, as a set of tools that readers may use when they read Indigenous texts—as a map, if you will, that can help guide their readings." This map or method for reading Indigenous texts focuses on "holophrastic reading," showing that although there are many different types of Indigenous literatures and expressions, they all generally share one dominant feature: holophrasis. Holophrases are, according to Neuhaus, "grammatically complete sentences or clauses because they include an expression of both the verb and the subject, and if applicable, its object(s)." The first part of the book presents a primer on finding "holophrastic traces" and "relational word bundles"—important features of Indigenous languages. Her central aim is to show how to "think outside the English language while simultaneously using that language."

Neuhaus' book is challenging and daunting, as it should be. As a manual or method, it requires more than a single reading. It is incumbent upon the non-Indigenous reader to struggle with these difficulties, and not to assume Indigenous narratives can be adequately conveyed in English. Neuhaus' method is best used as a constant reference and reminder of how to "read" Indigenous literatures written in English: "The presence of holophrastic traces in Indigenous writing in English is based on negation: holophrastic traces evoke (the use of) a language structure that does not exist in English grammar. And yet, holophrastic traces remain significant elements of discourse." Most importantly, holophrastic reading has particular "discourse consequences" that speak directly to important characteristics of Indigenous languages. First, the holophrastic "nature" of Indigenous languages demonstrates the importance of "evidentiality," or "the process of identifying or qualifying one's (source of) knowledge." Second, Indigenous literatures employ figurative uses of language. And third, holophrases allow for a "minimalism of text" to tell a story.

All these elements combine and allow the reader (the follower of the map) to engage with Indigenous literatures and see the influence of ancestral languages, to see how Indigenous narrative structures differ from their Western counterparts, to accept the "sovereignty" of Indigenous literatures, and to understand how these literatures contribute to healing the historical trauma that continues to affect Indigenous peoples. These elements are given life as Neuhaus moves beyond a "method" of reading toward a substantive consideration of the works of Richard Wagamese, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Louise Bernice Halfe, amongst others, to illustrate how holophrastic reading can contribute to a fuller engagement with Indigenous literatures written in English.

Neuhaus' work is thus a useful complement to McLeod's collection of essays, which defines Indigenous poetics as

"a theoretical activity grounded in narrative and language." The essays in this volume challenge how we understand and articulate poetry from an "Anglo-môniyâw interpretative matrix." The book is divided into the poetics of memory, place, performance, and medicine. These divisions do not signify different categories of analysis or meaning, but show how Indigenous poetics are artistic, cultural forms of expression that speak to rich histories and traditions and are also "political" acts of personal and communal "decolonization."

The French historian Ernest Renan famously argued that, "[f]orgetfulness, and I would even say historical error, are essential in the creation of a nation." The creative acts of Indigenous poets help confront the colonial "forgetting" necessary for Canada's creation and perpetuation. The poetic endeavour from an Indigenous perspective addresses what Warren Cariou refers to in his essay as "wilful forgetting, a choice to not look at something that might destabilize Canada's wholesome idea of itself." Cariou's essay, "Edgework: Indigenous Poetics as Re-Placement," examines the work of Marvin Francis to show how Francis' poetry breaks down boundaries that "enabl[e] the relatively wealthy and privileged to enjoy their place in the nation without being bothered by the horrific inequities that typify colonial reality on this continent." The poet as "edge walker" is able to challenge and complicate these divisions, thereby confronting the very nature and meaning of Canada.

But this remembering cannot be done without understanding the central role that the storyteller plays in Indigenous cultures. Essays by Duncan Mercredi, Janet Rogers, and Lindsay "Eekwol" Knight all speak to what Mercredi terms the "keeper of the fire," the storyteller and his/her role in both narrating and cataloguing the lived experiences of Indigenous nations, but also in pushing back against the "forgetfulness" foisted upon Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The "stories" of residential schools are most powerfully understood (heard) through an appreciation of the oral traditions of Indigenous peoples. Mercredi writes:

> Their stories were told in a manner consistent with the way stories were related when I was a child. These were emotional, gut-wrenching stories, told from memories and hearts of the storytellers so that they would have the most impact but, more importantly, they were told in such a way that they would remain embedded in the memories of those hearing them for the first time. They were poetic, with a rhythm that would rise and fall, depending on the emotion in which the story was told.

This circles back to the characteristics of Indigenous literatures identified by Neuhaus—figurative use of language, minimalism of text, and the qualification of knowledge—that shape how the storyteller recounts the narrative and allow for "silences" to bring the listener into the story. The memories of residential schools thus become at once historical and contemporary, creating the consciousness necessary for the decolonization that Indigenous poetics affirm.

Essays by Waaseyaa'sin Christine Sy and Alyce Johnson demonstrate how a unique connection to the land contributes to decolonization. Sy's spoken word poem about the sugar bush opens up a "personal decolonization" through a revised understanding of the "erotic." Sy also addresses the question posed at the beginning of this review. She writes: "The point is to inscribe contemporary Indigenous poetics with the work of decolonization so that we may reduce cultural voyeurism or tokenism and even prompt critical praxis in a non-Indigenous audience; prevent the recreation of a new kind of romantic Indian, the romantic Indigenous person . . . ; and nurture the personal in decolonizing practice." I take

this to mean an engagement—the type offered by Neuhaus' work—that appreciates and seeks to understand both the limits and possibilities that Indigenous poetics offers, without degenerating into the type of crude cultural co-optation that has characterized the "Canadian" relationship to Indigenous cultures.

Both Neuhaus' and McLeod's books show that Indigenous poetics offer a powerful cultural, aesthetic struggle against colonialism while creating discourses that non-Indigenous people must rightfully struggle with to appreciate and understand Indigenous narratives in Canada.

Out of the Silence

Edmund Metatawabin and Alexandra Shimo

Up Ghost River: A Chief's Journey Through the Turbulent Waters of Native History. Knopf $32.00

Rick Monture

We Share Our Matters: Two Centuries of Writing and Resistance at Six Nations of the Grand River. U of Manitoba P $27.95

Reviewed by Suzanne James

Revisiting, re-envisioning, and revising the histories of First Nations peoples in Canada is both a personal and a politically-charged act for Edmund Metatawabin, Cree writer and former Chief of the Fort Albany First Nation, and Mohawk academic Rick Monture.

Co-written with journalist Alexandra Shimo, Edmund Metatawabin's memoir, *Up Ghost River: A Chief's Journey Through the Turbulent Waters of Native History*, effectively conveys the alienation and intimidation of a childhood lost to a notoriously harsh residential school in the 1950s and early 1960s, followed by more than a decade of alcohol abuse. The outrage in Metatawabin's account is poignant, yet tempered, as he recounts horrific experiences that—even after the revelations of Canada's 2010-2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission—both surprise and disturb. His "silence began in 1955" and became (as it did for so many of his people) "an ever-present companion." Breaking this silence and recovering his lost voice as he relates his private—and now published/public—memories proves both advantageous and therapeutic for Metatawabin, his family, and his community.

Nevertheless, the story of Metatawabin's decline is sadly familiar as "[w]ith an addict's rage," he starts to "destroy all that . . . [he] had built: home, family and career." His recovery is attributed to traditional Indigenous teachings and practices that enable him to recover his Cree identity, though interestingly—especially from a Western perspective—this identity is presented as a collective: in Metatawabin's words, "My identity is other people." He initially struggles with a rehabilitation program that insists he come to terms with his identity in isolation, yet finds support in a Cree healer who contextualizes the alcoholism of disenfranchised First Nations men and women such as himself.

For Metatawabin, the Idle No More movement embodies a (perhaps) idealized collectivity and affirmation of Indigenous identity, and he closes this memoir by challenging readers with a series of concrete suggestions for change: abolish the Indian Act, support Native sovereignty, advocate for political change, help youth in education, target youth suicide, and support Indigenous artists.

In contrast to Metatawabin's very personal narrative, Rick Monture's academic text, *We Share Our Matters: Two Centuries of Writing and Resistance at Six Nations of the Grand River*, explores First Nations perspectives and issues of identity through a revisionist historical account of the Haudenosaunee, commonly referred to as the Iroquois or Six Nations. As Monture notes, the Haudenosaunee have been extensively

studied in Western anthropological, historical, political, environmental, and linguistic accounts, yet—until very recently—never critically analyzed from anything other than an outsider perspective. Focusing on letters, speeches, poems, and songs produced by members of the Six Nations, as well as select accounts by colonial writers purporting to convey Haudenosaunee perspectives, this work explores the complex ways in which prominent members of the community negotiated with European culture and the colonial government, represented traditional beliefs and Indigenous philosophy, and attempted to assert the sovereignty of their community. The latter is particularly interesting as colonial discourse so often negates any form of First Nations nationalism or sovereignty, or subsumes it within the framework of Canadian nation building, as Emily Pauline Johnson (one of the focal points of Monture's study) does here in "Brant: A Memorial Ode":

> To-day
> The Six Red Nations have their Canada,
> And rest we here, no cause for us to rise
> To seek protection under other skies

Monture explores the tension in works such as this memorial poem, interrogating the often-contested loyalties expressed by the Haudenosaunee writers he discusses, all of whom were the products of a formal Western education.

Monture opens his text with an overview of Haudenosaunee history and a discussion of their traditional worldview. This is followed by an analysis of the speeches, letters, and biographical accounts of the nineteenth-century Mohawk chief Joseph Brant (Thayendanegea), and a discussion of the often-contentious poetry of Emily Pauline Johnson (as exemplified in the previous paragraph). Monture then shifts outside of the community, providing a critique of Duncan Campbell Scott's highly influential accounts of Haudenosaunee issues at the turn of the twentieth century.

A discussion of the speeches, essays, and poems of Dawendine/Bernice Loft (1902-1997) takes the reader into more unfamiliar territory, as does the music of Jaime Robbie Robertson, who wrote for, and performed with, Bob Dylan and The Band in the 1960s. This is followed by a series of engaging accounts of Haudenosaunee writers leading up to the films and works of multimedia artist Shelley Niro.

Monture closes by reminding us that "[t]his is a book that will always be 'in progress'" as, for the Haudenosaunee, "the world is continually unfolding, changing, and developing." As well as providing a fascinating account of a people's philosophy, culture, and history so often misrepresented or unrepresented, *We Share Our Matters* exemplifies the ways in which the field of First Nations studies has the potential to challenge and enrich traditional Western academic culture. The many voices in this text now speak out of what has too often been a place of silence, resonating as does the voice of Edwin Metatawabin in *Up Ghost River*.

A Pixelated Paradigm

Anna Poletti and Julie Rak, eds.
Identity Technologies: Constructing the Self Online. U of Wisconsin P $24.95

Patrik Svensson and David Theo Goldberg, eds.
Between Humanities and the Digital. MIT $45.00

Reviewed by Justin Shaw

Identity Technologies: Constructing the Self Online and *Between Humanities and the Digital* discuss a central issue in defining the "digital humanities": to what extent are traditional humanistic concerns—pain, suffering, freedom, pleasure, happiness—taken into consideration in our increasingly abstract engagement with digital technologies? For some, this is a serious ethical issue

that will always require the insights of the traditional humanities, while for others the "digital" needs to break free from antiquity. Along these lines, these texts diverge in tone and content: *Identity Technologies* leaves an impression of reluctant yet cautious optimism, while *Between Humanities and the Digital* is anchored in the "digital" world, focusing on digital success stories and calling for investment in digital infrastructure.

Identity Technologies interrogates wide-eyed optimism for the "revolutionary" and "democratizing" potential of digital technologies, emphasizing that critical theory needs to situate such technologies within the histories of their production. This takes into consideration neoliberal discriminations based on gender, race, ethnicity, and class, which often impede the "democratic" participation of certain global citizens. Section 1, "Foundations," begins with Helen Kennedy's critique of this rhetoric of "democratization," arguing that offline discriminations are often transposed to online contexts. Lisa Nakamura extends this critique to the neoliberal commodification of cyberrace in "identity tourism." Similarly, Rob Cover challenges the "authenticity" of social network subjectivity, with Facebook allowing users to define themselves according to delimiting schemata of neoliberal intelligibility. Finally, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson ask whether digital extensions of human subjectivity will lead to posthuman liberation or neoliberal appropriation.

In Section 2, "Identity Affordances," Aimée Morrison argues that Facebook co-authors subjectivity through its pre-constituted affordances, which delimit users' authorial expression. Courtney Rivard also questions digital authorship, suggesting that the success and relative failure of the 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina digital archives reveal that archival production is always influenced by power relations. Laurie McNeill examines the affordances of creative self-expression and community building on *Smith*, a website dedicated to writing microfiction, arguing that its "democratic" image is undercut by its commodification of participants' stories into books, bypassing author royalties.

In Section 3, "Mediated Communities," Mary L. Gray explores how "coming out" as LGBTQ has been facilitated by online communities, especially for rural youth who face conservative social values and who lack visibile community. Olivia Banner examines how "lifelogging," promoted by PatientsLikeMe.com, creates biosocial communities of patients who track and share their symptoms, which problematically reduces embodied/experiential understanding to abstract data sets that are sold to medical corporations. In contrast, Alessandra Micalizzi, by examining an online perinatal death support group, shows how the Internet can serve as an identity technology in which communities can share personal narratives and gain recognition online that is otherwise denied in the offline world. The penultimate essay by Philippe Lejeune laments the devaluation of the expansive sense of time afforded by traditional forms of autobiography, suggesting that the nature of online communication—including its immediacy, revisionism, and brevity—"attacks" the ability to construct coherent life narratives.

Between Humanities and the Digital is a more expansive and in-depth volume that highlights the contemporary transition of humanities to the digital realm. In the first section, "The Field of Digital Humanities," Alan Liu and William G. Thomas outline how cost-cutting in neoliberalized universities encourages online courses, which traditional humanities departments have critiqued as dehumanizing. Along these lines, Todd Presner reasserts the fundamental importance of critical theory in the humanities, arguing that without it, the "digital humanities will largely ape

and extend the technological imaginary as defined by corporate needs and the bottom line." As critical theorists, Henry Jenkins suggests, humanities scholars should become better public intellectuals by getting involved in technology and adopting a more "citizenly discourse." Jenkins interviews Sherry Turkle, who sees public engagement as an antidote to current anxieties concerning technology, suggesting that people are "not happy and are genuinely searching for new ways of living with new technology." In contrast, Ian Bogost's polemic on the redundancy of the traditional humanities dismisses critical theory and thinking as "fashionable censure." However, David Theo Goldberg recasts the debate by simply asking, "what kind of humanists [should] we choose to be in and for our times[?]" In a technologically advanced culture, the answer is inevitably "digital." From that affirmation, the second section, "Inflecting Fields and Disciplines," moves into specific case studies of how the digital humanities are influencing contemporary fields. The breadth of application is wide: from digital interactive installations that revitalize medieval art forms, to "digital remixes" of media products as creative mashups, to critiques of gendered autocomplete results generated by Google's search algorithms, to immersive and interactive multimedia platforms that transport users to the "Global Middle Ages," to "cyber archaeology" that facilitates research in three-dimensional computer-generated environments, and to fMRI analyses of the brain while reading to better understand the processes of literary experience. All of the chapters on the practical applications of digital humanities are positive and gesture towards future research.

The third section, "Knowledge Production, Learning, and Infrastructure," defines the unique infrastructural needs of the digital humanities. Amy E. Earheart argues that digital humanities labs need to be both "real and virtual" and be "multipurpose, with activities ranging from research to pedagogy." Zephyr Frank examines a virtual laboratory project: an online recreation of Richard Pryor's hometown of Peoria, Illinois. The website was designed as an "alternative media" form that was "filled with links to primary documents and short filmed sequences designed to provide a visually rich narrative pathway into the material for novice users." Elizabeth Losh proposes that such "novice users" (i.e., students) should learn by actually creating "the bulk of course content" in a lab setting, a "utopian" pedagogical approach that "highlight[s] how new ideas around 'critical making' change the fundamentals of the production and consumption of knowledge." Closing the text, N. Katherine Hayles laments the "conservative" tenor of many commentators on the digital humanities, calling for a revolutionary embracing of the "nonconscious cognition" at the core of human reasoning that is replicated in current digital technologies.

The first text in this review, *Identity Technologies,* ends with a decidedly loose and philosophical interview with Lauren Berlant who envisions blogging as a productive crossover between the traditional humanities and the digital. In contrast, *Between Humanities and the Digital* makes a hard exit by focusing on digital humanities infrastructure. Svensson and Goldberg's decision to conclude on future hardware and productive spaces treats the question of the digital as if it's a foregone conclusion, and in many ways it is. While the inherent skepticism and ethical foundations of the traditional humanities will always remain vital to keeping "revolutionary" and "utopian" impulses in check, the digital world *has* been moving inexorably forward and the traditional humanities have to catch up to contemporary "human" concerns, which are increasingly linked to digital ways of being.

The Wild, Wild West

Rachel Rose
Marry & Burn. Harbour $18.95

Carolyn Smart
Careen. Brick $20.00

Reviewed by Andrea MacPherson

Carolyn Smart and Rachel Rose are both accomplished poets, and with *Careen* and *Marry & Burn*, we see this creative prowess at work. Smart and Rose are stylistically diverse poets, but they both explore the idea of "the west" in their new collections: *Careen* details the mythic story of Bonnie and Clyde, while *Marry & Burn* evokes the west coast of Canada.

In *Careen*, Smart tackles the well-known story of Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow, but she approaches the notorious outlaw narrative in a fresh manner, expanding her scope to include other, less well-known characters involved in the story of Bonnie and Clyde. Smart uses the thematic context to shape the collection, offering poems from the perspective of both Bonnie and Clyde, but also Buck and Blanche Barrow, various members of the Barrow gang, lawmen who were hunting the duo, and the father and son who ultimately betrayed Bonnie and Clyde. Presumably, Smart chose this approach to expand the constraints of a single theme for a collection; in many ways, she succeeds. However, there is also a sameness in voice to many of the poems, despite the beautiful lines and images contained within them.

The poems are contrasted by pieces of historical ephemera, including texts from posters and newspaper articles. These inclusions help to amplify the truth behind Smart's invented poems and the characters she occupies. There are also excerpts from Parker's own writing, as well as a detailed cast of characters, a nod to the extensive research necessary to the collection. Smart deftly uses the narrative poem to capture the desperation of the Dirty Thirties. Almost all the poems in this book are narrative in style, focusing on the underlying story behind the outlaws and those around them. The most lyric of the poems appear when exploring a specific moment in time, such as barrel fires during a break from the spree, or the clothes worn when they were finally captured, as witnessed in "the clothes Blanche ran with":

> Golden yellow spring outfit with white detailin, white gloves and pumps to match (ruined by grease that time I drove the car). . . . Tight yellow jodhpurs made me look so nice and trim and went real well with ridin boots (what I wore when we were caught).

It is in these small vignettes that Smart's brilliance comes through; we are perfectly transported to a dusty road in the 1930s, pulled into the mythic lives of Bonnie and Clyde.

Rachel Rose, Vancouver's current Poet Laureate, explores the complexities of the domestic in her newest collection, *Marry & Burn*. Poems in the book consider love and sexuality, commitment and betrayal, addiction, and parenthood, filtered through the compassionate lens of the author. Rose experiments with forms and structures, pushing individual poems into new variations of themselves; prose poems, sonnet corona, list poems, and series of vignettes all appear within the new collection. She creates startling images, using language to pivot meaning and subtext, and this is where her work shines. In "Cleave," Rose juxtaposes the simple act of cutting onions with the end of a marriage:

> August swelled
> with heat, loops of onion fell from my knife.
> The children knew nothing of such sorrow.
> My face streaked with sudden rain,
> I served them lies

Rose has explored the domestic in earlier collections, but even when tackling familiar

topics, she is able to create a distinct voice and narrative stance. However, there are sections of the collection that feel less immediate than others. Specifically, Rose's poems that rely heavily on phrase repetition, including "Living on the Islands II (Rune of the Fatherland)" and "Tooth," put the reader outside the emotional core of the poems, turning the lines flat:

> He could pull a body from a grasping lake.
> He could carry a drowned girl to her mother's arms.
> He could hack the mold from a stale cake.
> He could fence a pasture with posts and barbs.

The images are evocative, and one suspects a whole world exists in each line, but we are not given the time or space to contemplate their meaning or importance within the context of the poem. In these poems, we are only given a glimpse into a beckoning world. However, throughout *Marry & Burn*, Rose's musical ear is apparent, using cadence and rhythm to produce sophisticated pieces about complicated subjects.

When Voices Intertwine

Brent Wood and Mark Dickinson, eds. *Listening for the Heartbeat of Being: The Arts of Robert Bringhurst.* McGill-Queen's UP $60.00

Reviewed by Paul Watkins

Robert Bringhurst is often described as a modern-day renaissance man. Few writers could navigate fields as diverse as poetry, translation, typography, cultural history, and philosophy as interwoven vocations. Through an adherence to polyphony as a mode of deep ecological thinking, Bringhurst works to make accessible the wisdom of poets and thinkers past, from Sophocles to Haida mythtellers Ghandl and Skaay.

As Bringhurst puts it, "when two voices intertwine, the space they occupy gets larger, and the mind gets larger with it"; no wonder poet Dennis Lee calls him "a man of massive simple-mindedness." Bringhurst has a way of chiselling complex thinking down to that part of being that ineluctably binds all living matter together. Bringhurst's ontological approach is more aligned with ancient Greece than the modern academy, which is why editors Brent Wood and Mark Dickinson make clear that he doesn't neatly fit within the "twenty-first century university's rubric of knowledge production and transmission." As such, Bringhurst is most comfortable in the role of an independent public thinker, bound by neither institution nor strict cultural protocol, which has irked some of his critics.

Working to right the perceived blight of Robert Bringhurst from academic conversations, including his exclusion from CanLit anthologies, Brent Wood and Mark Dickinson have put together an excellent collection (the first of its kind) on Bringhurst's far-reaching oeuvre. *Listening for the Heartbeat of Being: The Arts of Robert Bringhurst* includes fifteen essays from a range of literary scholars, publishers, poets, and journalists, and, like Bringhurst's own work, concerns what we might refer to as an ecology of being. The essays include a detailed biography of Bringhurst by Mark Dickinson, first-hand accounts from publishers about his typographic achievements, analysis of his polyphonic poems for performance, and much-needed reconsiderations of his *Classical Haida Mythtellers* translation trilogy. Aside from experienced scholars and publishers speaking about Bringhurst's work, we also get strong endorsements for his singular genius and pioneering approach to translation, language, and poetics from well-known CanLit icons Margaret Atwood and Dennis Lee.

Bringhurst's active listening and translation of the great minds of many cultures is rooted in a polyphonic concern for ecological well-being. As he puts it in his essay "Singing with Frogs: The Theory and Practice of Literary Polyphony": "What city

dwellers frequently call 'silence' is the ebb and flow of birdsong and the calls of hawks and ravens, marmots, pikas, deer, mice, singing voles, the drone of gnats and bees and bee flies, and the sounds of wind and rain and running water. The world is a polyphonic place." "Ecology becomes," as Kevin McNeilly puts it in his essay on Bringhurst's *Antigone*, "a question of response and responsibility, of careful exchange: human beings cannot keep taking, without giving back." For Bringhurst this act of giving back relates to translation and revision as a "gesture of respect." To truly listen and understand, we need to immerse ourselves in the sounding world from which literature is born.

Hence, Bringhurst's definition of polyphony goes beyond the literary or the musical, as he claims it "isn't a literary or musical technique," but a "property of reality which any work of art can emphasize or minimize, emulate or answer, acknowledge or ignore." Of course, the central conceit borrows from the language of literature and music, and in many ways, as Katherine McLeod elucidates, Bringhurst models his own thinking and poetic structures on musicians whose practices are engaged with multiple speaking voices: "Glenn Gould, jazz pianists Bill Evans and John Lewis, and a range of composers from his contemporary Steve Reich all the way to J. S. Bach, and reading scores from 'early Hayden to Shostakovich.'" The comparison of Bringhurst to reclusive Canadian Glenn Gould is apt, as Wood and Dickinson suggest Gould's "little known polyphonic radio documentaries inspired Bringhurst's own multi-voiced performance poems." From jazz (I enjoyed reading of a young Bringhurst learning jazz drums) to European chamber music, Bringhurst utilizes the techniques of "echo, paraphrase, overlap, repeat," and other forms of musical response to find ways to show how literature is of the world and mind, shaped within and across cultures.

Bringhurst's approach to Haida oral literature takes an unexpected direction, albeit in line with his other work. His mentor and friend, the late Haida carver and storyteller Bill Reid, suggested that he could get inside the stories through European classical music, playing Bach's *Unaccompanied Cello Suites* for him, saying: "Those solo cello pieces are like those myths you were talking about. It's hard to follow the pattern, but they make a kind of sense." Part of the controversy around Bringhurst's retranslations of Haida oral literature surrounds him not asking the Council of the Haida Nation for permission and his enthnopoetic approach, preferring to use poetic line breaks to mimic an oral voice rather than prose as in prior translations.

Much of the initial ire directed at Bringhurst has dissolved. Atwood claims these early responses were misplaced and goes on to praise Bringhurst's Haida translations—particularly *A Story as Sharp as a Knife*—as an American *Iliad*. The collection does a good job summarizing the numerous debates and revelations of Bringhurst's *Masterworks of the Classical Haida Mythtellers*, with an essay about the book design of this work from Scott McIntyre; a public defense of the work by Atwood for the *Times*; a comprehensive breakdown of the trilogy by Nicholas Bradley; a piece by Vancouver-based broadcaster of Haida and Cherokee decent, Káawan Sangáa, that looks at the critiques of the text at the time of publication; and an essay by Ishmael Hope, an Alaskan storyteller of Iñupiaq and Tlingit heritage, who acknowledges the importance of these stories and mythworlds of Skaay and Ghandl for his own family. The essays are decidedly supportive of Bringhurst's endeavours, which, as McIntyre offers, seek to reveal "historical truths of the Haida voice."

While more could be said in the collection about how Bringhurst's universalism is at times fraught or essentialist, Bringhurst's

translations have much to offer both Indigenous and non-Indigenous readers and writers. As Nicholas Bradley phrases it, Bringhurst does not lay claim to culture or land, but rather works to provide a "grave historical understanding of colonialism and dispossession of land and language." For Bringhurst, the Haida stories of Ghandl and Skaay are more than folklore, as he defines them as literature: "They have individual authors, whom I have gone to some trouble to identify, and the works are treated as the works of individuals."

Idealistically, Wood and Dickinson suggest Bringhurst's craft gifts us a path into "a collective re-awakening to humility, a polyphonic epiphany owing something to a renaissance of North American Indigenous cultural ideals." It is no small feat that Bringhurst has found ways to make the abstract more concrete, as he guides readers into the polyphony that unites all things, whether organic or human-made. This collection is a call to pick up his books as starting points for deep reflection. Afterwards, we are called to go out into the world, develop what the editors at one point describe as a "compound ear," and listen ourselves for the heartbeat of being.

Yazdanian's Loopholes

Showey Yazdanian
Loopholes. Quattro $18.00

Reviewed by Saghar Najafi

Showey Yazdanian, a lawyer, has utilized her familiarity with the legal system to write fiction with a touch of humour about a loophole in the Canadian law of immigration and citizenship. Yazdanian's *Loopholes* follows a group of lawyers helping a Cuban family to immigrate to Canada. After failing to do so through the loophole they found in the immigration system, the lawyers stick to "a simple case of marriage fraud" by involving themselves in marriages with the members of the Cuban family, who are represented as random customers and mere strangers; as a result of the fraud, the lawyers have their permits suspended for the rest of their lives.

The story takes place partly in Toronto and partly in Havana. The team of delegates includes an ambitious lawyer named Octavian Castro; an astute lawyer named Ferdinand Magellan, usually referred to as Mags; and the protagonist, an untalented lawyer named Walter Roger. The loophole, originally discovered by Mags, concerned the eligibility of "anyone born on a Canadian military ship for Canadian citizenship." Castro, Roger, and Magellan travel to Havana in order to finalize their plans to circumvent the Canadian legal system. They plan for Stella, a Cuban citizen, to give birth to her child on a ship, which would be considered Canadian as long as Magellan, who had served in the Canadian Naval Army, was on it. The plan's progress becomes hampered by the embassy, and so Magellan and Castro devise a new plan where Stella will temporarily divorce her husband Ramon so that the Cubans can temporarily marry the lawyers. Stella and her child (falsely presented as Castro's) ease their way to Toronto, and Ramon's fake same-sex marriage to Roger paves his way to Canadian citizenship—the reader is forced to wonder how the embassy overlooks evidence that would contest the truth of such claims. After a year, Ramon and Stella divorce their partners and reunite. The end result is that the Cuban family gains Canadian citizenship, while the lawyers are suspended from practicing law in Canada indefinitely.

Loopholes evokes the struggle of a family attempting to escape the communist economic system of Cuba and fighting to live in a capitalist society such as Canada. Although the novel makes no overt claims in support of capitalism, its focus on the harsh living conditions and

limited stipends of families in Cuba does so implicitly. Yet, *Loopholes* also raises numerous questions about capitalist Canada as a country wherein immigrants hope to belong. For example, Ramon, who is an engineer, finds work at the Bank of Montreal as a security guard in order to make ends meet, leaving readers to question whether or not he finds the opportunities he deserves after immigration. Moreover, Ramon is also subject to homophobia within the Cuban community in Toronto, who make him a "laughing stock" based on their perception of his sexuality resulting from the sham marriage to Walter that enabled his Canadian citizenship. Such difficulties faced by immigrants are highlighted throughout the novel and cast a shadow over the utopian dream of Canada. Despite the lawyers' success in navigating legal loopholes, the difficulties of Ramon's life ultimately raise the question of whether or not coming to Canada and becoming a Canadian citizen have been worth the trials of immigration.

Contributors

Articles

Paul **Barrett** is a Banting Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University. He is the author of *Blackening Canada: Diaspora, Race, Multiculturalism* (University of Toronto Press, 2015).

Janie **Beriault** is currently a PhD student in the Department of English at the University of Toronto, where she specializes in postcolonial writing.

Sharlee **Cranston-Reimer** received her PhD from English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University. Her dissertation, "Building New Worlds: Gender and Embodied Non-Conformity and Imagining Otherwise in Contemporary Canadian Literatures," won the 2015 Canadian Studies Network Prize for Best PhD Dissertation in Canadian Studies and was nominated for three other awards. She has taught at McMaster University and Laurier-Brantford and began a postdoctoral fellowship in Women's and Gender Studies at Brock University in January 2017.

Jeff **Fedoruk** is a PhD student and SSHRC CGS Doctoral Scholar in the Department of English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University. His dissertation project, "Fabricating Canadian National Identity within the Creative City Complex," examines the implications of Canadian nationalism on urban development and gentrification, drawing from examples of cultural production in Hamilton, ON, and Vancouver, BC.

Brenna Clarke **Gray** is a faculty member in the Department of English at Douglas College, where she also serves as Associate of Arts Coordinator. She holds a PhD in Canadian Literature from the University of New Brunswick. Her research focus involves the intersections of visual culture and literature in Canada.

Melissa **Li Sheung Ying** is a doctoral candidate in the Department of English at Queen's University, and holds an MA in Comparative Literature from the University of Alberta. While her primary areas of specialization are Canadian literature and children's literature, she also holds research interests in folk and fairy tales, literature and the environment, world literature, Asian Canadian literature, and any exciting intersections her primary areas create.

Lucia **Lorenzi** is a doctoral graduate of the Department of English at the University of British Columbia. Her research focuses on representations of sexual violence in contemporary Canadian and Indigenous literatures, with a specific focus on the strategic use of silence. Her other research interests include trauma theory, affect theory, and autobiographical theory. Her work has previously been published in *West Coast Line* and in *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*.

Jessica **McDonald** is a PhD candidate in the English Department at the University of Saskatchewan. She specializes in Canadian literature, and she also researches in the fields of literary cartography and postcolonial literatures and theory. She is currently completing her dissertation on the spatial politics of Douglas Coupland's writing.

Shane **Neilson** is a poet, literary critic, and physician. In 2016, he edited *The Witch of the Inner Wood*, a collected volume of M. Travis Lane's long poems (Goose Lane Editions) and *Heart on Fist*, a selected volume of Lane's prose (Palimpsest Press). He is also a PhD candidate and Vanier scholar researching representations of pain in the English and Cultural Studies Department of McMaster University.

Kate **Siklosi** is currently a PhD candidate in English at York University. Her research interests centre upon the intersections of Canadian and American avant-garde poetry and poetics, post-structuralism, and spatial theory. She is currently the co-editor of *Pivot: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies and Thought*.

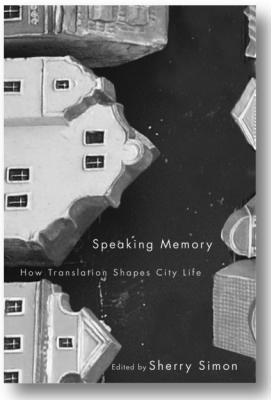
Shaun A. **Stevenson** is an SSHRC Joseph-Armand Bombardier Graduate Scholar and PhD candidate in the Department of English at Carleton University. His dissertation work addresses the limitations of the current land claims process in Canada, underlining the vital role of the humanities in reimagining the possibilities for just arrangements in the postcolony, beyond institutionally ingrained legal and policy frameworks.

Poems

Maleea **Acker** lives in Victoria, British Columbia. Cyril **Dabydeen**, Amanda Charlotte **Earl**, and Pearl **Pirie** live in Ottawa. Jean-Paul **Daoust** lives in Sainte-Mélanie, Quebec. Alexandra **Dexel** lives in Langley, British Columbia. Bill **Howell** lives in Toronto. Erinn Beth **Langille** lives in Truro, Nova Scotia. Shazia Hafiz **Ramji** and Sam **Weselowski** live in Vancouver. Ruby **Turok-Squire** lives in Waterloo, Ontario. Tom **Wayman** lives in Winlaw, British Columbia.

Reviews

Dan **Adleman** and Joel **Martineau** live in Vancouver. Lourdes **Arciniega** and Michael **Roberson** live in Calgary. Myra **Bloom** lives in Toronto. Misao **Dean** teaches at the University of Victoria. Jeff **Fedoruk** lives in Hamilton, Ontario. Susan **Gingell** lives in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Julian **Gunn** teaches at Camosun College. Crystal **Hurdle** teaches at Capilano University. Suzanne **James** teaches at the University of British Columbia. Daniel **Laforest** teaches at the University of Alberta. Lucia **Lorenzi** lives in Port Coquitlam, British Columbia. Andrea **MacPherson** teaches at the University of the Fraser Valley. Philip **Miletic** lives in Kitchener, Ontario. Anne Marie **Miraglia** teaches at the University of Waterloo. Saghar **Najafi** lives in Sherbrooke, Quebec. Nazeer **Patel** teaches at Carleton Univeristy. Neil **Querengesser** teaches at the Concordia University College of Alberta. Asma **Sayed** teaches at Grant MacEwan University. Shelley **Scott** teaches at the University of Lethbridge. Justin **Shaw** teaches at Cape Breton University. Paul **Watkins** teaches at Vancouver Island University. Carl **Watts** lives in Montreal.



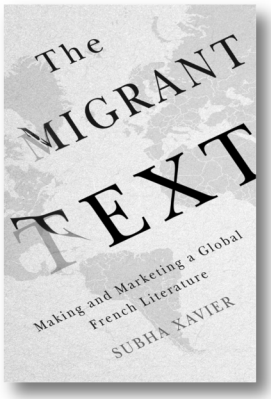
Speaking Memory

How Translation Shapes City Life

Edited by Sherry Simon

9780773547896 $34.95 paperback
9780773547896 $110.00 cloth

"... offers rich portraits of specific locations and practices while also furthering current debates on the nature and role of translation in today's 'globalized' urban landscapes."
Loredana Polezzi, Cardiff University



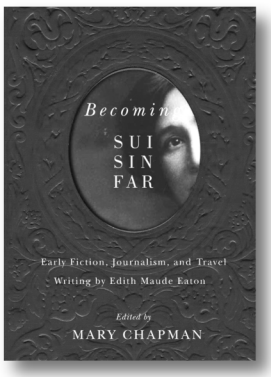
The Migrant Text

Making and Marketing a Global French Literature

Subha Xavier

9780773547605 $34.95 paperback
9780773547599 $100.00 cloth

"... an original and excellent contribution that should have an extensive readership."
François Paré, University of Waterloo



Becoming Sui Sin Far

Early Fiction, Journalism, and Travel Writing by Edith Maude Eaton

Edited by Mary Chapman

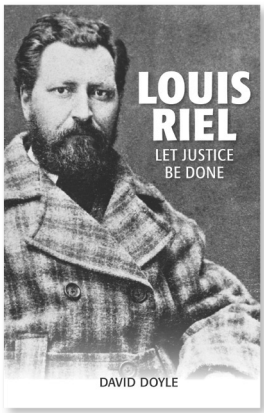
9780773547223 $34.95 paperback
9780773547216 $110.00 cloth

"A polished and nuanced study that will make an extraordinary intervention into studies of Edith Eaton and scholarship about Asian North American writers. Mary Chapman has done a heroic act of recovery work, and developed a very strong argument about the significance of Eaton's writing."
Martha Cutter, University of Connecticut

McGILL-QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY PRESS | mqup.ca

Follow us on Facebook.com/McGillQueens and Twitter @Scholarmqup

New from Ronsdale Press

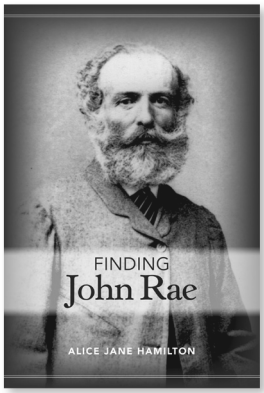


Louis Riel: Let Justice Be Done

David Doyle

In this imaginative re-enactment, Riel is finally given the opportunity to respond to his conviction for treason, offering his side of the story at Batoche and Red River and the reasons for his exoneration. 15 b+w photos.

978-1-55380-496-3 (PB) / **978-1-55380-497-0** (EBOOK)
6 x 9 ■ 240 pp ■ $24.95

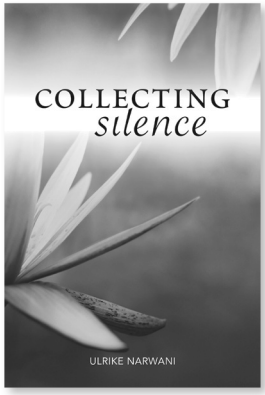


Finding John Rae

Alice Jane Hamilton

Hamilton follows Rae as he discovers not only the missing link to the Northwest Passage but evidence of cannibalism within the Franklin Expedition — his report to the Admiralty sending shockwaves throughout Victorian England.

978-1-55380-481-9 (PB) / **978-1-55380-482-6** (EBOOK)
6 x 9 ■ 230 pp ■ $21.95



Collecting Silence

Ulrike Narwani

In this moving debut volume of poetry, Narwani travels from the Baltic states to Asia and on to Canada, with a stop at the Berlin Wall, to show how in silence our deepest experiences talk to us in a "language we all know without speaking."

978-1-55380-487-1 (PB) / **978-1-55380-488-8** (EBOOK)
6 x 9 ■ 94 pp ■ $15.95

Available at your favourite bookstore ■ Distributed by PGC/Raincoast
www.ronsdalepress.com