

# Non-Recognition in the Colonial Archive

Rachel Zolf's *Janey's Arcadia: Errant Ad^ent\$res in Ultima Thule*

In her 2014 poetry collection *Janey's Arcadia: Errant Ad^ent\$res in Ultima Thule*, Rachel Zolf thinks through the role of the archive in legitimizing colonial aims by playing with the source material of the archive itself. Zolf takes as a basis for her poems texts from the settler Canadian archive and feeds them through Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software, which transforms scanned images of print texts into “malleable language” (*Janey's* 117). This technology is infamously glitchy, and Zolf uses the OCR errors, which consistently misread language used to represent Indigenous and other racialized groups (and thus misrecognize the people themselves), to expose the white supremacist perspectives of these settler texts.<sup>1</sup> As Joan Retallack notes in an endorsement on the back cover of Zolf's collection, the OCR errors perform “an allegory of misreading . . . inescapably charged by the cultural politics of non-recognition.” If access to the colonial archives and the technology used to maintain them is necessarily linked to the rule of power, then Zolf's glitches subvert that power imbalance to “enact a process . . . of disfluent listening” (*Janey's* 117), whereby texts initially intended to glorify the Canadian state and its colonial project are read against their grain. For Zolf, this “disfluent listening,” which requires reading both with and against the hegemonic representations of the source texts, enables the reader to witness the role of power in the archive and the non-recognition of marginalized groups that it engenders. I begin by situating Zolf's text in relation to archive theory and Canadian feminist innovative poetics, before moving on to argue that the OCR glitch in *Janey's Arcadia* exposes, stirs up, and disrupts the workings of power in the archive, whereby

the mis- and non-recognition of Indigenous and other racialized groups is mobilized to support the capitalist and colonialist aims of settler Canada.

A few critics have begun to note the considerable political force of Zolf's collection, and its critique of Indigenous-settler relations in Canada, both past and present, is a key emphasis in the scholarship that the collection has already attracted. To date, these studies include Gillian Roberts' examination of *Janey's Arcadia* alongside other Canadian poetry collections by non-Indigenous writers that explore what it means to be a settler, and an ally, in the wake of the Idle No More movement, and Jessica MacEachern's analysis of the feminist impulse behind the collection's soundscape, both as represented in the print text and as featured in the video created by Zolf to accompany her collection.<sup>2</sup> Zolf's attention to the language of Indigenous-settler relations in this, her fifth poetry collection, fits well within her oeuvre: the thematic range of her collections is considerable (from corporate language to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and beyond), but each collection engages in what Zolf describes as "serial materialist poetics dealing with interrelated questions about memory, history, knowledge, subjectivity and the conceptual limits of language and meaning" ("Interview" 186). In *Janey's Arcadia*, Zolf's exploration of "memory, history, and knowledge" comes into play through her interest in the archive, which is evident throughout her works, but especially in this collection. The authority of the archive is troubled in part by the sense of polyvocality that Zolf cultivates in this collection and throughout her works, as she challenges a singular poetic voice and instead fosters "an exploration of subjectivity in a multiple form" ("Interview" 188). Zolf's poetics are also notable for their frequent use of digital interventions, such as the OCR glitch in *Janey's Arcadia* or search engines in *Human Resources* (2007). Because of these techniques, as well as Zolf's feminist play with "the conceptual limits of language and meaning" (186), her work is often discussed within the context of feminist innovative poetics, and specifically within a North American tradition.<sup>3</sup> My own approach similarly locates Zolf within this tradition, while also looking to archive theory to think through Zolf's engagement with the settler Canadian archive.

### **Power, Technology, and Anxiety in the Archive**

As Jacques Derrida demonstrates in *Archive Fever*, the Western notion of the archive has been steeped in power since its origins. Derrida traces the etymology of the word *archive* to the Greek *arkheion*: that is, the house of the *archons*, or "those who commanded," where official documents were filed

and guarded (8-9). Traditionally housed at the site of power, the Western archive is embedded in the rule of power since those who claim power also claim the right to interpret and to determine what constitutes the archive. According to Derrida, by controlling the archive—a kind of memory of the nation—those in power also control the making and interpreting of the law; through their control of the law, these individuals have the ability to legitimize some activities (and groups of people) and criminalize others.

In her repurposing of the archive of Canadian texts that comprises her source materials, Zolf demonstrates how the concerns of white settler Canada are privileged at the expense of Indigenous peoples and visible minorities in these texts. Zolf's sources, dating largely from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, include documents of importance to the official history of Canadian nation-state building, like an 1886 Canadian Pacific Railway immigration-recruitment pamphlet, as well as white-supremacist, moralizing narratives and non-fiction parading under a thin veneer of social progress. These latter texts, written by public figures like Emily Murphy and the Reverend J. S. Woodsworth (among others),<sup>4</sup> are noteworthy for their influence on contemporary debates regarding, for example, immigration policy and eugenics. That influence can be directly correlated to the privileged position of their authors, many of whom occupied positions of power and authority within the religious, political, and capitalist communities of white settler Canada and its colonial antecedents. As such, these texts, born out of white supremacist perspectives that presume to legitimize certain racialized groups and perpetuate racist stereotypes about others, enjoy privileged positions within the Canadian archive and, correspondingly, a certain amount of influence on Canadian policy. Zolf takes these texts from their place of power in the archive and resituates them in the context of her collection, which aims to interrogate and to pull apart the structures of power that prop them up.

Clearly, the status and influence of Zolf's sources are integral to her project. Zolf pointedly indicates in her author's note that Woodsworth, for example, was the founder and first leader of the Co-operative Commonwealth Foundation, which would later become the New Democratic Party, while Emily Murphy was Canada's first female magistrate and worked to get (certain) women recognized as persons under the law with the other members of the Famous Five (119; 117). Significantly, both of these figures continue to be remembered and celebrated as leftist icons well into the present: in 2004, Woodsworth was ranked the 100th Greatest

Canadian in a CBC contest (“The Greatest”), while in 2012, Emily Murphy and the rest of the Famous Five were enshrined in Canadian public memory when they were featured on the \$50 bill. Zolf deliberately selects these sources to expose the hypocrisy and racism of white feminism and the white left, and to implicate contemporary Canadians, including those who espouse feminist, leftist ideals, and their valorization of such figures. Furthermore, Zolf’s use of contemporary sources, including (former) prime minister Stephen Harper’s denial of Canada’s colonialist history, racist comments on *Calgary Herald* online articles, and the mission statement from the federally funded proselytizing organization Youth for Christ, demonstrates the ongoing legacies of colonialist attitudes and the continuation of such rhetoric in the contemporary speech of Canadian citizens and leaders alike.

According to Derrida, the archive maintains its hegemonic status by presenting itself as a coherent “system” or “synchrony” that is rooted in place—specifically, the place in which power is held (10). By gathering together these materials, those who command limit access to them, and to their signifying power. In *Janey's Arcadia's* accompanying video, which features readings of poems from the collection voiced over National Film Board (NFB) footage depicting early-twentieth-century settlers in Canada, Zolf subverts the Canadian state’s ability to limit access to its archives by appropriating its archival materials without permission and thus undermines the state’s power to control these materials and what (and who) they represent. As MacEachern notes, “Zolf and her collaborators did not receive permission from the film board to use the historical footage, so the NFB logo is burned into every frame” (291). Thus the state quite literally puts its stamp on this archival footage, suggesting that “[t]he videos of wheat fields, beavers, riverbanks, and train platforms are the exclusive property of the government and, it is implied, so too are the placid smile of Miss Iroquois and the naked body of the Indigenous man riding a horse among false clouds” (MacEachern 291). The NFB stamp manifests the state’s attempt to claim and control the land’s resources and inhabitants by gathering their representations into the colonial archive and limiting access to them: by appropriating such archival material, Zolf interrogates not only the kinds of voices and representations that are preserved, circulated, and privileged, but also how the state gleans power from controlling these archival materials.

Access to the archive is limited in part by controlling access to the technology with which the signs of the archive are encoded. Since the archive is necessarily created through a form of inscription technology,

whether scroll, codex, digital, or otherwise, the powerful can further control the archive by controlling the development, ownership, and literacy of that technology. Zolf's use of the OCR glitch highlights the often-invisible role of technology in the archive, and especially its role in perpetuating hierarchies. The OCR glitch draws attention to the increasing use of digital resources to store knowledge, which is made problematic by the hierarchy of value embedded into the development of technology like OCR software. In Zolf's collection, English text is, for the most part, easily read by the OCR software, whereas text like the Cree syllabic alphabet is completely *misread* (21).<sup>5</sup> This hierarchy of readability mirrors the legibility of the bodies that use these signifiers, so that white bodies and concerns are legible by the state, while those of Indigenous people are not. If the archive presents itself as coherent, whole, and hegemonic by "*gathering together signs*" (Derrida 10, emphasis original), then it is integral to Zolf's project to examine which signs, and which bodies they signify, are misread, and thus excluded, from the vision of the nation that the archive provides.

Although the archive presents itself as objective and whole, it is not: the archive is curated according to subjective principles that are often not consciously articulated or even recognized. Ann Laura Stoler describes colonial state archives as "piecemeal partiality," in which the anxieties and biases of its contributors fundamentally shape what kinds of knowledge are legitimized and reproduced, and which are ignored and thrown out (19). Furthermore, the colonial archive "pulls on some 'social facts' and converts them into qualified knowledge," so that opinions become reified as facts and are recirculated in the archive as such (Stoler 22). For Stoler, the colonial archive is a curated palimpsest in which its content has been "*layered and crafted* from practical and unevenly sedimented deceptions and dispositions that accumulated as acceptable or discarded knowledge" (22, emphasis original). The "layering" and "crafting" aspects of the colonial archive significantly work in tandem, so that archival documents filtered through and crafted by opinions and anxieties are layered on top of each other: opinions are used to reinforce and justify other opinions, and eventually are recognized as common knowledge.

In Zolf's collection, the "layered and crafted" aspect of her source texts becomes especially apparent. For example, the CPR pamphlet "What Women Say of the Canadian North-West" uses the commissioned opinions of white settler women to encourage white settlement. In this text, these opinions are quite literally layered on top of each other in a list that descends the page.

The intended effect of the pamphlet is that each positive opinion reinforces the one before and after it, so that the document relies not on a single source but on an aggregate of sources for its credibility. Commissioned by a corporation for an immigration-recruitment pamphlet, these opinions have been curated to encourage the state's colonialist project of white settlement and the CPR's capitalist project of selling train tickets and land. These two projects necessarily work in tandem, since white colonialism and white capitalism serve to bolster each other. Furthermore, the publishing of the text in English indicates that its target audience is English speakers; the text's London publisher suggests a further narrowing of the target audience to those English speakers coming from the British Isles. An examination of the women's names, provided alongside their responses in the pamphlet, indicates that the majority, if not all, of the women whose opinions are sourced for this pamphlet are similarly of British ancestry and presumably English-speaking. Thus the pamphlet demonstrates, if not consciously, a hierarchy of voices and preferred settlers. In her poetic treatment of the text,<sup>6</sup> Zolf highlights this hierarchy by incorporating the names of missing and murdered Indigenous women, which have been rendered in grey, crossed-out text, suggesting the dismissal of Indigenous women and the crimes committed against them. Although the pamphlet's persuasive power is predicated on its aggregation of many voices, an examination of whose voices are presented and thus valued demonstrates that the lack of diversity of these voices works to reinforce a white-supremacist view of the nation.

In the section Zolf features in her collection, the CPR pamphlet uses the limited view of these voices to dispel the idea of an "Indian" threat ("What Women Say" 40). The point of this is not to encourage exchange between Indigenous peoples and white settlers, but to allay prospective white settlers' fears and thus encourage their settlement. While the pamphlet works counter to the texts of the Dutch East Indies archives that Stoler describes, in which threats are imagined rather than dispelled, both kinds of documents are predicated on addressing political anxieties and are used to strengthen the colonial state and the normative white body of the settler. The other source texts of Zolf's collection work in similar ways, as assumptions about Indigenous people are articulated through white-supremacist settler perspectives. Because of the privileged position of such voices within the colonial archive, their racist, stereotypical ideas about Indigenous people are more frequently circulated and rearticulated. Furthermore, Zolf's strategy enables her to dismantle colonial rhetoric, as voiced by settlers in their own

words, while avoiding speaking for or on behalf of Indigenous people. Using these texts as the basis for her collection, Zolf interrogates, critiques, and breaks down the hegemonic perspectives they defend.

### **Zolf's Feminist Poetics**

Through source texts like the CPR pamphlet, Zolf zeroes in on the problematic role of the white settler woman within Canada's colonial regime: the importance of this theme to her collection is emphasized by her central figure of Janey. The Janey of *Janey's Arcadia* is a mashup of Emily Murphy's pen name Janey Canuck, whom Zolf describes as a "plucky white-supremacist settler," and under whose name Murphy wrote a series of articles for *Maclean's* which were later turned into a series of books, and Kathy Acker's character and "guerilla icon" Janey Smith from her late 1970s novel *Blood and Guts in High School* (Janey's 117). Engendered from the "savage, fleshy rendezvous" of these two Janey's, one a racist white feminist and the other embroiled in a web of complicated sexualized violence, the Janey of *Janey's Arcadia* is a "mutant (cyborg?) squatter progeny" whose presence throughout the collection interrogates the role of white women in colonial violence (117). Through Janey, Zolf examines how the rhetoric around protecting white women from the supposed threat of Indigenous and non-white people is used to justify colonial violence, and how white women themselves participate in the circulation of such rhetoric, which actually works to erode the strength of their own position as women through its sexist logic. Zolf's feminist project is to interrogate the white feminism of figures like Emily Murphy, whose privileged position within the Canadian archive ensures that echoes of her voice can still be heard today.

Zolf's OCR glitch, then, is a disruptive force that breaks through and breaks up the sedimentation of white settler perspectives. The errors of OCR encourage the reader to question the authority of these texts and to look more closely at how they circulate power in a white-supremacist society. With her use of OCR technology and non-conventional poetics, Zolf is working within the tradition of (Canadian) feminist experimental or innovative poetics. Several contemporary feminist artists and critics identify, like Gail Scott, an "energetic fusion between feminism . . . and revolt in language and form" (38). Notably, Rae Armantrout critiques the association of women's writing with conventional, closed, and univocal lyrics that serve a stable poetic subject, which, she argues, cannot fully capture the fractured subjectivities of an oppressed group such as women. In fact, the univocal



voice often objectifies others and appropriates their voice, thus enacting the same kinds of violence towards others that the marginalized themselves face. In Zolf's collection, the OCR glitch works to break up the univocal, objectifying perspective of her white settler source texts, and instead fosters a clarity of social attention, which, according to Armantrout, is differentiated from, and even antithetical to, readability (290). Unlike readability, which can promote the oversimplification of complex interactions and the false certainty of a univocal perspective, the clarity that Armantrout proposes allows for a polyvocality that opens up, rather than shuts down, meaning and interpretation. Through such polyvocality, like that enabled by Zolf's glitch, an author can more adequately pay attention to the world's social interactions without imposing a totalizing perspective on it.

As an example of the poetics she proposes, Armantrout points to Lyn Hejinian's use of metonymy and its "connections," "adjacency," and "instability" (292). Unstable in its transfer of meaning, metonymy promotes a multiplicity of interpretations and works to develop new connections in many directions. I argue that Zolf's OCR glitch, while not strictly metonymy, works in similar ways. The glitch, which causes certain words to be misread as other words, creates new connections of meaning in the relationship between the word of the source text and its glitched complement. Furthermore, the glitches work as in a *metonymic*, or in this case, *glitchy constellation*, so that the glitching of a certain word in different ways throughout a passage or even the collection creates a web of interconnected meanings. Any reading of Zolf's collection is necessarily slippery, since the polyvocality of her glitches undermines a univocal perspective or reading.

Furthermore, Zolf hijacks the OCR software and puts it to the task of exposing (and overexposing) its own embedded hierarchy of value. Zolf repurposes the OCR's "errors of recognition" to "conjure other forms of mis- and non- and dis- and un-recognition" (*Janey's* 117). Zolf argues that "[t]his errancy can, perhaps, enact a process of thinking past (or through) the retinal struggle for recognition to a kind of disfluent listening (an attending that is also a waiting and conjoining) and always-already-complicit, glitched, queered witnessing" (117). This "disfluent listening" requires listening, and reading, both with and against the currents of the circulation of power in Zolf's source texts. It is a kind of listening that works against linear univocality and instead radiates and gleans meaning in many directions. It is hearing what these source texts hide by listening to what they do and do not voice. By stirring up and disrupting the circulation of power in the archive, Zolf's



OCR glitches enable a kind of polyvalent witnessing of the mis- and non-recognition in Canada of Indigenous peoples and people of colour. But this witnessing is also “always-already-complicit” (117): it requires its readers to examine their own perpetuation of practices of non-recognition, and how they may have benefited from the colonialism such non-recognition serves.

### **Colonial Non-Recognition**

Through the OCR glitch, Zolf’s collection illustrates the power of the archive to enshrine in the collective memory of the nation the mis- and non-recognition of racialized groups in service of capitalist and colonialist aims. The OCR glitches target Indigenous people in particular, who are consistently misread in the collection as “Indigns.” This is a double misrecognition, in which the OCR glitch highlights, by adding to, the misidentification of Indigenous people as “Indians” according to an ignorant and outdated Western assumption. Furthermore, the use of the term “Indign” serves to lump all Indigenous peoples together and actively fails to recognize differences between various Indigenous groups. Other misreadings of Indigenous people as “Indignities” (29) and “worth-n%thing folk” (49) illustrate the psychological violence of the objectification, especially the degrading objectification, of others. The glitching of “Indignities” creates polyvalent possibilities of interpretation, so that the term could refer to the indignities that Indigenous people suffer at the hands of white settlers or to the white-supremacist treatment of Indigenous people as indignities themselves. In this latter example, the glitch manifests white settler perspectives towards Indigenous people in the very word that signifies them, thus exposing how the perspectives of the source texts influence the framing of their content. Perhaps most importantly, these interpretations, and any others, work together to create a glitchy constellation of possible meanings.

Elsewhere, the glitching of Indigenous people as “Israeli braves” (Zolf 63) and “Italian primitifs” (9) manifests an anxiety regarding assimilation lurking in the source texts. On the one hand, these source texts see assimilation as desirable and so the glitches misread Indigenous people as coming from the so-called Old World, and thus as less racially other. At the same time, these glitches register the white settler anxiety regarding the need to maintain a hierarchy of races, even within the system of assimilation, and so misread Indigenous people as belonging to groups considered subordinate to the imagined Anglo-Saxon race. At the core of these misreadings lies the colonial lust for land and the wealth it can provide, since the assimilation and

subordination of Indigenous people are key components in the appropriation of their lands. By misreading Indigenous people as “Israeli” and “Italian,” the glitch exposes a colonialist desire to ignore the long inhabitancy of Indigenous people in the region, and thus nullify their claims to the land.

Zolf uses the glitch to highlight how the erasure of Indigenous knowledge is fundamental to the colonial projects of assimilation and settlement. This erasure is embedded in the subtitle of Zolf's collection, *Errant Ad^ent\$res in Ultima Thule*. Meaning “a faraway unknown region,” the Latin phrase *ultima Thule* is used to indicate the area of the Red River Colony where many of the poems are set, and thus demonstrates the displacement of Indigenous relationships with and naming of the land (“ultima Thule”). After all, according to whom is this region “faraway” or “unknown”? Furthermore, the glitching of “Ad^ent\$res”—specifically the use of the dollar sign—suggests the ulterior motives of these innocent-sounding adventures. Indeed, the CPR immigration-recruitment pamphlet that Zolf uses as one of her source texts quite obviously intertwines the settler state's capitalist and colonialist projects: the state encourages white settlement to strengthen its own position and shore up its own white-supremacist interests, which it accomplishes by giving away land to white settlers that does not actually belong to the state, but to various Indigenous groups. In turn, the colonists look to the land as a source of capitalist wealth that they can (quite literally) grow, while the CPR benefits from selling the colonists train tickets, land, and later, consumer goods. Thus, the state and the CPR jointly sell the vision of pioneering “Ad^ent\$res” to their target audience of white colonists, who happily consume the promise of adventure and wealth that such immigration-recruitment pamphlets imply.

This privileging of certain racialized groups is integral to the colonial project: in the opening lines of the collection's first poem, “Janey's Invocation,” Zolf establishes whose knowledges are privileged, and whose are discarded, in the colonial archives. The presence of Indigenous peoples is obscured in the poem, whereas the first line indicates that “Infallible settlers say this is the latest season / they have known,” thus setting up settler knowledge and the settlers themselves as “infallible” (9). Local Indigenous groups would of course have more extensive knowledge of the region's growing seasons, but this knowledge, even if it would prove useful to the region's settlers and their capitalist and colonialist endeavours, is dismissed. Later in the same poem, Zolf also sets up the dichotomy of white settlers and Indigenous people that will be critiqued and problematized throughout the collection: “Janey and the rest / of the people witnessed the Italian primitifs

/ in ‘wild’ societies” (9). Here “Janey and the rest / of the people” are the “witness[s]” whose derogatory judgment about Indigenous people seeps into the rest of the line (and the collection). In contrast, Indigenous people are misrecognized as “primitif” and “wild” (and “Italian!”), dehumanized in their distinction from “the rest / of the people,” and made the object of the white settler gaze. Furthermore, Zolf’s glitching of “Italian primitifs” appears to reference primitivism, a nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century artistic movement that was inspired by pre-Raphaelite Italian painting, and which cultivated a similar white gaze that reinforced racist stereotypes used to vindicate European colonial expansion. While Indigenous knowledge and presence are erased, the poem is noteworthy for its fetishization (in the manner of primitivism) of nature: if the poem indeed functions as an “invocation,” as its title suggests, then it invokes a white settler utopia of virginal, productive land, from which Indigenous presence has been wiped.

The poem “Concentration” explores the role of residential schools in implementing this erasure of Indigenous knowledge. The policy specifically targeted Indigenous youth, and, correspondingly, the future of Indigenous communities. The speaker declares,

The  
aboriginal  
youth  
community  
is a  
prime  
area  
for

development. (22)

In a collection notable for its verbosity, the sparseness of this passage, and that of the three other sentences that accompany it on two facing pages, is striking. Here the vast blank spaces of the page make room for the “development” the speaker seeks by wiping away other knowledges. Perhaps most disturbingly, the “aboriginal / youth / community” is described in the same language that would be used for their land: like the page that has been clear-cut, they have been surveyed and selected for “development.” The association of development with construction suggests the aim of residential schools to shape Indigenous youth so that white, colonialist values can take up residence. By developing the next generation of Indigenous people

according to white formulas, the colonialist state also frees up land for the construction of homes for white settlers. Thus, this passage betrays the ultimate goal of residential schools and their parent project of assimilation: by assimilating Indigenous people, the white settler aims to devalue and dismiss Indigenous rights to the land.

The violence of the policy of residential schools, which tore young children away from their families and their way of life, becomes particularly evident in Zolf's use of the glitch. Elsewhere in "Concentration," the speaker recalls taking a young boy to one of these schools, not before telling

his fathom that I would be a paring  
to him, clothe him and feed him  
and tear him what I knew to be  
his harbinger. (30)

In this passage, the boy's father is misread as his "fathom," while the speaker declares he will be a "paring," or parent to the child. The "fathom" glitch suggests the process by which Indigenous parents are stripped of their fatherhood, or more generally their parental rights, through the colonial policy of residential schools. At the same time, the fathom, a unit of length used to measure depths, suggests the distance being created by the residential school between the boy and his father, and thus between future generations of Indigenous people and their ancestors. In place of the boy's father, now rendered as "fathom," the speaker appropriates the role of parent for himself. Yet the speaker is significantly a "paring," a removal or cutting away, and not a parent. Thus, the child is cut off from any form of parental support, which was a common, if not regular, occurrence in the residential school system.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the speaker also claims that he will "tear," or teach, the boy: this glitch is telling since it indicates the goal and result of the boy's so-called education—that is, to tear him away from his family, land, and traditions. The glitch also expresses the emotional pain of the separation of a boy and his father as a "tear" which may be shed.

Even the Cree language itself, as an embodiment of Indigenous knowledge, is subject to the violence of this non-recognition: embedded in "Concentration" and its examination of the rhetoric behind residential schools, "The Cree Syllabic Alphabet" is rendered in a mess of glitches (21). The OCR software completely fails to read the Cree syllabics, thus demonstrating the hierarchy of values embedded in the development of the software. At the same time, the author's note points out that the Cree syllabics are said to have been invented by the Reverend James Evans, while "others argue that they were

developed by the Cree people themselves—long before colonization” (118). In this context, the glitches can be seen to disrupt the appropriation of Indigenous knowledge, while also representing how that knowledge can be skewed and misread when it is filtered through the white settler perspective. Furthermore, Zolf makes a point of adding that “[t]he first book that Evans . . . translated into Cree Syllabics was the Bible” (118). Not only was the Cree language appropriated by the white settler, but it was also mobilized as a weapon of assimilation and assault on Indigenous spirituality.

As Zolf’s collection demonstrates, the assaults that Indigenous people face because of colonial violence are physical and sexual as well as psychological and emotional. In Zolf’s poetic rendering of “Who is this Jesus?,” it is implied that Astumastao, an orphaned “Indign” girl, is sexually assaulted by the same Reverend James Evans credited with inventing Cree syllabics (74-77).<sup>8</sup> In direct contrast to the sparse passage in “Concentration,” the words of “Who is this Jesus?” completely fill and even spill over the page. With words cut off on both sides of the page, gaps are introduced into the story; this is especially problematic since they serve to obscure the Reverend’s horrific treatment of Astumastao. The moralizing tone of the narrative, which is presented as an “allegorical tale,” further contributes to the dismissal of his actions since it diverts attention away from them (118). The narrative is introduced as a “sweet story” which “shows how a few lessons learned in early life about religious truth enabled [Astumastao] to be a great / . . . ssing to her stern old uncle, a great Indign hunter” (74). This summary of the narrative is a glaring misreading of the psychological, emotional, and sexual violence Astumastao experiences at the hands of her assaulter, as well as at the missionary school, where she is taught contempt for the traditions and spirituality of her family. The cutting off of “. . . ssing,” presumably “blessing,” works to undermine this white settler misreading of the narrative by literally pointing to the holes in such an interpretation. Furthermore, the eclipsing of the word “[ble]ssing” suggests that the “lessons” that Astumastao has learned have not been “blessings” at all, while the Christian connotation of the word implicates Christian authorities and their policy of forced religious conversion as the basis of her plight.

In the collection, the white settler rape of Indigenous people is intimately connected to the white settler rape of the land. After all, staking a claim to the land, regardless of whether a claim is warranted, is the point of colonialism, and the projects of assimilation, residential schools, forced religious conversion, and the erasure of Indigenous knowledge are all means to the end of

acquiring land. In “Janey’s Hospitality,” Zolf demonstrates how the mis- and non-recognition of Indigenous peoples is mobilized towards this end:

‘Have you any Indigns round where you are?’

asked the realtor.

‘No,’

replied the visitor.

‘We have hardly any foreigners at all.’ (89)

In this poem, reproduced here in its entirety, the irony of settler “hospitality” on stolen Indigenous land is heartbreaking. The presence and question of the realtor suggest that not only has the land been appropriated for white settler use, but the revenue from its sale will be pocketed by a white realtor. The visitor’s reply illustrates a misrecognition of the “Indigns” as foreigners, which serves to bolster white claims to lands stolen from Indigenous people, while also lumping all “foreigners”—that is, visibly racialized groups— together. Furthermore, the realtor’s question demonstrates a prevailing anxiety of Zolf’s source texts regarding the presence of “Indigns” as possible threats to white settler claims to the land.

Zolf’s collection demonstrates how this white settler anxiety corresponds with a similar one regarding the assumption of an “Indign” threat to the white woman. Land and white women are conflated as things that, in the white settler’s mind, need to be protected from Indigenous people, and that should only be accessed by the white settler, sexually or otherwise. After all, both land and white women are seen as producing figures that ensure the continuity of settler Canada through producing food and wealth or children, and thus are essential to the continuing supremacy of the white settler. The parallel roles are perhaps most succinctly demonstrated by the cover image of Zolf’s collection, in which a young white woman holding a blond child stands in a field surrounded by cows, chickens, a tidy little house and barn, and wheat ripe for harvest. This image comes from *Canada West – The New Homeland*, a 1930 immigration brochure commissioned by the Canadian Department of Immigration and Colonization and distributed in Europe (*Janey’s* 136). In this vision of a white settler utopia, the victims of colonization are notably absent, not unlike the ways Indigenous peoples are mis- and non-recognized in the colonial archive. The figure of the white woman displaces Indigenous people from this tamed landscape and domesticizes the colonial project, making it seem wholesome and

productive, and not the violent and bloody reality that Zolf's collection reveals. As such, the cover image functions as a visual representation of nostalgia for an imagined past that corresponds with the white settler perspectives of Zolf's source texts.

Zolf's exploration of the supposed threat of Indigenous people to white women, and how these fears are used to fuel mis- and non-recognition, is most obvious in her poetic rendering of the CPR pamphlet "What Women Say of the Canadian North-West" (*Janey's* 102-13). Zolf sources her material from a section of the pamphlet that poses the question, "Do you experience any dread of the Indians?" ("What Women Say" 41). The women respondents answer no, with their responses filtered through various white settler perspectives. For many of these responses, the denial of "dread" is predicated on the fact that the responders simply have not seen any Indigenous people for some time: "Never seen any since I came to the farm, now going on three years. Never think of them," says one responder (*Janey's* 104). The glitching of "think" as "thiuk" underscores the complete non-recognition of the presence of Indigenous people and illustrates how not *thinking* of Indigenous people is intimately connected with not *seeing* them; these white settlers fail to see or adequately recognize Indigenous peoples because they are absorbed in their own selfish perspectives of the world.

The "Indian question" is posed to "women of the Canadian North-West," yet its underlying assumption that the default for woman is white completely disregards any perspective that does not conform to this supposed norm ("What Women Say" 40). Here, Zolf intervenes: alongside the glitched, non-recognizing responses of the white settler women, Zolf places the names of missing and murdered Indigenous women and details taken from the police reports related to their death or disappearance. These names come from the signatures hand-written by friends and family of the deceased, which are reproduced in the collection, interspersed with Zolf's poems, and titled "Justice to Come" (44-46, 68-70, 79-81, 124-34). Zolf's decision to include these signatures in their original handwriting suggests a desire to make space for the kinship they represent while still allowing them to speak in their own voice. "What Women Say" illustrates what happens when such voices are appropriated by settler texts: in this poem, the names of these Indigenous women are rendered in grey, crossed-out text, while the names of the white settler women are in black, easily readable text. This distinction illustrates how settler women who reinforce settler Canada's colonialist goals are legible by state institutions and are circulated in the archive, while



Indigenous women, especially those who assert their presence, even and maybe especially in death, are erased. Yet significantly, the handwritten signatures can be found even after the author's note (which typically signals the end of a collection): thus it is their affirmation of the presence and mutual recognition of Indigenous women that closes (or perhaps opens up?) the collection.

### **The Archive Glitching Forward**

In her discussion of Canada's multicultural archives, Karina Vernon indicates that some members of racialized groups have opted to develop personal or community archives as an alternative to handing over their cultural material to the state (199). Thus perhaps we can think of the signatures as a kind of community-based archive of kinship that is predicated on the recognition of Indigenous women, and which counters the mis- and non-recognition so prevalent in the colonial archives. After all, the archive, and OCR software, can be incredibly useful tools, but their use in legitimizing colonial states must be interrogated. When we begin to question the archive and how it is constituted, we can ask important questions like, whose stories are repeated and circulated in the archive? And are we, as readers of the archive, complicit in what stories are told, and which are discarded? Are we complicit in who is recognized and who is not? Although Zolf's source texts date back several decades and even centuries, the issues her collection evokes are pressingly contemporary and urgent: this becomes especially apparent when Zolf's poems are placed alongside the signatures written for missing and murdered Indigenous women. Mis- and non-recognition are not just matters for the archives: those archives, and the ways in which they are stirred up, recirculated, or disrupted, have profound implications for our present and future. It is up to us to recognize the glitches and to enact the clarity of social attention they prompt.

#### NOTES

- 1 Indigenous people, for example, are frequently rendered as "Indigns," while African Canadians sometimes appear as "needgrow[s]" (29).
- 2 See also Shane Rhodes' short piece "Fracked-Up Settler Poetry: Rachel Zolf's *Janey's Arcadia*" in *Arc Poetry Magazine*.
- 3 See, for example, Milne, whose discussion of *Human Resources* within the context of North American feminist innovative poetics significantly influenced the framing of my own argument.

- 4 See Murphy's *The Impressions of Janey Canuck Abroad* (1901), *Janey Canuck in the West* (1910), *Open Trails* (1912), and *Seeds of Pine* (1914), written under the pen name "Janey Canuck"; and her *The Black Candle* (1922), written under the name "Judge Murphy." See Woodsworth's *Strangers Within Our Gates* (1909) and *My Neighbour* (1911). See also Zolf's author notes (116-20) for a complete list of sources.
- 5 See the section of this paper on "Colonial Non-Recognition" for a more detailed analysis of this passage. This section also explores at greater length how Zolf's OCR glitches of English text are dependent on who is being signified (or more specifically, mis-signified) by them.
- 6 Further discussed in the section "Colonial Non-Recognition." Zolf's poetic treatment of this text can be found on pages 102-13 of her collection.
- 7 See, for example, Chrisjohn, Young, and Maraun; Miller; and Milloy.
- 8 See Egerton R. Young's *Indian Life in the Great North-West* (1900).

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