

The “look of recognition”

Transcultural Circulation of Trauma in Indigenous Texts

You know, that Billy Frank tells me, this story about the Enemy Aliens have their property taken away by Coyote and the Whitemen and get moved from their homes to someplace else reminds me of another story.

Yes, I tell Billy Frank, me, too.

You remember how that story goes, says Billy Frank.

No, I says, but maybe if we think about it, that story will come back.

—Thomas King, “Coyote and the Enemy Aliens”

“**W**e didn’t know we were going to Canada that sun-blasted afternoon. We thought we were going to Auschwitz” (Cariou 17). In this startling opening to his essay about his visit to Auschwitz, Métis author Warren Cariou describes how he found out about a Canada he had not previously known. Informed by the Auschwitz guidebook, he discovered that a section of the concentration camp was called “Kanada,” “the name of a warehouse used to store valuables taken from newly arrived prisoners” (18). Right at that moment, while at Auschwitz, he did not want to think of Canada; he had come to comprehend, in some way, Auschwitz, and Auschwitz alone, but was involuntarily confronted with the multidirectional power of a traumatic memory that “takes on meaning precisely in relationship to other memories in a network of associations” (Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory* 16). He therefore compares this moment of his discovery to “something from a W. G. Sebald novel: a tiny quirk of history that grabbed onto me in that moment and wouldn’t let go” (Cariou 18).¹

Traumatic histories happen in certain places, at certain sites, in certain times, and to certain groups of people. However, as Michael Rothberg argues, the memories of them may become re-contextualized “as rhizomatic

networks of temporality and cultural reference that exceed territorialization (whether at the local or national level) and identitarian reduction” (“Introduction” 7). Not a Jewish survivor or descendant of a survivor, but a Métis from northern Saskatchewan in Canada, Cariou found himself at a place where seemingly different sites and memories were knotted together in one of the “*noeuds de mémoire*” (Rothberg, “Introduction” 7) and he was left with the task of unravelling its significance. Explicitly stepping away from arguments of “comparability” between Fascism and the genocide of colonialism, Cariou remembers instead the power of creative works by Aboriginal authors which evoke—similar to texts by black Canadian writers²—the “multiplicitous story of Canada” (20), constituting a counter-memory that unsettles the official version of “Canada’s unwavering commitment to recognizing, promoting and celebrating human rights,” as it states on the website of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (qtd. in Cariou 21).

I chose that episode from Warren Cariou’s life—a “real” situation—and his way of re-presenting it by narrative movements that underline linkages, multiple directions as an introduction to my own explorations into literary representations of transcultural travels of trauma and the power of multidirectional memory, including Cariou’s “Kanada,” the collection *In Honour of Our Grandmothers*, Thomas King’s “Coyote and the Enemy Aliens,” Marie Clements’ *Burning Vision*, Shirley Sterling’s *My Name Is Seepeetza*, and Richard Wagamese’s *A Quality of Light*.

Born and raised in Germany at the end of World War II, I have never been in Auschwitz, but I visited the Dachau concentration camp close to Munich, where, as I learnt as an adult, my father had been a guard—if only for the last few months of its existence. I never found out what exactly had happened, why he ended up there; he never spoke about his war experiences and many important records have been destroyed. The history of my country lies heavily on my generation, the generation “who came after” and grew up with too many silences and unaccounted ruptures of family lives.³ As an immigrant in Canada, it took me a long time to make the connection between Fascism and colonialism; it was not my positionality as “second-generation inheritor of the Holocaust legacy of guilt and condemnation” (Worthington 208) that generated my interest in Canada’s colonial history and literature by the colonized, but my experiences as an instructor of a class of Cree students who made me aware of a huge gap in the humanities curriculum. Also, it was only by teaching a course at the Oji-Cree

community of Sandy Lake in northwest Ontario that I became more strongly aware of connections between Jewish and Aboriginal histories, as it was at their school library that I found the book *In Honour of Our Grandmothers*, a collaboration—now out of print—between poets and artists from both groups (Schneider and Gottfriedson). As pointed out by Rothberg, “on the grounds of Jews’ presumed ‘whiteness,’” Jewish people are usually excluded in minority and postcolonial critique, but in this book, artists of Jewish and Aboriginal ancestry bring together memories of “[s]hared histories of racism, spatial segregation, genocide, diasporic displacement, cultural destruction” (*Multidirectional Memory* 23) as well as resistances to them. Reisa Smiley Schneider’s poem “Paths of Reawakening” links both groups in the following way:

Rejected as a young child
 because he was an Indian
 Rejected as a young child
 because she was a Jew.
 They were dark They were different.
 ridicule disdain humiliation alienation
 Blankets tallitot worn as shawls
 enwrap gaunt bodies as eagle calls.
 Souls emerge in disguise seeking empathy in sensitive eyes
 striving for unity in natural signs.
 (qtd. in Schneider and Gottfriedson 24)

The smooth parallelism of the opening lines of this excerpt from the poem with their straightforward “explanation” for social censure is followed by a halting style, as if searching for the right words, the gaps or pauses reflecting the unspoken or unspeakable and undermining an easy flow of similarities. These lines undercut simple comparisons initially suggested and point to more complex connections between both the cultures—blankets worn by Native people and the Jewish prayer shawl—and the peoples’ suffering: the image of “gaunt bodies” evokes associations of Native people afflicted by smallpox and starvation and of the concentration camps. The language reveals “an intertwining of darkness and light,” as is stated in the preface to the book (Schneider and Gottfriedson 2) and illustrates a “look of recognition” which Kirsten Emiko McAllister identifies as a connective element in her own story about cross-cultural relations (441).

In an essay published in the third and last volume issued by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation—*Cultivating Canada: Reconciliation through the Lens of Cultural Diversity*—McAllister tells the story of an encounter between

her Japanese Canadian family and Aboriginal people at a blockade in British Columbia, on their way to East Lillooet where her mother's family was incarcerated during the war. When their car approached the blockade, the Lil'Wat man in charge of stopping cars "didn't come over to inspect us, ask for our identification, and then deliberate over whether we had permission to pass; rather, in one glance his look took us in and beckoned us through . . . into what I now know to be Lil'Wat territory" (428). Interpreting that incident, which she had experienced as a child, years later, she comes to the conclusion that this Indigenous man "gave us neither a look of pity, empathy, or sympathy" but a "look of recognition," which "entails another type of relation. It starts with an understanding that the very possibility of one's existence in this world is fundamentally interconnected with all other beings."⁴ Approaching historical trauma of "the other" through the look of recognition "does not relate to others just in terms of their injuries" (441), but leads to the potential of solidarity and the building of new communities, a "Reawakening" toward "Harmony and Peace," in the words of the Jewish/Aboriginal collaborative publication. Or, understood within Rothberg's theory, "multidirectional memory is often the very grounds on which people construct and act upon visions of justice" (*Multidirectional Memory* 19). As a scholar based in the United States, he acknowledges the failure to confront "continuing dispossession of Indians" among Americans, who are concerned about genocides elsewhere, but also asserts (quoting Jodi Byrd) that "memory's multidirectionality provides a critical resource . . . for contesting that unequal distribution of attention" (*Multidirectional Memory* 311).

In spite of the landmark gathering of Aboriginal writers and "writers of colour" in the 1994 *Writing Thru Race: A Conference for First Nations Writers and Writers of Colour* chaired by Roy Miki, there are not many crossovers in the literatures of each group⁵ nor has there been much work done on the intersection between multiculturalism and postcolonial studies, or, as Rita Wong puts it, on the need for "unpacking the specific problematic of racialized subjects who have inherited the violence of colonization" (158). Rejecting a superficial version of multiculturalism in Canada and Australia by underscoring the legacies of imperialism and colonialism, one of the few critics in this field, Sneja Gunew, argues in *Haunted Nations* "that the Australian state fails its 'multicultural' subjects as much as it does its indigenous ones" (44). Choosing a similarly telling title for her own critical analysis of relationships between "immigrants of colour" and Aboriginal peoples and of Canada's discourse on multiculturalism, Himani Bannerji

states in her book *The Dark Side of the Nation*: “It is the nationhood of this Canada, with its two solitudes and their survival anxieties and aggressions against ‘native others,’ that provides the epic painting in whose dark corners we must look for the later ‘others’” (93). Her point that the suppressed legacies of colonialism shape Canada’s relationship with its immigrants of colour is echoed by Cherokee author Thomas King who, in his narrative “Coyote and the Enemy Aliens,” looks in those dark corners of the nation for “the later ‘others’”—in this case, the Japanese Canadians—by telling a story about them through his lens of the “native other.”⁶ In the publication of this story in *Our Story*, he states in his preface:

I know the story of the Japanese internment in Canada. I know it as most Canadians know it.
In pieces.
From a distance. (158)

In his own narrative, he crosses this distance between him, an Indigenous person, and the Japanese Canadians by making his character Coyote both a victimizer and a victim in the internment history. He takes the Japanese Canadian story out of its isolation and creates a knotting of traumatic histories—so much so that he conveys to us in his preface that whenever he hears either of these stories, “a strange thing happens. I think of the other” (158). In the original publication of the text in *A Short History of Indians in Canada*, the opening story of the collection with the book’s title satirically tells the history of “Indians” as being labelled, tagged, and confined when they come falling from the sky. In “Coyote and the Enemy Aliens,” it is the Japanese Canadians who are labelled, tagged, and confined, but eventually the Native characters—who had offered their homes for the displaced Japanese Canadians—are considered enemy aliens as well, including Coyote. Published in 2005, this story reminds of the branding of all non-white people as potential “terrorists” in “the war against terror,” an echo that Paul Gilroy captures in the subheading “Enemy Aliens” in his chapter on 9/11 (19–22) and that King himself alludes to with the reference to Los Alamos at the end of his story.

In the last story of *A Short History of Indians in Canada*, “Another Great Moment in Canadian Indian History,” a group of “Indians” is mistaken for a group of Japanese tourists. In “Coyote and the Enemy Aliens,” the theme of mistaken identities is a literary strategy for deconstructing concepts of race and foregrounding instead the systemic nature of oppression that connects colonialism with “anti-terrorism.” Native people are seen as enemy aliens although they are not Japanese and Coyote himself is captured by the

RCMP. Further undermining the importance of race, Coyote is a Native character but very much involved in the oppressive measures against the Japanese Canadians, through his jobs as “Custodian of Enemy Alien Property” and as the one to “Disperse Enemy Aliens.” The fact that he is Native does not exempt him from becoming an oppressor—although he does not acknowledge his complicity. He does not want to own this story but distances himself from the Canadians, the “Whitemen” who gave him this job and “a commendation” for a job well done: “No, no, says Coyote. This story is not a good Coyote story. This story is a good Canadian story” (166). With Coyote, King uses an ambiguous transformer character that in oral traditions is never idealized but rather shown as making mistakes (from which listeners/readers can learn). In King’s earlier story “The One About Coyote Going West,” he is responsible for the “big mistake” that creates a consumer culture; in this story, he falls for the government’s propaganda and considers his job of confiscating Japanese Canadian property and of displacing people from their homes as legal. The narrator has a different view:

Canadian story. Coyote story. Sometimes it’s hard to tell the difference. All those words begin with C.

Callous, carnage, catastrophe, chicanery.

...

Cold-blooded, complicit, concoct, condemn. (166)

These and other c-words that he lists reflect the narrator’s disagreement with both the government’s racist policy and Coyote’s role as perpetrator; he places the c-word “cupidity” emphatically at the end of his list (166). Although colonialism, another c-word, is not mentioned here, it is implied if one reads the story in a multidirectional manner. The narrator clearly distances himself from Coyote and his stories of denial, suggesting that Coyote makes another “big mistake” by continuing the dehumanization he and his people had experienced:

They are not like you and me.

They look like you and me, I says.

Oh no, says Coyote, you are mistaken. They look like Enemy Aliens. (167)

In spite of being victimized himself when he was arrested by the RCMP, Coyote further collaborates with the “Whitemen” after he reappears: “I’m going to that New Mexico. I’m going to that Los Alamos place in New Mexico, help those Whitemen want to make the world safe for freedom” (176). Ironically, the narrator comments that since New Mexico is “mostly that desert and those mountains,” there is “[n]othing much in that Los

Alamos place that Coyote can mess up” (176). As a conclusion to his story that contains “another story,” King inspires readers to learn from Coyote’s mistakes and practise their own multidirectional memory in this discourse on national security. Los Alamos is well known for its National Laboratory that specializes in national security science and in which computer technology simulates terrorist attacks. Even more significantly related to the theme of the story, it is also the site of the research centre that created the atomic bomb that fell on Japan.

While the poets in *In Honour of Our Grandmothers* tell two stories—the Jewish and the Aboriginal one, albeit in an interconnected manner—King tells only one story while, at the same time, telling/bringing forth another one. Both texts deconstruct the hierarchy among hi/stories by showing how they are intertwined. The story of the Japanese Canadian internment got the Canadian public’s attention in a Prime Minister’s apology twenty years earlier than the story of the displacement of Aboriginal children into abusive institutions (1988 vs. 2008). The Jewish/Aboriginal “comparison” is unsettling, as the Holocaust—implied in this connection—is much more recognized as a horrific event in European history than is the genocide of colonialism in North America.⁷ One may agree with Rothberg that the authors’ particular linkages speak to “memory’s multidirectionality,” which “provides a critical resource . . . for contesting that unequal distribution of attention” (*Multidirectional Memory* 310) and which is opposite to “competitive memory” (which we see in Winnipeg right now in the discussion about displays at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights⁸). His theory of multidirectional memory echoes influential critics like James Clifford and his concepts of travelling cultures as well as Edward Said. Said’s statement in *Culture and Imperialism* about “ideas of counterpoint, intertwining and integration” support Rothberg’s argument that multidirectional memory does not take away from but enriches the understanding of oppression: “If, for example, French and Algerian or Vietnamese history, Caribbean or African or Indian and British history are studied separately rather than together, then the experiences of domination and being dominated remain artificially, and falsely, separated” (259).

McAllister asserts that “colonial history has shaped the realities for postwar British Columbia, marking anyone who is not recognized as some variation of an ideal British subject as a perpetual outsider who threatens the integrity of what is imagined to be this province’s social body” (425; emphasis mine). Her observation is reflected in King’s story but also in the

aggressive assimilation policy put into practice in residential schools. The residential school novel *My Name Is Seepetza* is set in British Columbia and written by Nlaka'pamux (Interior Salish) residential school survivor Shirley Sterling. The fictionalized narrative, based on the author's own experience, is framed as a "secret journal" written for one year in the school by a twelve-year-old girl. Although the Aboriginal story is foregrounded, the author alludes to "the other story" of the Japanese Canadians by telling about her father who beat her brother for calling them "Japs"—her father, who had been "a guard" at the internment camp. The style of Sterling's novel is allusive, capturing the limited view of a child who could observe but not interpret what she saw. Jo-Ann Episkenew explains that "by refusing to dramatize situations that clearly have sensational potential, Sterling subtly executes her socio-pedagogical goals. What Seepetza portrays is her norm, and readers are forced to look beneath the matter-of-fact descriptions to understand how the events described would affect a child" (128). Therefore, readers have to read between the lines in order to understand not only the extent of the disturbing school experiences, but also the significance of the cross-cultural theme. The mentioning of her father being a guard "in a camp near Firefly during World War II" (41) brings up the question asked by McAllister, a child of *Nisei*, second generation Japanese Canadians and internment survivors, "how the First Nations would have viewed my mother and her generation, interned on their territories" (438). McAllister also mentions close relations between some First Nations and the Japanese Canadians; similarly, Sterling emphasizes the friendly relations her father had with the people he guarded. Still, as a guard, her father was on the side of the perpetrators, complicit like King's Coyote character albeit not in an equally dehumanizing manner. His guarding is presented very differently than his role as sharpshooter in World War I. Like many other Aboriginal men, he not only had to endure residential schools but also, following right after, the war from which he came home carrying the guilt of the perpetrator: "He said once that the Germans they killed were just boys" (Sterling 103). Another episode in the novel that includes Japanese Canadians relates Seepetza's hospital stay in a room that she shares with a Japanese girl. Again, Seepetza only briefly comments on the difference that she observes between their lives: while the Japanese parents are visiting their daughter every day, Seepetza assumes that her parents are not coming because they were not even told about her stay at the hospital. She rightly assumes this as Native peoples were considered wards of the state, governed by the Indian Act and

hindered from governing their own lives. The continued oppression, in the 1950s and later, through the continuing existence of colonial legislation, sets Native peoples apart from the Japanese Canadians, even if the latter experienced racism long after their designation as enemy aliens was lifted.

Multidirectional memory of historical traumas may make us aware of “debts and interdependencies that most of us were trained to ignore” (Wong 160). In her play *Burning Vision*, Métis playwright Marie Clements, a descendant of the Sahtu Dene, fictionalizes the interdependence between colonialism and the imperialism of World War II by exposing the link between resource exploitation (uranium mining) on Dene territory and the use of this resource in the creation of the bombs that fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Like Sterling, she opens her text (the published version of the play) with a map. Sterling’s novel shows a map with a drawing of the residential school on one side and her home, the family ranch, on the other. Although at first glance the binary seems to be clear, looking more closely, similarities reveal themselves. The drawing of the ranch is rendered in a similar style to that of the school, as if to say that while home is different from the school, it is tainted by a long history of “cultural oppression and coercive change” of which the residential school is “merely an important cog” (J. R. Miller qtd. in McKegney 17). After reading the story, it also becomes clear that the father’s experiences during the two wars impact life at home. Clements’ map shows the setting of the play, the Northwest Territories (NWT), where the uranium was found. However, this map also illustrates interconnections as it is overwritten by a textual map, statements about intersections of Indigenous and Japanese history—from the discovery of the uranium to its implication in cancer among the Indigenous people in the NWT to the bombing of the Japanese cities to the travelling of six members of the Deline community (a Sahtu Dene and Métis community) to Hiroshima in 1998; inserted as well are texts on the branding of Japanese Canadians as enemy aliens and their internment in British Columbia. This emphatic representation of the play’s theme of interconnections of trauma that travel beyond a specific geographic site and time period is further enforced by the play’s structure into “Movements,” rather than Acts:

- Movement One: “The Frequency of Discovery” (19)
- Movement Two: “Rare Earth Elements” (42)
- Movement Three: “Waterways” (75)
- Movement Four: “Radar Echoes” (102)

It was on First Nations land that Japanese Canadians were interned and it was on their territory that uranium was “discovered”—a word loaded

with connotations of erasure in the name of “progress” and “civilization.”⁹ In each case, their stewardship of the land and their title to the land were not honoured. Although the plot of this play is carried by the varied (and positive) relationships between Japanese and Aboriginal (Dene and Métis) characters, the opening and the subtitles emphasize the land as the central focus. This point is made strongly in the discussion of the play by Rita Wong, who positions herself as “a writer and critic who lives on unceded Coast Salish territory otherwise known as Vancouver” (160). The play’s imagining of a transcultural circulation of trauma foregrounds the destruction of the land as the root cause of traumatic events happening to different peoples. Wherever we direct our memories, we will always be on the land, on the one shared Earth. The conquest-based ideology of imperialism as an extension of colonialism created wars that made peoples into both perpetrators and victims. (Pearl Harbor is mentioned on the play’s textual map of conquest, “discovery,” and trauma as well.)

The narrator in Thomas King’s story, whose list of c-words culminates in “cupidity,” points out that mostly “those White people . . . like to fight. They fight with each other. And then they fight with those other people. And pretty soon everyone is fighting. Even some of us Indians are fighting” (*A Short History* 53). Similarly, in the preface to his historical novel *Crazy Dave*, Anishinaabe author Basil Johnston condemns the two world wars as caused by European greed for land, in other words, as the action of indestructible Weendigos who “wanted land, and all of it and *more*” (18). Because of the importance of the land, Clements’ play ends with images envisioning not the coming together of the two peoples—Japanese and Aboriginals—but of representations of non-humans from each land: “*Glowing herds of caribou move in unison over the vast empty landscape as cherry blossoms fall till they fill the stage*” (122). Wong points out that this conclusion refers to “not only shared suffering but also the one Earth on which they all live” (170). However, while the conclusion is hopeful, it is also haunting with its allusion to radium in the glowing of the herds. As well, the “vast empty landscape” is reminiscent of the apocalyptic vision in the novel *Fool’s Crow* by Blackfoot author James Welch, set in the 1870s, with its prophecy of a “vast, empty prairie” with no animals, only people dying from smallpox (356). In each case, multidirectional memories of history emphasize the Indigenous philosophy of “all my relations” by pointing to the need for inclusion, not only of the suffering of different peoples but also of non-humans. As Wong states: “May there still be enough time for us to deeply learn and understand ecological interdependence” (211).

Richard Wagamese is an Anishinaabe author from Wabaseemoong, Ontario (White Dog First Nation), a community seriously affected by hydroelectric developments in the 1950s and by mercury poisoning, known as Ontario Minamata disease, in the 1960s. As has been documented with regards to other communities, these developments generate community traumas on many levels.¹⁰ Kai Erikson argues that communal trauma is “different from (and more than) the sum of the private wounds” (185) and means a damaging of “the texture of community” (187). Together with the residential school legacy, these communities have a high rate of family breakdowns¹¹ so that children were (and are) removed into the foster care system in great numbers. Wagamese himself was taken into care as a toddler and separated from his siblings, as was often the case in the so-called Sixties Scoop (Fournier and Crey 87). Unlike authors Cariou and King, who do not address the collective memory of a specific colonial trauma but the “trans/historicity” of a colonial trauma that is centuries old and nationwide (Van Styvendale), Wagamese imaginatively works through the collective and individual trauma caused by the removal of children through the child welfare system.

Having been robbed of a sense of belonging as a young person, he imagines in his fiction new identities, families, and communities in which the wounded come together to heal each other. The formation of new relationships as a result of a multidirectional approach to traumatic memory constitutes a major theme in his work. It could be argued that the spatial and ideological diaspora (McLeod 19), into which he was thrown through colonial policies, forced him to look beyond a “fixed national and ethnic sense of identity” (Levy and Sznajder 1) and to move from a collective memory of his people to a “cosmopolitan” mode of memory, since “diaspora opens possibilities for memory that reach beyond national modes of identification” (Levy and Sznajder 15). Wagamese “came home” through stories, as Neal McLeod would put it, reimagining again and again in his four novels published to date different ways of belonging. Kristina Fagan explains in her essay on trauma in the texts of three Aboriginal novelists the importance of fiction as an indirect way of working through a traumatic past. She argues that while “the repetition of traumatic experiences may be painful or harmful, humour and storytelling can provide a more distanced and self-aware form of repetition, allowing repeated and indirect revisiting of a trauma” (211). She discusses Richard Van Camp, Tomson Highway, and Eden Robinson, but I want to argue that Richard Wagamese also chooses this “indirect revisiting.” *Keeper’n Me*, his

first and most widely known novel, is a fictionalized autobiography (as he explains in his interview with Paula Kirman) allowing him, to borrow from Fagan, “to speak of one’s own painful experience while treating it as fiction” (216). It is also a text known for its humour. In subsequent novels, he revisits his trauma of being separated from family and community by telling stories about losses and dysfunction in non-Native families, positioning Native world views as sources of strength for everyone’s wellbeing. Although each of his novels includes a character’s “look of recognition,” of seeing the other’s story in one’s own, I will focus here on a novel that did not garner much critical attention, *A Quality of Light*. It is a work of fiction that highlights cross-cultural movements but also reveals their challenges and limitations.

Even in his first novel Wagamese gives an example of the potential of multidirectional memory “to create new forms of solidarity and visions of justice,” as Rothberg claims (*Multidirectional Memory* 4), by including black people in the main character’s restorative journey. In his second novel, *A Quality of Light*, Wagamese shows—through a narrative about entangled lives—how ethnic boundaries may be crossed through the commonality of “brokenness,” as the narrator intimates in a description of a street scene in Toronto:

It was summer and there were children everywhere on the streets. I found myself searching among them for a face like Johnny’s until I realized that the faces of the lonely, disenfranchised and afraid are everywhere. Their faces passed in clumps of browns, blacks and white. There didn’t seem to be a whole lot of movement between the races. The color lines were drawn indelibly everywhere, even in playgrounds. (106)

While highlighting the “lack of movement” between the races, the narrator starts out with the perception of people’s commonality in their woundedness. In this novel, Wagamese rewrites the “Indian/white” binary as a reflection of the colour lines in Canadian society. It is through their disenfranchisement that the two characters, Joshua Kane, the Aboriginal boy adopted by a non-Aboriginal, devotedly Christian farming family, and Johnny Gebhardt, a white boy growing up with an abusive, alcoholic father, become friends. When the two boys meet, it is only Johnny who goes through a hard time; Joshua is at that point unaware of any loss in his life, as he is well cared for by his adoptive parents. However, as they do not tell him anything about his Ojibway identity and Canada’s colonial history, he is totally unprepared for the racism he encounters in high school. Ironically, it is his friend who had learned about “Indians” in library books into which he retreated as an escape from his abusive home who is the first to make Joshua aware of his

difference. However, this is an unsettling novel with a tragic ending. Johnny appropriates the collective trauma of colonialism, which victimized his Ojibway friend, as his own, and this leads to his demise. Reminiscent of Levy and Sznajder's question about homeless, ahistorical individuals who in our globalized societies collect memories in an ad hoc fashion from TV, books, and movies (23), this character who grew up with "no history" (Wagamese, *A Quality* 201) does exactly that: fashioning for himself a history and a collective memory that gives his life meaning. As well, this novel is set at the time of the Oka Crisis, which was more than a mere "crisis" but the result of "400 years of colonial injustice" (Ladner and Simpson 1).

Johnny understands this and responds in a confrontational manner by taking hostages and making demands on the government. However, the standoff fails and instead, Wagamese puts the emphasis on unity; at the end, the Native character Joshua "disappeared into the words" of "the other," his non-Native friend Johnny (317). The novel does not end with the death of a person who crossed the colour line but with a story from the oral traditions about how the coming of the light into this world brought awareness of difference: "The Animal People . . . could see each other for the first time and they were scared. . . . The coming of the Light meant that they had more to learn of each other and their world. But they learned it and they continue to pass on these teachings to each other, and especially to Man, the newest and strangest of the Animal People" (327). In spite of the tragic ending, the plot of the novel encourages living "with each other's differences" (327) and strongly undermines a validation of unidirectional memory, namely that "the only memories and identities that are . . . possible are ones that exclude elements of alterity and forms of commonality with others" (Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory* 4).

To conclude, I have cited from and interpreted the writings by five different Indigenous authors as examples of literary representations of transcultural circulations of trauma. Although each one of these authors is affected by collective memories of colonial trauma in varying degrees, they approach that history in a multidirectional manner that goes beyond their own hi/story of suffering. Warren Cariou writes about his unsettling insights when he experienced a de-territorialized Canada, re-territorialized in the context of a concentration camp. Although he is well aware of Canada's colonialism and neo-colonialism, the discursive knotting of seemingly disparate realities made him look more deeply into suppressed stories. Thomas King, on the other hand, takes the experience of colonialism out

of its specific context of victimization and instead reads it through the lens of another story, which is ambiguous about the boundary between “Coyote story” and “Canada story,” making Coyote a victimizer in another traumatic chapter of Canada’s history, undermining racial boundaries. Similarly, Shirley Sterling, a residential school survivor, shows in her fictionalized life story not only her and her family’s spatial and ideological diaspora, as Neal McLeod identifies the residential school experience, but also includes a father’s troubled memories of being a guard of a Japanese Canadian internment camp and the guilt of a soldier in a war that killed boys. Both Sterling and Marie Clements open their texts with maps. Sterling shows the school and the home ranch as separated yet related images and Clements presents a map of the NWT that is overwritten by conquest, resource exploitation, and subsequent deaths—in Japan through the bombing, in Canada through cancer caused by uranium mining. Clements adds another layer to the multidirectional memory theme by emphasizing the land as the basis for all life and the significance of interconnections with all of creation. Building on the notion that, as the original inhabitants of this land, Indigenous peoples are the hosts for the newcomers, Richard Wagamese imagines in his novels communities of the disenfranchised and the broken. In *A Quality of Light*, he leads his readers into “the dark corners” of the history and legacy of colonialism, as Himani Bannerji puts it, while revealing the light in the friendship of two people from different backgrounds.

None of these narratives can be read in one direction, so to speak, but engage readers in movements between different sites and sights of trauma. Readers are taken from Auschwitz to Canada, from an Aboriginal Coyote story to the Japanese Canadian internment history, from a residential school narrative to the two world wars, from uranium extraction in the NWT to the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, from perpetrators who are also victims to victims who are also perpetrators, from colonial trauma experienced by Indigenous characters to traumatic events in the lives of other disenfranchised, broken people. With Paul Gilroy, one may sum up these narratives as stories about “the universality of our elemental vulnerability to the wrongs we visit upon each other” (4). Coming back to my own positionality as the interpreter of these stories, they speak to me because when doing my work in Aboriginal studies, I keep hearing “the other story” that happened in my country of origin and the impacts of its intergenerational legacy on both victims and perpetrators.

NOTES

- 1 Eva Wiseman, in her young adult novel *Kanada*, uses this place in Auschwitz as the setting for her story, as Cariou mentions; Jewish Canadian playwright Jason Sherman inserts in his play *None Is Too Many* a scene ironically titled “Welcome to Kanada,” in which a Canada refusing entry to Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany is seen in approximation to Kanada, the place in Auschwitz. The point is made that not as many people would have perished, with their belongings left in Kanada, if the country Canada had accepted more Jewish people: “Beware the tyrant, I say. He does not live in a foreign land stained with blood; he lives amongst us, dripping with ink” (Sherman 154).
- 2 Christian J. Krampe: “African-Canadian literature thus constitutes a counter-memory whose goal is a restructuring of the prevalent ‘whitewashed’ national memory of Canada” (63).
- 3 This is well documented, for example, in Ursula Hegi’s collection of interview-based stories in *Tearing the Silence: On Being German in America*.
- 4 This “look of recognition” is very different from, actually the opposite to, Charles Taylor’s condescending “politics of recognition,” which Himani Bannerji critiques as “a recognition from the patron, . . . an elitist form of self-deception” (149). It is also different from struggles for recognition over injustices in the context of competitive memory, “over whose history and culture will be recognized” (Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory* 20).
- 5 Besides the authors discussed in this article, I want to mention Lee Maracle, Sky Lee, and Hiromi Goto. The multidirectional view on genocide as a theme in the work of Anishinaabe artist Carl Beam is also noteworthy in this context: for example, his painting *Columbus Chronicles* (1992) that links the bombing of Hiroshima with colonialism in North America.
- 6 Before I go on with my discussion, I want to acknowledge as inspirations for this article not only Terri Tomsy and Jennifer Bowering Delisle—the organizers of the seminar on “Cosmopolitan Memory and Travelling Trauma” as part of the 2011 Annual Conference of the American Comparative Literature Association—but also my international MA student Keiko Kusamoto from Japan, who defended her thesis in 2012 on the topic *How Can I Read Aboriginal Literature?: The Intersections of Canadian Aboriginal and Japanese Canadian Literature*.
- 7 The understanding of colonialism as genocide is still being debated. I concur with sociologist Chris Powell who states in his recently published book *Barbaric Civilization: A Critical Sociology of Genocide* that “the systematic study of genocide in Canada would make up a book in itself,” but that “the simplest argument for understanding Indigenous experiences as genocide concerns the Indian residential school system (IRS)” (6).
- 8 The construction of the museum is accompanied by many public debates about the content and space of the displays. Which atrocity, which genocide should be especially emphasized? (See, for example, the article in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, 24 Mar. 2011, “Most oppose separate Holocaust gallery.”)
- 9 Richard Van Camp from the Tlicho nation in the NWT comments in an interview with Japanese scholar Junko Muro on his short narrative “The Uranium Leaking from Port Radium and Rayrock Mines Is Killing Us”: “that’s our connection to Japan. . . . The uranium that was used to develop the bombs that were dropped over Hiroshima and Nagasaki came from our land,” and that is why “there is so much uranium sickness in the Northwest Territories” (300).
- 10 Kai Erikson’s article “Notes on Trauma and Community” not only mentions his research in communities in the United States and in Haiti, but also in the Grassy Narrows First Nation community in Ontario, which was also affected by the Minamata disease.

- 11 Sylvia Morrisseau, an MA student in Native Studies at the University of Manitoba, is involved in thesis research on the link between the high ratio of children in foster care and environmental devastation, specifically in her community of Wabaseemoong.

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