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Appropriate Appropriations?

Reading Responsibility in Joan Crate's *Pale as Real Ladies*

When I teach Alberta Métis writer Joan Crate's 1989 collection of poetry *Pale as Real Ladies: Poems for Pauline Johnson* to my mostly second-year Women's Studies students in a course on Feminist Theory and Practice in the Arts, I always begin with the comment that I am astonished at how Crate's work is so critically underexamined.[1] We study the text's use of image and sound, deployment of metaphor and simile, as well as of other rhetorical devices, and the patterns of idea that repeat across the collection. I break from a distanced relation to the work by telling my students that the text represents, for me, some of the most gorgeous writing in the English language. But I also use the work to discuss issues of ethical responsibility in acts both of representation and reception. We explore how, in a feminist aesthetic, the value of a work is indissociable from the meaning(s) that it makes, how art both produces and is produced by particular values, norms, and assumptions, and how feminist readings of artistic production (visual, literary, musical, theatrical, or otherwise) fundamentally engage questions of responsibility. In particular, my purpose in this endeavour is to understand with the students how "appropriation" works in Crate's text. It is typically understood as a seizing of something for one's own purposes without permission or, in Deborah Root's analysis of Western dominance, as an inexorable cultural taking or taking over that consumes human bodies in capitalism's "cannibal system" (7). Yet, appropriation can function at once as an act of violence *and* an action against it. Reading Crate's work thus offers a critical exercise in questions of historical, material-discursive, and hermeneutic accountability. Reading "appropriation" this way, I locate Crate's work as a critical intervention against Canadian colonialism, not simply as a crucial primary literature of resistance, but also as a decolonizing form of literary and canon criticism.

The text poses particular sets of challenges in confronting this very question of responsibility in representation—in literary art proper and in its critical "taking up." In *Pale as Real Ladies*, Crate "re-invents"—indeed, she *appropriates*—in first-person voice the life and work of Emily Pauline "Tekahionwake" Johnson (1861-1913). A woman of mixed heritage (her father was a Mohawk chief and her mother was English), Johnson was born on the Six Nations Reserve near Brantford, Ontario. She became a widely recognized, much celebrated, canonically acknowledged poet and performer, but Crate's "Johnson" is hardly recognizable to many readers familiar with this historical and literary personage. As David Stirrup suggests, Crate's figure "stands in stark distinction to the refined observer of her mother's upper-class etiquette that we know Johnson to have been" (64). In Crate's work, he argues, "[t]he Johnson of the singing paddle, national icon, pristine and proper like the providential puritan, meets the tainted vessel of commodification" (65). What is immensely difficult in Crate's collection, in a poem like "I am a Prophet," for example, is that Crate's language contentiously, even shockingly, images "Johnson" as a cultural sex worker/prostitute, a type of culturo-literary sell-out who offers the Indigenous female body as object for "display"—a sustained trope across the poem. What follows in this paper is my grappling with this representation and my reading of it in relation to larger questions of ethical responsibility in/of representation. I work to understand how Crate's text forces readers to confront their place(s) in the scene of reading, to engage questions of identity, difference, and appropriation and their articulation in relation to particular operations of value and power in order to *better* understand, not Johnson's life, identity, and work expressly, but the conditions of their production,[2] in terms both of literary and material Canadian history. Crate's Johnson is, tautologically, as much a construction of the contemporary poet's imagination as she was (Crate suggests) created by the prevailing assumptions and conventions of her largely white, Western, late-nineteenth-century audience.[3]

In so many ways, Johnson was able to "speak" within the Canadian literary canon and certainly, at least, to the Canadian stage-going public. Veronica Strong-Boag and Carole Gerson recognize that in compilations of great Canadians like *Maclean's* "One Hundred Most Important Figures," "Aboriginals and women are sparse enough, but First Nations women are utterly absent" (6). Nonetheless, Johnson holds prominence as the first published Aboriginal poet in Canada and as the Aboriginal performer who, as Greg Young-Ing claims, "gained the highest level of notoriety in the literary world *and* sold the most books in Canada" (182; see also Margolis 179). She is one of the few women of her era who made a living by writing and performing her poetry, and Beth Brant claims in her a vital literary and spiritual (grand)mother (176): "Pauline Johnson began a movement that has proved unstoppable in its momentum—the movement of First Nations women to write down our stories" (175). Strong-Boag and Gerson write,

> [i]n the high age of Anglo-Saxon imperialism and patriarchy she was . . . a figure of resistance, simultaneously challenging both the racial divide between Native and European, and the conventions that constrained her sex. Her vision of Canada, of First Nations, and of women, articulated in print and on stage, was very different from that set forth by the Fathers of Confederation in 1867. (236)

But without in any way detracting (I hope) from Johnson's integral place in both the history of women's and Aboriginal writing in Canada or from the excellent work of scholars who take up her acts of resistance, it can be argued that Johnson's ability to achieve the kind of (full) agency often popularly ascribed to her is questionable, given the racist and assimilationist disposition in Canada in her time—and this is a complexity, I argue, that Crate's text *performs*. It was of course difficult for women artists generally to gain reception for their work, particularly so for women of minoritized groups—especially those artists working to trouble entrenched gendered and racialized conceptions of cultural and literary value in their time. For example, William Lighthall's "Indian" section in the canonical *Songs of the Great Dominion* (1889) contains, as Charlotte Gray has noted, an overwhelming number of contributions (9 out of 12) by non-Aboriginal writers; the other three selections are translations of traditional native songs (147). In other sections, Lighthall includes two of Johnson's poems: "In the Shadows" (a paddling poem) and "At the Ferry" (set on the Grand River), neither of which treat Indigenous issues. I'm not commenting on the value of the pieces included in texts like Lighthall's—rather identifying, as other critics (like Gray) have recognized, that what gets disregarded are more overtly politically polemical works, such as Johnson's "A Cry from an Indian Wife" or "The Cattle Thief" (often performed in the first half of her recitals) in which the poet forcefully castigates British violence against First Nations peoples; these are works more threatening to entrenched racisms contained both in the canon and by the broader culture. Brant recognizes the way Johnson's work is historically used/taken up in the literary canon: "[I]n reading Johnson, a non-Native might come away with the impression that she only wrote idyllic sonnets to the glory of nature, the 'noble savage' or the 'vanishing redman,' themes that were popular at the turn of the century" (176). There appears a discernible tension between what was sought after, valued, and reproduced in Aboriginal *writing* and what was actually being demanded by Western "consumers" from First Nations *oral performance*, which, in the latter, is the staging of more violent encounters with the Other—that is, explicit representations of conflict and the aggression of colonial injustices.

Several scholars have traced the predilection among American and Canadian audiences for "Wild West" shows, performed by "showmen" like Buffalo Bill Cody and the once exiled Sioux Chief Sitting Bull; as Betty Keller writes, "[R]ecital by an Indian was something of a freak show, a chance to show their children *what a real live Indian looks like*" (112; emphasis added). This desire is taken up in relation to discourses around authenticity and the vanishing Indian, which converge in the Anglo-Canadian imagination. As Root identifies, "authenticity" was linked in popular understanding to ethnological assumptions that the "bona fide" Native was/is exemplified in pre-European contact (116). Typically, Johnson executed the last portion of her performances, while reciting verse about birdsong and landscapes, in classically upper-middle class Victorian garb for women: corset, silk stockings, ball gown, and heels; in the earlier half, where she recited highly political poems about white brutality in the appropriation of Indian lands and peoples, she performed in beaded dress with furs, hairfeathers, bearclaw necklace, and both a "souvenir" scalp and hunting knife. Her Aboriginal "costume,"[4] described by Gray as combining "shapely femininity with exotic appeal" (158), had the potential both to shock her Victorian audiences and fulfil their cultural stereotypes. The knife and scalp functioned as signifiers of Indian "savagery" and the low bodice of her dress facilitated exposure of the body; indeed, "[a] bear-claw necklace . . . modestly filled the expanse left by [her] low-cut neckline" and her skirt was "daringly short for the time" (Adams n. pag.).[5] As Diana Brydon argues, "Natives dressed as Europeans were disappointing, ridiculous, or boring to British observers in this period; Natives in supposedly authentic dress were thrilling commodities" (par. 19). The titillation of difference marked as "savagery" is symbolized not simply in the bearclaw necklace and more obviously the scalp that Johnson wore but, too, in an amalgamation of assumptions around sexual/racial otherness. I am careful to note here that I am not suggesting that Johnson's wearing of the bearclaw necklace may not have had deep symbolic/spiritual/community significance for her. On the contrary, I am speaking to Crate's taking up of Johnson's work/performance in relation to assumptions about her "spectators." As Patrick Watson contends, "[H]ere was the . . . appearance of a voice that could accuse us of our genocidal behaviour but at the same time forgive, and even say in effect: it's really alright" (96). Julie Rak, too, contends that Johnson's audiences "connected her outrage with the violence of a desirable, but mercifully vanquished lawless Wild West, one which could be lived through vicariously in a performance" (165). Ultimately, it can be argued that the "scandal" transposed on the racialized body marked as exotic other is resolved by the closing metamorphosis of her performance—that is, Johnson's absorption into the Victorian lady, visual reassurance of the efficacy of the Canadian government's policies on assimilation. Thus, surely at least some of her audiences consumed her politics as performances—the "work is transformed into pure commodity," as Root claims—that is, aestheticized moments; white guilt over the violence of white racism could be purged within the comfortable space of theatre. Root argues that "[t]he process of exotification is another kind of cultural cannibalism. . . . feed[ing] particular cultural, social, and political needs of the appropriating culture. . . . The consumption of the spectacle of difference is able to make the alienated Westerner feel alive" (30). As Rak asserts, mainstream attention to Johnson largely functioned to mask non-Native interest in Indigenous production indeed "lifted away from the context of colonization" (163)[6]—a staging of colonization's operations as art rather than truth.

This is in part what Daniel Francis means in *The Imaginary Indian* by his troubling claim that Johnson was a "White Man's Indian"—that she "demanded little from her audience beyond sentimental regret, which was easy enough to give" (117). To better understand this assertion and Crate's "rendition" of Johnson in *Pale as Real Ladies,* it is important to note that Johnson herself recognized her lack of autonomy, her inability to realize the full, whole, artist/person of her choosing; she described herself to a friend as "the mere doll of the people and a slave to money" (qtd. in Keller 45). In a private letter to her friend Harry O'Brien, she exposed this recognition: "More than all things I hate and despise brain debasement, literary 'pot-boiling,' and yet I have done, will do these things, though I sneer at my own littleness in so doing. . . . You thought me more of a true poet, more the child of inspiration than I have proved to be. . . . *I could do so much better if they would let me*" (qtd. in Keller 50; emphasis added). Margolis argues that Johnson "offered a rare glimpse into Native culture for mainstream Canada, albeit in conformity with her White audience's expectations and the mores of the times" (179). Lorraine York takes up Francis' idea of the "celebrity Indian," a type of the "imaginary Indian," to explore these critical interpretations of Johnson as having "slavishly fed her public whatever image they desired" (14). York suggests that, while critics variously differ in their understanding of Johnson's real control or autonomy in relation to her self-presentation, it was the poet's commercial success—her stardom, fame—that is significant to her interaction with audiences (14). For York, it is precisely Johnson's popularity and commercial profitability that "reified her as a commodifiable 'Mohawk Princess' for non-native consumption" (9). Certainly, Francis contends that ultimately Johnson's voice was one "that White society *could* hear" (119). Thinking about these interpretations, I argue not simply that what Johnson's audiences wanted of her was a "*plume* of tepid verse" (Crate, *Pale* 33; emphasis added), the exhibition of Native "authenticity" against Victorian femininity in the most simplistic renderings of these, *nor* that this is what/all Johnson offered—but that in Crate's re-invention, she stages the literary-material conditions of Johnson's historical context to explore the violence not simply of her representation, but of representation itself, self-reflexively "performed" across Crate's pale pink volume of poems.

Indeed, Crate's text frames the ability to "represent"—or perform—one's marginal culture/dominant culture as determined by operations of power and disciplinary practices, performing, then, a critique of Euro-Canadian culture and canons—and Johnson's "authentic" place within these. In "I am a Prophet," Crate addresses this historical commodification of First Nations identity and culture within Anglo-Canadian society (*Pale* 60). In a first reading, text written on/as the Aboriginal female body appears to mark its speaker not as the prophet suggested by the title, but as a literary-cultural prostitute instead,[7] selling the body as spectacle, the body to be seen. And yet, the body on display is history's text; inscribed on this (broken) form of the "prophet" in *Pale* are the discourses of cannibal consumption of culture and racist genocide. The effects of herded peoples and nations contained on reserves are "spelled out" in the peddling of the last vestiges of autonomy—the human body, will, and spirit:

> No, don't go yet!
> You haven't seen it all.
> For ten bucks I will show you
> every scar on my body.
> Another ten, you can make your own.
> I will dance for you in a veil
> of red waterfalls. (60)

Here, violence done to land and nation becomes writ on the body; her readers (Crate's, Johnson's) might be invited to see that Johnson's (certainly "Johnson's") narrative performances are not (just) an act of selling out—but rather an insistent resistance ("No, don't go yet!") against effacement. But this is not a salvage project; Crate's depiction troubles any one-dimensional reading of Johnson's capacity to imbue her white audiences with Indigenous culture and history. In the poem, the speaker tries to carve out a space for herself/her history—the names of the lost tribes of her people, she says, can be read (for a dollar) across her toes. And, too, ironically in a bitter pun, the spirits "will speak to you from my mouth / if you will just buy me a drink" (*Pale* 60). That "Johnson" has little left to give/barter in a historical commerce that, as the poem avers, has resulted in an almost but also never total eradication of Native *being* makes it ironic—but powerfully poignant—that the speaker's last act of resistance in Part II of the collection is to offer *herself*—the age-old "trade" in/of women—in/as exchange in a representational trope for material violence. In these relations, it can never be a fair "exchange": "ten bucks" signals as a trope the abusive historical terms of trade for Indigenous peoples in this country. Significantly, that her body is marked by "*pen* knives" (*Pale* 60; emphasis added) is another urgent acknowledgement that this material violence is deep-rooted in representation—including *this* one. Such "double" disfigurement, Stirrup argues, "leaves us with a disquieting spectacle" (65). Thus, in *Pale as Real Ladies*, we see a displacement of the pornographic gaze of Western dominance onto the female body (of the text) as a way to signal a problem with representation *itself*—including Crate's recognition of her own acts of "taking" and distorting. Critically, the image of Johnson as literary-cultural prostitute is "overwritten" into one that refuses to rob Johnson wholly of agency (nor fully inscribe her with it), since she is marked in the poem's title—its governing, directive, framing apparatus—as the "prophet," as one not simply caught as specular object of the gaze, as the "seen," but as herself an actor—*as one who sees*, and one who *knows*. She occupies deeper structures of recognition, tied to knowing out of trauma. And in this way, the worst of racist-sexist stereotypes of the Aboriginal woman as "easy squaw" (see, for example, work by Marilyn Dumont and Janice Acoose, among others)[8] made to serve/service as object are exploded. The prophet's (the poet's?) message, then, is this: positioning the prostitute here exhorts *recognition* of the violence of "pimping" (even, I argue, of Crate's acts of "selling" Johnson on display, self-reflexively addressed here)—of the aggression in representation-as-pornography when there is no full freedom of consent by those trapped within its f(r)ame. Crate as author acknowledges the politics of appropriation, self-reflexively staged in the poem "The Society Page," a poem ostensibly about a gossip rag reporting on the historical Johnson's breakup with one of her lovers but which, in its reference to text (page) and society, pushes broader metacritical recognition of representational violence, including that of individuals and systems:

> Someone writes poems about me,
> words lying on the page, small corpses.
> . . . .
> She reels me into the late twentieth century
> where I am quaint as . . . disintegrating
> paper lace . . .
> . . . .
> As I wait now in someone else's hands
> for another betrayal. (*Pale* 27)

That words *lie* on the page is telling; that they function as acts of erasure/"disintegration" is signified in the trope of ultimate destruction: small corpses. Further, Crate not only implicates herself as scriptor in this violence but also draws us as readers into its complicity: the "Johnson" figure waits in *our* hands for betrayal as we hold the book in this very moment of reading. Thus, it is not only writers/representers but also receivers of the work who must register accountability. Without, I hope, relying on self-reflexivity as an alibi for damage, I argue that it is in part precisely this recognition of violence that best serves to undo its effect. In Crate's adroit pen carvings, it is not the figure of Johnson that is degraded in the text, but any dis/ingenuous and simplified rendering of her (full) agency, made to satisfy hegemonic interests in the service of an epistemic violence, that is refused, and the viciously oppressive contexts of her production that are ultimately "exposed." Stirrup argues, "[T]he national literary 'tradition' in which Pauline has taken a place becomes a sentimental romance" (65); this tradition/romance becomes deeply ruptured in Crate. Thus, I argue that this appropriation of the "historical"—what might be seen by some as linguistic violation—Johnson interrupts *in its violence* our complacency (whoever "we" in the act of reading might be), interrupts the satisfaction of our desire by which we feed on other subjects, forcing a confrontation *with*, not simply *in*, the act of reading itself.

Further in my work on Crate with students, I place readings by Root on cultural appropriation and Gayatri Spivak on subalterneity as "framing" strategies of my own for working through these issues of representational violence alongside Crate's book.[9] I recognize this as another "directive" manipulation of students' interpretive freedoms—as perhaps all pedagogical choices must be—but my purpose is to suggest how "contexts" function as more than historical situations and that structure as well as content produces particular ways and "whats" of knowing. In grappling with Spivak's revised text, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," students confront the issue of violence perpetrated in the assumption that the oppressed can transparently assume agency in a voice that is recognizable in/to dominant discourses. Specifically, Spivak suggests that the subaltern cannot speak—that is, more properly, she cannot be *heard*—since in colonial discourse, her subjectivity is necessarily produced according to the terms and norms of dominant culture. But Julia Emberley argues that the "Spivakian paradox" is confrontation with the redundancy that recognition of the *silencing* of the dispossessed "does not necessarily *address the voices* of the dispossessed" (74). Here, we are confronted with the question of agency and the imperative to responsibility. I suggest to my classes that probably we must recognize, as Rey Chow might propose and I argue Crate does, that Johnson is *not the non-duped* (Chow 344). In so recognizing, Chow argues, we return to the subaltern "a capacity for distrusting and resisting the symbolic orders that 'fool' her, while not letting go of the illusion that has structured her survival . . . not to neutralize the massive destructions committed under such orders as imperialism and capitalism" (344). I understand, then, in this rendering of the subaltern as the *not* non-duped, that Crate, by performing the conditions by which the subaltern cannot speak, produces "Johnson" in the paradoxically double negative, in the space of silence speaking (silence) even as "Johnson" can never be fully absorbed into it. She is not made to stand in as some universal phantasm of the "third world" victim, as Chandra Mohanty might phrase it.[10] While it might seem more to the point to situate Johnson as Spivak's "native informant," that is, the subject who speaks (and is received) within the dominant discourses of the age (recall Francis' claim, cited earlier, that Johnson's was a voice "that White society could hear"), I rather argue that

Crate's construction of Johnson is a staging of the subaltern speaking silence. The "Johnson" imaged here is very much a product of Crate's contemporary imagination—a metacritical positioning of the violence of representation. In "The Censored Life of a Lady Poet," "Johnson" articulates the distinction, central to Spivak's re-writing of her understanding of the position of subalterneity, between speaking and having the cultural authority to be *heard*:

> This is all I'm allowed—
> allusions glimpsed through a child's sketch
> in condensation—a circle, two eyes,
> a smile that opens my reaching mouth,
> the taste of peppermints on my tongue. (*Pale* 33)

In this tightly-closed semaphore, there is never "fullness," only a stick (stock) figure and a silence: it is a smile—not sound—that opens the poet's lips and the peppermints act as a kind of cold English sanitization on her tongue; "tongue" is, of course, a metonym—part for the whole—for language. Further,

> When my voice breaks
> I sip distilled water
> my reflection imprisoned in glass—
> lips gulping
> at a sound freezing in my fingers. (33)

"Breaks" here signals at once pause/emotion/fracture; her reflection is "imprisoned" in "distilled" water: again, the "sanitizations" of racist white Anglo-Canadian society allow little space in their pale clarity (water, glass) for unmediated (*reflection* of or on) her own representation. The figurative hand over her mouth, "lips gulping / at a sound freezing in my fingers" is another image of silencing/stifling, and is an intratextual reminder of fingers that sing for money in an earlier poem, "Gleichen" (*Pale* 20); she is being made to *eat her words*. In a staging of this stifling, Crate's "Johnson" gestures to the "screen of silence" through which she cannot speak: her poems are an "opaque window" and she must reach "[t]hrough a frost of words"; all she can afford the audience is a "glimmer of sweat at curtained edges" (33). Again, it is body rather than voice that Crate's "Johnson" must offer/trade to her audiences.

"The Poetry Reading" is another poem about speaking/silencing in Johnson's efforts to record "a world swallowed in one quick gulp" (*Pale* 18). While this poem is about recitation, we are drawn into this (as) re-citation: we enter into the act by "Reading the Poetry"—that is, *we perform* the "Poetry Reading" *in* the act of reading the poetry—and thus, method becomes meaning as meaning makes a method. But the violent act of absorption, of a world/history voraciously consumed by a cannibal culture, her dominant Anglo-Canadian audience becomes, for a moment, re-incorporated and projected/transferred/reversed outward: "Johnson" has an important story to expel (if, as subaltern, the ability to be *recognized* is also always under question/erasure: "Can you hear me?"). This abject telling, this (non)recognition is not a reconstruction but a rewriting—that is, writing as revision—that neither confers a subject status nor wholly robs *the object* of power. We are confronted with the image of the small girl shivering before her shack, whose "daydreams are bruises behind her eyes" and whose "unfinished womb" "oozes songs of suicide" (*Pale* 18). The text requires us to ask, to speak, to interject: is hers an "unfinished womb" because she is still a young girl, thus resisting the "full" exigencies of white middle-class nationalist-assimilationist femininity? Perhaps the speaker is performing the materiality of violent representation in the intimation she is not a "whole" woman in racist discourses on the gendered Aboriginal body? It is also possible that readers of this line will bear witness to it, in considering the violence of robbed reproduction and bodily violation in the horrifying history of forced sterilization of women globally and particularly of Native American women in the 1970s (see Burn 61-66, especially 63). "Johnson" *appeals* to the "powdered" woman (powder, of course, functions as a mask for sweat, expression, oil, acne, scars, and age; in this way we see that the "divide" between "real"/ladies and their manufactured Others is always and already false, that "difference" here is locatable not in some biology or bloodline but in the politics of deceit or cover, regulated by the technologies of racialized femininity), whose "plucked eyebrows" further indicate a purging of the material body and who sits in the *first row* (she occupies a primary space) to:

> look at me, diseased,
> scarred with smallpox
> seeping gonorrhea, lungs smothered with T.B.,
> drunk,
> pushed into a sewer, a reserve,
> the weed-choked backyard
> you never walk through,
> listen. (*Pale* 18)

What is on display here is again racist discourse written on the Indigenous female body, the violent effects (smallpox, gonorrhea, tuberculosis, alcoholism, land/life confiscation) of contact with Imperialist bodies and racisms, against which—even through which—the Other still struggles to speak a history "pieced from a jigsaw of flesh / torn from *dumb tongues*" (*Pale* 18; emphasis added). Still more defiantly,

> Under my skin
> blood beats along roadways
> barred with DO NOT ENTER signs
> walls of small scars.
> I will not return to silence. (*Pale* 18)

But again lest we romanticize full agency in the claim "I will not return to silence," the text exhorts us to note in "return" that the space from which the voice emerges *is* one of silence, and that refusal *not* to not speak does not ensure reception. In the context of nineteenth-century white privilege, the audience will be entertained and (thus) exculpated: they rise and clap. The woman whom the speaker addresses dusts "biscuit from the corner / of [her] mouth," which brings us painfully back to the poem's opening lines: "Tonight let me tell you of / a world swallowed in one quick gulp / with only crumbs remaining" (*Pale* 19, 18). There is a kind of benumbed sense of this erasure and the "Johnson" speaker dissolves into mute inactivity, for "I stare at pelts / hanging from my shoulder, / and sip from fine bone *china*" (*Pale* 19; emphasis added). The china for tea functions metonymically as artifact of cultural theft/consumption of art (and function itself) in the West; in "The Poetry Reading" especially, what appears in the world of the theatre is a microcosm of larger ingestion that "eats" tracts of lands—and her (the speaker's) words.

Indeed, Crate's poetry compellingly recognizes (and requires recognition) that cultural death can also be quite literal. In almost the exact centre of her second collection, *Foreign Homes*, stands the section, "Loose Feathers on Stone: for Shawnandithit," the suite of poems written for the "last of the Beothuk" (43). The caption/epigram on the subcover for the suite makes the sense of loss in the larger text specific: "The Beothuks, a First Nations tribe of Newfoundland, were the victims of European disease and genocide" (43). In "Unmarked Grave," the unidentified speaker (likely Shawnandithit) mourns unqualified eradication: "There is no stone, no word or prayer to mark / Our fleet lives, our staggering deaths" (*Foreign* 45). But without, I hope, myself carving an epitaph of her words, I will say that the "Shawnandithit" voice (a telling which had little cultural authority to be heard, but whose articulation it is for us as readers to discover, to listen for the speaking/silence) is one of resistance to the internalization of Imperialist discourse around her. As a maidservant in her white captors' house, she both recognizes and contests the violence of the startlingly racist and sexist language of the foreign "home" that contains her, in the "*whores, witches, niggers, injuns*" that she tastes in the goblets, the "fine" things around her (*Foreign* 47). *She will not drink from these cups.* Instead, she chooses (in a life of little choice) to drink only from her own hands at the pump; she "would not drink from cut glass / that reflected her misery / and shoved it down her throat" (47). The refusal to drink from her masters' glass is a symbolic repudiation of their harmful languages/ideologies (the "Heirlooms" of the title is less a literal reference to the fine glass imported from England than it is to the Euro(ethno)centrism that is passed down the line): Shawnandithit refuses to internalize their lib(el)ations.

Crate further reinvents "Shawnandithit" as a simultaneous victim/rebel (both/and: her resistance situates in relation to and not impossibly outside the power nexus of her reality) in "Working for the Peytons":

> Like the others captured before me—
> Demasduit, Oubee, and the boys they named
> Tom June and John August for the time
> of year they were found—
> I am lost. . . . (*Foreign* 48)

Although the content of the lines addresses her powerlessness, the act of naming lost tribe members "Demasduit" and "Oubee" in their Beothuk translations—or even simply *speaking loss*—is a linguistic defiance of their erasure, even if, as we know from "The Naming" in *Pale as Real Ladies*, our appellations may not effect material change. Although "Johnson" (like the historical woman) tries to name herself differently in the first collection, working to resist Western assimilation in her reclamation of the Native name of her grandfather, Tekahionwake (see "The Naming," *Pale* 39, and "Prairie Greyhound," *Pale* n. pag.), self-appellation cannot protect her from the racism of her largely white English audiences, as Crate's opening speaker identifies: "'Hey squaw,' they called from the foot of the stage. These relics [her father's pride, her grandfather's name] were not enough to protect you from voices in the dark" ("Prairie Greyhound," *Pale* n. pag.). But for Shawnandithit in this suite, personal and cultural memory function in the poem as a counter-strategy in the face of absconded agency. While she has difficulty eating "English" food—and we might read here in her self-starvation the anorectic's attempt to assume control in its otherwise absence, or the prisoner's hunger strike where the body speaks refusal—she sustains herself with cultural recollection: “I fumble with memories, already / a memory, chew legends I heard / lifetimes ago, my entrance into the cavity of tomorrow” (*Foreign* 48).

In “Sentences: at the Culls’” (also from the *Foreign Homes* collection), the speaker reveals that her “sentence,” the condition of her imprisonment, is to write “sentences” in English recording Beothuk history (50); again, there is a link explicitly made here between demand for cultural preservation (in writing) and the violence of its eradication that serves intertextually as a trope for Crate’s reading of Johnson. Indeed, for “Shawnandithit,” this sentence is a bitter irony, for the culture that orders of her an archive of her nation is the same one that is responsible for its *literal* disappearance through colonization’s devouring of lands and its pushing of the Beothuk inland, its spreading of sickness, and its readiness to attack/destroy Indigenous populations:

> Our only choice was
> nothing
> left
> for me to reveal
> on these vast white sheets. . . . (50)

She is torn between her own, personal desire to remember and record the pride of her people—and the appropriation of such in the annals of their slayers. But Crate’s text avoids this latter ethno/anthropological “inspection” in the poem on the facing page, “She is crying in a corner,” by collapsing subject and object in intimate connection (*Foreign* 51). Here, the speaking voice has shifted from first person “Shawnandithit” in the rest of the suite to an “outside” speaker (Crate?); the “appropriator” intervenes to comment on a brutal reality: that Shawnandithit is made at once “everything that must be scoured, / cast-out, shelved, and treasured” (51)—the abject. But this crying out against the eradication of a person, a people, is not part of the “objective” record of the colonizers’ history (unless its urgent politics might be performed, removed, and “aestheticized” in/as theatre). Rather here, as we see, the poem’s title becomes fused with its speaker (and accordingly the speaker with her subject) thus: “She is crying in a corner” heads the page in bold face, as do all the pieces in the collection, but the opening line begins: “of my mind . . .” (51). The concluding lines of the poem announce: “but she is with me, with us all. / Shawnandithit?” (51). Shawnandithit, then, is both on—and in—the speaker’s mind, an incorporation (or ironic anti/cannibalism?) of Shawnandithit’s loss: not to fix or an/aestheticize, but to constantly be reminded of her anguish, to bear it, a kind of mnemonic resistance as act. In this intersubjective moment, I believe the ability to "other" is transcended, but without the violence of saming—that is, without conflations of difference across space and history, and other locations. "Shawnandithit" is, in this representation, no longer "cast out" but harboured within both the speaker's mind and writing. It is not easy, thus, to "escape" her anguish. This "incorporation"—"screams sinking like a scalpel through sense / and absence" (51)—is not an undemanding or complacent act, not an aesthetically pleasant consumption; rather, the difficult, trying, contesting confrontation with questions of violence, agency, and subjectivity that Crate's work requires is made to come—from inside. In this way, the responsibility for acknowledging the brutal conditions of Canada's racist past/present, including the conditions of its canonical values and historical record, must fall to the "listener" who takes up Shawnandithit "in *my* mind" (*Foreign* 51; emphasis added) in the very moment of reading—a subjective and deeply personal encounter. The text refuses a violent over-identification or erasure of difference, for "she is with me" is a location of contiguity ("with") rather than an identity ("as"); moreover, ultimately, the speaker's "assimilation" (as ours) with Shawnandithit is never total and only offered as a question, the mark at once of possibility and indeterminacy, in the closing articulation of the poem: "Shawnandithit?" Thus, work to recover must continue as an open-ended, enduring, and always uncertain process.

Thus, in these renderings of "Johnson" and "Shawnandithit," I read Crate's work not so much as biography in poetic form, not simply literary ventriloquism, nor even "interpretation" of historical lives, but as a metacritical reflection on the (im)possibilities of speaking. Ultimately, Crate's "renditions" remind me that appropriation is, but also is not just, a taking and receiving, or even a taking over: it is also a taking *up*. To enter in a relation with *these* texts entails grappling with conditions of production and reception, of the *situating* of voices, indeed selves (including *our* selves) within regimes of truth and nexuses of power. For appropriation is also an engagement—a way of meeting in the text—which stages the scenes of production and reception as entrenched in a chain of locations. We can never *simply* (in all resonances of that word) take up Pauline Johnson's life and work—and in this, I see not a violence *in* representation but the representation *of* violence. That is, I see a deep, responsible commitment to acknowledging the complex conditions of production and reception for Indigenous women writers in Johnson's day and now, in the very scene of reading here—as for all acts of inscription. To take up Crate's "Johnson," there is no immediacy without mediation, and perhaps no intimacy without immediacy; we co-create. In this "meeting," we as readers also take up Johnson's *Crate*, the performing, self-reflexive reader-critic-poet produced both by Johnson's life, work, historical and aesthetic contexts, and our own conscientious exegesis. This, then, is a staging of silence that itself speaks more than—

(whatever it is that dominant culture calls for).

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NOTES

1 Diana Brydon's "Empire Bloomers" (1994) and David Stirrup's chapter in *A Usable Past* (2010) are among notable exceptions. I recognize, of course, that *Pale as Real Ladies* is published by an outstanding—but small and regional—press: Brick Books is originally located in Coldstream, Ontario, co-founded by Stan Dragland and Don McKay. But while the press is small, its reputation is national. Brick has published prominent authors like P. K. Page, Marilyn Dumont, Michael Ondaatje, Dennis Lee, Robert Kroetsch, and others, and so I cannot make a certain correlation between distribution and critical reception. (For information, see *Organizations of Book Publishers of Ontario*.) Joanna Mansbridge suggests that, while Crate's oeuvre is relatively small, her significance is not; Mansbridge claims in Crate "an important voice in prairie, Métis, and women's writing in Canada" (74).

2 In this way, I see Crate's work taking up, in part, Norman Shrive's call, made already in 1962, for assessment "not of her [Johnson's] verse in isolation, but of her verse in reference to the conditions *by* which it was written" (38; emphasis added). It is noteworthy, I think, that Shrive uses "by" rather than "in"—the suggestion not that the work should be placed in a socio-cultural context but understood as its effect. But Crate's work departs from Shrive's call for "unprejudiced, dispassionate assessment" (38); *Pale* is very much an (inter)subjective engagement.

3 For an insightful and important understanding of the meaning of Johnson's work and impact for audiences and readers outside dominant white Anglo-Canadian culture, see Rebecca Margolis' text, cited in this paper. In particular, Margolis suggests, through readings of Jewish responses to Johnson's work, that "Johnson represented a promising way for Jews to reconcile their own 'mixed heritage.' . . . Johnson's writing offered a positive model for otherness" (180). Deena Rymhs' work is also interesting in her suggestion that Johnson's "intercultural mediation befits a personality who assumed various cultural poses" and whose "survivance bears the signature of the trickster" (53). These readings appear at odds with Crate's representation of Johnson, which stages Johnson as a subaltern subject—and yet I do not see these positions as contradictory, which I hope becomes clear in this paper.

4 I am of course *not* referring to traditional historical clothing worn by Aboriginal women

in Canada as "costume"; rather, as other critics have noted, Johnson's stage attire was never representative of Indigenous women's apparel, despite marketing claims of "authenticity" in her publicity posters/press releases (see Gray 157). Here, Johnson's "authenticity," I argue, can be read as a kind of museumization, locating "Native" in relation to a pre-contact past, and attached to a particularly gendered exotification. I make this not as a charge against Johnson as a performer, but place the criticism within popular conceptions of "the Indian" as a "dying race" in her time.

5 Adams, though, points out that Johnson was costumed in buckskin leggings under her skirt.

6 See also Rak's brilliant and self-reflexive analysis of contemporary appropriations in a web resource of Johnson and her work for current Canadian schoolchildren, which Rak was invited to build. Rak argues that "[t]he ambiguities of her identity as a native/Canadian, those already apparent during her own evocation of the Wild West in an earlier period of imperialism, are highlighted and concretized as pleasing performances. This means that their political implications are flattened, and within hypertext rhetoric, written out *while* they appear to be highlighted because they turn E. Pauline Johnson's work into another Internet spectacle" (156). As Rak argues, current packaging of Johnson for maximum "entertainment" supercedes even the educational aims of the Internet resource.

7 Of course, I do not mean to demean sex workers but rather to read Crate's staging of "Johnson" in relation to a particular selling of self/body evident in the poems. Neither the analogy in Crate nor my assessment here is meant to suggest all sex work/"prostitution" functions in the same register of oppression, nor to deny agency or respect to those engaged in sex work.

8 Cf. *A Really Good Brown Girl* (Brick, 1996) and *Iskwewak—Kah' Ki Yaw Ni Wahkomakanak: Neither Indian Princesses Nor Easy Squaws* (Women's, 1995), respectively.

9 Of course, I recognize the urgency of reading (for) cultural differences across the literatures and theories we take up; it is thus crucial to address the very different geo-discursive locations of "Indian" in Spivak's and Crate's works, and of "native" in Rey Chow's. But because, for Spivak, "subaltern" is the speaking space that is not/can not be heard by dominant culture, it is germane for our work in the course to explore Johnson's—and "Johnson's"—relation to subalterneity.

10 Mohanty's definition of "third world" is largely geographical (but also geopolitical): "the nation-states of Latin America, the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, South and South-east Asia, China, South Africa, and Oceania constitute the parameters of the non-European third world." But she also includes minoritized groups living in the "first" world, for "black, Latino, Asian, and indigenous peoples in the US, Europe, Australia . . . also define themselves as third world peoples" (5). I include Canada in her enumerated list, although I recognize this classification generally in the West is also problematic.

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