M a i a   J o s e p h

Wondering into Country:

Dionne Brand's *A Map to the Door of No Return*

Dionne Brand's memoir, *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging*, can be read as an elliptical, poetic meditation on a short passage by Eduardo Galeano that Brand cites twice: "I'm nostalgic for a country which doesn't yet exist on a map" (qtd. in *Map* 52, 85). Brand's desired "country," her imagined space of belonging, is not Canada, despite her formal citizenship. Her reflections on her experiences as a black woman and diasporic subject repeatedly exceed the boundaries of the nation as she explores the possibilities of diasporic community, political community, and artistic community. Nonetheless, just after she recounts the experience of reading Galeano in the silence of late night, Brand takes an imagined journey across Canada:

> In cities at 4:45 a.m., Toronto or Calgary or Halifax, there are these other inhabitants of silence. Two hundred miles outside, north of any place, or in the middle of it, circumnavigating absence. For a moment it is a sweet country, in that moment you know perhaps someone else is awake reading Galeano. (53)

As she muses on the possibility of a "country" where she might belong, Brand remains keenly attentive to the country she calls "home" (64, 77, 79). She brings the concept of impossible origins that informs her experience as a descendant of African slaves to the definition of Canadian identity, arguing that in the discourse on national belonging "[t]oo much has been made of origins" (69). She goes on to criticize what she describes as "the calcified Canadian nation narrative" (70), contending that national identity has been "drawn constantly to the European shape in its definition. A shape . . . which

obscures its multiplicity" (72). She also challenges the reliance on narratives of origin by Canadian immigrant populations, suggesting that such a tactic simply produces a mirror image of its national counterpart (69). Both arguments, she observes,

> must draw very definite borders both to contain their constituencies as well as, in the case of the powerful, to aggressively exclude the other and, in the case of the powerless, to weakly do the same while waving a white flag to the powerful for inclusion. Each of these arguments select and calcify origins. Out of a multiplicity of stories, they cobble together a narrative glossing over accident, opportunism, necessity, and misdirection. (69-70)

In *Map*, Brand herself sometimes falls into the trap set by a narrative of origins, and in so doing implies that the "well worn" paths of such narratives are not easy to abandon (1). However, she also interrogates this entrapment through reflections on the Door of No Return, the symbolic location of departure for Africans sold into slavery. She emphasizes the need to reconfigure her relation to, and understanding of, this symbolic space, and to channel her longing for an impossible origin into imagining possible collective futures not constrained by exclusionary teleological narratives or the ossified social relations such narratives engender. As she charts relations with others that open up the possibility of such a "country," she repeatedly engages in creative, provisional reterritorializations of spaces within the Canadian nation.

Landing is what people in the diaspora do

In using the term "reterritorialization" to describe Brand's descriptions of her relations with others, I am responding to Marlene Goldman's exploration of the trope of "drifting" that runs through *Map* (evident in Brand's repeated use of maritime imagery) and that informs the memoir's fragmented, non-linear structure (Goldman 13, 23).[1] Drawing on Paul Gilroy's and, within a black Canadian context, Rinaldo Walcott's work on diasporic movement and community, Goldman proposes that in her memoir Brand charts her deterritorialized positioning as a diasporic subject, and in so doing "underscores the inadequacies of the nation-state, particularly in its response to demands for social justice in a global era and in its long-standing practices of exclusion" (13). I agree that Brand displays "the aesthetics and politics of drifting" (Goldman 22), but she also attends to the experience of what she terms "landing." "Landing," says Brand, "is what people in the Diaspora do. Landing at ports, docks, bridgings, stocks, borders, out-

posts" (150). Like "drifting," Brand's concept of "landing" is clearly connected to the Middle Passage; moreover, the term is associated with issues of citizenship and national belonging. While Brand employs the word in *Map* to describe her own experience within the structured spaces of (post)colonial territory, the concept of "landing" is not new to her work. In the novel *In Another Place, Not Here*, for example, Brand describes the "landing" of her Caribbean protagonist, Elizete, in the cold, indifferent urban landscape of Toronto. In this earlier work, the experience of landing tends to be removed from agency, and thus seems to counter a politics of drifting. "Landed like a fish or a ship," is Elizete's summary of her arrival in Canada: "More like fish on somebody's line" (47). In *Map*, however, Brand favours the gerund form "landing," which suggests an ongoing process and indicates that she is not interested in mapping a static, universalized landscape. Each time that she "lands" in yet another (post)colonial outpost, she does not simply become reinscribed within its regimes of power; rather, she maps ways of seeing and moving, of making sense of space, that exist in the midst of or despite the systems of power that govern social relations. Brand's "landings"—or what I would describe as creative reterritorializations—take place beyond as well as within the boundaries of the nation. However, as readings of her "landings" in particular Canadian spaces (Toronto, Vancouver, and the small town of Burnt River, Ontario) will demonstrate, her approach allows her to articulate and interrogate her positioning in relation to specific narratives and social structures that shape her experience of Canada.

In *Faking It: Poetics and Hybridity*, Fred Wah offers a discussion of reterritorialization as a potentially subversive tactic for "ethnic" Canadian writers.[2] Emphasizing the need to interrogate the "monologic" Canadian literary tradition that tends to obscure or exclude difference (54), Wah reconfigures Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of reterritorialization to argue for the ethnic writer's creative articulation of "placement in . . . place" (56), a process that, according to Wah, "knots" difference into the conceptualization of Canadian community (63, 66). While Wah's work provides a Canadian context for Brand's approach, her "landings" seem also to align with the theoretical framework for reterritorialization developed by transnational feminist scholars. In her essay "Feminist Encounters," Chandra Talpade Mohanty emphasizes temporality and situational specificity in her configuration of the relation between personal experience and political

struggle, noting that "[m]ovement between cultures, languages, and complex configurations of meaning and power have always been the territory of the colonized" (42). She explains that

> this [ongoing] process, this reterritorialization through struggle[,] . . . allows me a paradoxical continuity of self, mapping and transforming my political location. It suggests a particular notion of political agency, since my location forces and enables specific modes of reading and knowing the dominant. (42)

Caren Kaplan notes that for Mohanty reterritorialization is not an appropriative attempt at asserting a new dominant, but rather is provisional and contingent, involving "critical practices" that enable the intersection of "interests, subjects, and purposes" (182). Key to this approach is an awareness of the ways in which space is organized through the complexity and nuance of social relations. As Henrietta Moore explains, "[t]he organization of space is . . . above all a context developed through practice—that is, through the interaction of individuals. This context, or set of relationships, may have many meanings. These meanings . . . are in fact simultaneous" (117). For Brand, dominant social discourses (of colonialism, of nation, of race, of patriarchy) are played out and perpetuated in social relations, but critical and potentially transformative ways of engaging in these relations, of effecting creative and provisional reterritorializations of particular spaces, are nevertheless possible.

Reflecting, in *Map*, on her project of exploring and charting possible relations of belonging, Brand turns to an observation by David Turnbull in *Maps are Territories*: "In order to find our way successfully, it is not enough just to have a map. We need a cognitive schema as well as practical mastery of way-finding" (Turnbull 51; qtd. in *Map* 16).[3] Brand proposes that for blacks in the diaspora the dominant "cognitive schema is captivity" (29), arguing that (post)colonial regimes have generally functioned to domesticate and regulate the space of the black body (35, 37). In attempting to chart her own lived relations with others, Brand challenges the central assumption of colonial mapping—the idea that space can be conceived in universal terms, and that a particular social and symbolic order can be imposed on space (Mavjee 28-9; Goldman 23; Brydon 112). Brand responds to such an approach, which confines racialized subjects to the terms of the colonial order, by setting up the symbolic Door of No Return as her "destination" (1). Such a move challenges the unidirectional thrust of the colonial narrative that makes the Door a starting point only, the beginning of confinement within the colonial order. As Jody Mason observes, the Door functions as "a

trope for fixed forms" (784), which Brand subverts in her assertion that it represents a "fissure between the past and the present," "the end of traceable beginnings," and thus the end of teleological narratives (*Map* 5). In other words, the Door is, for Brand, an opening into deterritorialized multiplicity—it becomes a "door*way*," as Mason puts it, rather than a space of static closure.

Still, finding another way—one that seeks to recognize social relations as the intersection of multiple "ways"—does not allow Brand to escape completely the shadow of "mastery," of authority, that Turnbull assigns to the project of way-finding.[4] Now, however, the authority is at least partially her own: Brand apprehends and charts social relations from her particular point of view (her doorway still has a frame, we might say), and as a result she cannot help but engage in reterritorialization in Deleuze and Guattari's sense of the term. In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari explain that "[m]ovements of deterritorialization and processes of reterritorialization [are] . . . relative, always connected, tied up in one another" (10). "You may make a rupture, draw a line of flight," they remark, "yet still there is a danger that you will reencounter organizations that restratify" (9). As I will demonstrate in my readings of particular "landings," while Brand works to escape the reterritorializing forces of dominant social structures, her descriptions of social relations nevertheless have their own restratifying quality. However, through an attentiveness to the alternative possibilities—and in particular to the potential openness—of spatiality, Brand's creative, provisional reterritorializations tend to push toward deterritorialization.[5]

Mapping emotion

Integral to Brand's discovery of a sense of potential openness in her "landings" is her cultivation of a heightened awareness of affective experience. Sara Ahmed, in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, offers an articulation of how emotions "shape" individual bodies, and of how they function to align those bodies with (or separate them from) others, that can help shed light on this dimension of Brand's project. Ahmed suggests that emotions operate as "orientations towards objects and others" (15), arguing that "emotions are not simply something 'I' or 'we' have. Rather, it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made: the 'I' and the 'we' are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others" (10). Ahmed situates her work within the tradition of scholars who

understand affective experience as involving both bodily feeling and cognition.[6] She borrows the term "impression" from David Hume in order to describe the combined experience of "bodily sensation, emotion and thought" (6), proposing that "the surfaces of collective [and] individual bodies take shape through such impressions" (10). In *Map*, Brand demonstrates an often self-conscious attentiveness to the ways in which her experiences "impress" her and others, and she describes particular moments when such impressions exceed or subvert the affective relations scripted by dominant tropes or narratives.

In my reading of Brand's "landings" in various Canadian spaces, I focus in particular on instances where an attentiveness to emotional experience allows Brand to discover the possibility of tentative alignment across socially constructed boundaries, opening up the terms of national belonging. That said, Brand certainly does at times display a rather difficult, even antagonistic persona that might seem to contradict such a reading. George Elliott Clarke is perhaps Brand's most vocal critic in this regard. In his short review of *Map*, Clarke specifically targets Brand's relation to the black Canadian community, arguing that she assumes an arrogantly distant positioning, and in so doing succumbs to what he describes as a form of "Naipaulization." Although I am not convinced that Brand's shifts in affective orientation always map neatly onto the divide Clarke sets up between the black Canadian community and the (white) Canadian intellectual elite whom, he claims, Brand simply flatters, I do think Clarke is right to attend to the emotional complexities of Brand's persona. Indeed, I would suggest that *Map* invites a more sustained assessment of Brand's shifting affective orientation than the limited space of a book review allows. Brand seems to encourage such an assessment in her own discussion of V. S. Naipaul, that notoriously difficult persona to whom Clarke compares her. Reflecting on "In the Middle of the Journey," an essay by Naipaul about his voyage "home" to India, Brand pays particular attention to the "choices of words and emotions that indicate his state of mind" (*Map* 60). As she attends to the language of Naipaul's essay, she reflects that

> [m]any read Naipaul as spiteful. . . . But in some ways I read Naipaul as spitefully sorrowful. . . . The dread he feels . . . is the dread of the unknown, the unfamiliar, the possibility of rejection— . . . the possibility that in fact one is unwanted back home, perhaps hated, perhaps even forgotten. . . . Fear is repeated so many times in his essay. . . . [T]he essay betrays someone trying to get a grasp of himself; trying to grasp something unfathomable, not in a landscape or in the regularity of abject poverty or slovenly wealth, but in oneself, in one's connection to

anything. The superior voice of the text is directed to a particular audience in the metropole in which he has a provisional footing; the fear leaks out as an expression of that self-doubting, self-conscious being who is at the core of the discourse—author and autobiographer. (60-62)

In this nuanced interpretation of Naipaul, Brand reads an affective tension that pushes toward home in sorrow, even as it retreats fearfully behind an armour of spite. In effect, Brand discovers outward movement in apparent emotional closure—an interpretation that seems to imply much about her own orientation toward Canada, the place she so ambivalently calls "home" (significantly, Brand's analysis of Naipaul's essay introduces a section of *Map* primarily dedicated to the exploration of narratives that fuel the desire for entry into the "home" of the Canadian nation [64-72]). In my view, it is through similarly careful interpretations of emotional experience that Brand, in her Canadian "landings," finds a way to engage productively in the question of national belonging.

Landing in Burnt River

In assessing Brand's early work, Rinaldo Walcott proposes that she engages in "the remaking of the racialized, gendered and sexualized (literary) landscape of Canada":

> Moving beyond the discourse and literary tropes of "roughing it in the bush" and "survival" in a barren national landscape (national tropes which deny a First Nations presence), Brand moves through an urban landscape populated with the usual suspects of Canadian migrant cultures. (Walcott 52)

In the later text *Map*, Brand remains engaged in this same writing of difference in Canada's urban landscapes; however, she also moves out of the city and into the bush, tucking into the middle of *Map* a sequence of fragments in which she reflects on her experience living and writing on the outskirts of the small Ontario town of Burnt River. In writing about her experiences in this rural Canadian space, Brand develops what Randall Roorda terms a "narrative of retreat"—a retreat from human society toward nature (Roorda xiii)—but it is a narrative of retreat with a particular difference: Brand's is a specifically emotional retreat into the dread that she recognizes in herself, as in Naipaul—an emotion that she traces back to the "tear in the world" effected by the Middle Passage (4), that she locates in her "dreadful [childhood] house" in Trinidad (116), and that remains with her in Canada, where she feels denied full entry into the "home" of the nation (64, 68). In Burnt River, Brand's retreat takes place largely in response to social scripts that she

feels she cannot escape, even in the comparatively isolated landscape of rural Ontario. However, Brand also describes moments when her emotional state takes on new nuance, allowing her to make sense of her relations in space differently. Significantly, the strategic positioning and mode of observation that she discovers at Burnt River inform other scenes in *Map*, including the urban sequences so central to her oeuvre.

Brand's poetry collection *Land to Light On* serves as an important precursor to *Map*'s Burnt River sequence, as the small Ontario town figures prominently in this slightly earlier work. In *Land to Light On*, Burnt River is the place where "the land is not beautiful, braised / like the back of an animal, burnt in coolness" (45). Brand's experiences in this cold, bleak space are marked by enclosure: "All I could do was turn and go back to the house / and the door that I can't see out of. / My life was supposed to be wider, not so forlorn / and not standing out in this north country bled / like maple" (7). In describing Burnt River, Brand draws on the old national trope of survival in an inhospitable landscape, employing it to interrogate the possibility of her own emotional survival, which at certain points she seems to tie directly to her uncomfortable positioning within the nation. "Maybe this wide country just stretches your life to a thinness just trying to take it in," she says (43), and: "I don't want no fucking country . . . I'm giving up on land to light on, and why not, I can't perfect my own shadow, my violent sorrow" (48). Brand maintains a sense of isolating despair throughout much of the collection, which ends with the image of "a prisoner / circling a cell, / cutting the square smaller and smaller . . . Even if she goes outside the cracks in her throat will break / as slate, her legs still cutting the cell in circles" (103). In *Land to Light On*, Brand apparently remains a captive of the dread and despair that she connects to the Door of No Return, and that continue to inform her experience within the Canadian nation.

Brand returns to this trope of captivity in *Map*, detailing the oppressive social forces that endanger her emotional survival at Burnt River. Significantly, while the foundational literary space of the nation is often problematically unpeopled (as Walcott notes), Brand not only depicts this space as an inhabited one, but also works to chart the relations that play out upon her landing therein.[7] "This is country where people mind their own business; they are as cold and forbidding as the landscape," she says. "[T]hey guard what they call their 'property' . . . They are suspicious of strangers. I can only imagine nightmarishly what they think of me" (145). This is, of course, also country where the people are almost exclusively white: "I am much more eager to please or not to cause offence in this town," explains

Brand, because the population "is all white except for the Chinese people who took over the restaurant in my last year in the bush" (147). As one of the few racialized subjects in Burnt River, Brand finds that the much-storied dangers of the Canadian wilderness are trumped by social peril: "I fear the people more than the elements," she says, "which are themselves brutal" (143).

Brand uses the Burnt River sequence to investigate how the circulation of feelings of fear and dread entrenches inhospitable social relations in this rural Canadian space. Near the beginning of the sequence, she writes:

> There are ways of constructing the world—that is, of putting it together each morning, what it should look like piece by piece—and I don't feel that I share this with the people in my small town. . . . I think we wake up and . . . we make solidity with our eyes and with the matter in our brains. . . . We accumulate information over our lives which brings various things into solidity, into view. What I am afraid of is that waking up in another room, minutes away by car, the mechanic walks up and takes my face for a target, my arm for something to bite, my car for a bear. He cannot see me when I come into the gas station; he sees something else and he might say, "No gas," or he might simply grunt and leave me there. As if I do not exist. . . . A thing he does not recognize. (141)

Brand's thoughts in this passage highlight the way that emotions scripted by dominant tropes and narratives give shape to social relations. By repeatedly evoking, throughout the sequence, the image of the shell of her vehicle (which she calls her "armour" [140]), Brand seems to suggest that fear produces and hardens the boundaries that separate her from others—that fear, as Sara Ahmed puts it, "envelops the bodies that feel, as well as constructs such bodies as enveloped, as contained by it" (63).

In contemplating the cultural politics of fear, Ahmed turns to Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks,* and specifically to Fanon's story of a white child responding in fright to "a Negro," which in turn results in fear on the part of the black man (Fanon 111-12). Ahmed observes that

> the other is only felt to be fearsome through a misreading, a misreading that is returned by the other through its response to fear, as a fear of the white child's fear. This is not to say that the fear comes from the white child, as if he was the origin of that fear (or even its author); rather the fear opens up past histories of association . . . , which allows the white body to be constructed as apart from the black body in the present. (63)

Brand demonstrates an acute awareness not only of the histories of association that fuel misreadings of her by others, but also of her own past history of association. In the Burnt River sequence, she highlights the role of a particular ancestral narrative in shaping and evoking her fear:

> I have inherited this fear of people from my grandmother. . . . You would not know
> it to look at me but I am like my grandmother a person of sure perimeters. . . . I
> still take the small steps of my grandmother; I lift my eyes only to the immediate
> area of the house I live in, the small bit of road I can see from the window. (143,
> 151)[8]

Fear, as Ahmed notes, involves reading the world through tropes and narratives that script openness as vulnerability and the unknown as danger (69). In her "landing" at Burnt River, Brand describes the ways in which a complex interplay of such stories persistently results in withdrawal from the outside world, into the enclosure of the familiar.

In charting social relations at Burnt River, Brand engages in a productive querying of the familiar narratives that shape this space. In both *Land to Light On* and *Map*, she offers a description of "landing" in the rural Canadian landscape that, like Northrop Frye's garrison mentality, emphasizes enclosure; however, by drawing on the particularity of her experience as a black woman and diasporic subject, she effectively interrogates and reconfigures this classic image of Canadian identity.[9] More importantly, in *Map*'s Burnt River sequence she also eventually discovers the world opening in possibility beyond both of these familiar stories:

> I look intently and I know each dead weep of grass within my view. . . . But in the
> beginning I did not notice wildflowers. [I was] [s]o intent on the hardship of living
> out here . . . [u]ntil one day . . . when it was fall and all the grass had turned
> brown and wilted, I saw something violet. I thought, "What a fool!" struggling up
> like that with winter coming. . . . Finally I thought, "Well, what else is possible?
> Nothing but to make a go of it, I suppose." (151-52)

Recognition of this misreading of her environment, of her own inability to see, causes Brand to alter her relation to the rural space in which she finds herself. Stranded on the road midway between her house and town, fearing to enter into the snowy landscape (and white-as-snow population) in order to seek help, she sits waiting in the "armour" of her car, pondering her own survival; finally she decides to leave her shell—to get out and walk toward Burnt River. She then closes the sequence by rephrasing an old cliché: "[t]he road knows that wherever you find yourself you are" (152). In so doing, she articulates her acceptance of "landing" in Burnt River, an acceptance that she seems to have achieved by opening herself to the potential of the space in which she finds herself. Notably, in her rephrasing, Brand locates understanding in the in-between space of the road, rather than consolidating it within the enclosed, familiar space of the self, of a particular "way. . . of constructing the world" (141). Brand's response to the question of survival

(affective and otherwise) at the sequence's close can be read as her response to the national (literary) narrative: rather than positioning herself outside of, or simply caught within, an alienating tradition, she seems to conceive of her engagement as an opening into dialogue, while acknowledging the potential for blind spots in her own reading.

Significantly, in her description of the discovery of wildflowers, Brand appears to suggest that a moment of wonder has precipitated her move into this personally and politically enabling position. Wonder, Ahmed explains, involves an "affective opening up of the world" (181)—it is "about seeing the world . . . 'as if' for the first time. . . . The capacity for wonder is the space of opening up to the surprise of each combination. . . . [W]onder, with its open faces and open bodies, involves a reorientation of one's relation to the world" (179, 183). In its capacity to unsettle and reorient, wonder can have politically transformative effects (Ahmed 181), and at Burnt River Brand seems to experience such a shift. She discovers—in fact, she is moved by— the surprising potentiality of landing. Through her Burnt River sequence, Brand stresses the importance of affective openness to her reterritorializing project, while at the same time placing herself in dynamic relation to the Canadian nation.

Landing in Toronto

"Landing" in Toronto is hardly a new subject of investigation in Brand's writing. Toronto often serves as a cold, oppressive setting in her work, with the early novel *In Another Place, Not Here* offering her most sustained indictment of the city. As Joanna Luft notes, Brand explores, in this novel,

> the city's refusal to credit the existence of [Caribbean female immigrants]. [Her] portrayal of Toronto is informed by white privilege and male aggression that is cloaked by indifference. . . . Brand writes an other story of immigration to, and ethnic life in, Toronto that Canada presents to those whom it refuses to acknowledge as valid players in its national drama. (30)

In *In Another Place, Not Here*, Brand juxtaposes highly sensual, passionate relationships between black immigrant women against the apparent indifference of the city. However, as I have noted, in *Map* Brand cultivates suspicion toward rigidly oppositional narratives. In the Toronto sections of her memoir, she attempts to maintain an affective openness to the people of the city who have tended to remain invisible not only to the nation, but also to her. "There is a city here where I walk to see how others live," she says, and then, reflecting on Pablo Neruda's poem "Letter to Miguel Otero Silva, in Caracas," she emphasizes her necessary implication in those lives: "I could

be unaffected. . . . But Neruda summons me. . . . I cannot ignore my hands 'stained with garbage and sadness'" (100).[10] Thus, Brand remains committed to writing the marginalized lives of Toronto, but she constantly pushes beyond her stance as simply the voice of "post-national black lesbian feminist space/place" (Walcott 52). When she states that the people she wants to "see" are the "people on the edges of the city," she refers not only—and at times not at all—to members of the black (female lesbian) immigrant Canadian community with whom she has, in the past, most closely identified, but also to an array of others—the homeless, her neighbours, Canada-born youths negotiating hybrid selves (101). In *Map*, Toronto remains an inhospitable space, as Brand emphasizes through the experience of her uncle, an immigrant whose "fierce" self was, she feels, "parenthesized" by the city (124). However, Brand responds to this dull, insistent threat of "parenthesis"—of loss of self through marginalization in the (post)colonial city—not only through acts of passionate defiance, but also by attempting to sketch, to map, the contours of affected lives within this space. Brand's shift in approach, in *Map*, is significant. Indeed, her reconceptualization of the "ordinariness" of city life, as well as her querying of her relation to a range of "other" urban citizens, makes *Map* a key transition piece between her earlier work and later texts such as *Thirsty* and *What We All Long For*, in which Brand develops a slightly more positive (though certainly still critical) attitude toward Toronto, and attempts to perceive life in the city through eyes quite different from her own.

In *Map*, when she describes the view from her apartment window, which she refers to as "wonderful," Brand demonstrates her desire to remain attentive to the often-overlooked ordinariness of other lives (54). She observes intently, "looking at [and recording] the slow, unimportant movement of [her neighbours'] lives—the flowerpots and beer bottles, the evening incandescence of the window frames" (55). Even here, in this summary of her experience, we can see Brand blurring the boundaries of domestic space, of the small squares of city to which she and her neighbours are confined:

> Another building filled with windows into other apartments. A middle-aged eastern European woman in flowered dresses; how could I tell she was eastern European. I couldn't. I assumed by the light frills around her shoulders. The knick-knacks on the windowsill. The not-quite-here feel of her. She could have been from anywhere, really. A man, probably English, with a small hawk's face, who drank coffee incessantly and looked worriedly out the window. I'd say he had no work; I'd say he was in his forties. He smoked cigarettes to the quick. (54)

Through careful—indeed poetic—attention combined with self-conscious

guesswork, Brand makes a kind of "sense" of her neighbours' lives. She is more than a voyeur here: prior to this passage, she describes her positioning in a similar apartment, situating herself in relation to the others who inhabit her building through sounds, knowledge of behaviour patterns, and anecdotes. In making an impression on her (and here I use "impression" following Ahmed's definition, as the combination of "bodily sensation, emotion and thought"), the others exceed their domestic spaces, just as, in engaging in attentive observation and response, Brand exceeds her own. Into a city and a nation that she insists are structured by systems of enclosure, assimilation, and exclusion obscured through the trope of "home," Brand articulates a conceptualization of relationality that avoids eclipsing or denying difference, and is characterized instead by implication and openness.

While Brand focuses on domestic spaces here, she brings a similar approach to public space when she visits Toronto's Jarvis Youth Court. Upon entering the courthouse, she registers her status as a bystander while also emphasizing that this role does not exempt her entirely from the regime of power ordering this enclosed space: "[t]o get [in] . . . one has to go through the obligatory metal detector and pass by several policemen. Even though one is merely an observer one cannot help feel an immediate loss of control and a sense of surveillance" (103). She then proceeds to recount a morning in juvenile court, but rather than offering a narrative of events she charts affective interactions:

> They are urban children—cool and bored is their emotional attire. . . . And perhaps they *are* cool, bored. . . . I don't know. . . . I see the children at first tentatively stand, knees weak, and make their way . . . to the bar. Something curious happens to most of them in their walk up the aisle. . . . I see their backs straighten and their heads lift from shame to insolent dignity. Inside they're making some decision— some resistance—"this is what I am then." . . . [Their] emotions changing now from insolent dignity to ennui, the clerks who seem Caribbean in origin . . . look at [them] like disgusted relatives. . . . The bleached-blond Chinese boy, the red-streaked Indian girl take on these looks and swagger off, smirking. (107)

Of three girls with apparently hybrid origins, Brand says, "[t]hey keep each other company in the desolate courtroom in the desolate city, this transatlantic space trio. But those are my words, my sentiments. For them, the city is beautiful and reckless. . . . [I]n the hallway [they] giggle about how awesome it was" (107). In her observations, Brand tracks the performance of public discipline and shaming played out by the clerks, and the attitude of "insolent dignity" that allows the children a moment of self-respect, a degree of resistance. At the same time, Brand again questions her readings, correct-

ing her assumptions as she hesitantly attempts to discover the children's worlds in the looks they offer. In so doing, Brand maps the emotions circulating within this manifestation of the nation-state regime, attempting, in the process, to bear witness (in her repeated "I see . . .") to the larger scope of the children's lives in the moment of circumscription, of domestication by the state. Significantly, Brand aligns herself across established identity categories: she works to "see" the Canada-born youths (105), whereas the clerks, who are Caribbean-Canadian black women like Brand, remain caught, in her eye, in the system's imposed script.

"What holds poetry together in this city," reflects Brand, "is the knowledge that I cannot resist seeing; what holds me is the real look of things. If I see someone I see the ghost of them, the air around them, and where they've been" (100). As in her observations of her neighbours, Brand manages to sketch, in the courtroom scene, the "living ghostliness—the stray looks, the dying hands" of the children she observes (100). However, the courtroom scene also highlights the necessary limitations—and certainly the restratifying dimension—of Brand's approach. She "cannot resist seeing," as she says, but she also cannot help bringing her vision into a degree of focus, and when she does, certain elements fade to the edges of the scene, slipping into blind spots. And so in the courtroom scene, the black female clerks, when juxtaposed against the attentively observed children, seem reduced, through Brand's reading, to mere cogs in the machinery of the nation-state, ghostless.

Landing in Vancouver

Toward the end of *Map*, Brand offers a brief sketch of a trip she and a friend take on Vancouver's Granville bus. She describes the bus driver—a black man—and then takes notice when "[t]wo stops along a Salish woman gets on" and, as Brand and the friend have just done, asks the bus driver for directions (219). Brand observes and reflects:

> This jutting of land through which this path travels has lost its true name. It is now surrounded by English Bay, False Creek, and Burrard Inlet. And Granville Street, whose sure name has vanished, once was or was not a path through. That woman asking directions might have known these names several hundred years ago. Today . . . she is lost. She looks into the face of another, a man who surely must be lost, too, but who knows the way newly mapped, superimposed on this piece of land. . . . It is only the Granville bus, surely. But a bus where a ragged mirage of histories comes into a momentary realization. (219-221)

Brand reminds us that "landing" in Vancouver—or almost anywhere in the

so-called New World, for that matter—involves negotiation of a (post)colonial order haunted by histories of usurpation and the trauma of loss. Nevertheless, the space of landing still holds the potential for the momentary discovery of connection. In the act of querying her relation to others with obscured or unknown histories, Brand refuses to think and feel within divisive narratives of origin, and instead charts provisional alignment via the recognition of non-identical experiences of loss:

> The four of us . . . have perfected something—each of us something different. One drives through lost paths, one asks the way redundantly, one floats and looks, one looks and floats——all marvel at their ability to learn and forget the way of lost maps. We all feign ignorance at the rupture in mind and body, in place, in time. We all feel it. (221)

Again, the experience of wonder (or, as Brand puts it here, "marvel") seems to lie at the heart of this moment of intersection. Ahmed suggests that

> what moves us, what makes us feel, is also that which holds us in place, or gives us a dwelling place. Hence movement does not cut the body off from the "where" of its inhabitance, but connects bodies to other bodies: attachment takes place through movement, through being moved by the proximity of others. (11)

Ahmed proposes that "[t]he politics of . . . activism as a way of 'being moved,' is bound up with wonder, with engendering a sense of surprise about how it is that the world has come to take the shape it has" (182). On the Granville bus, wondering at one's displaced positioning, at landing in the spaces where multiple cartographies overlap, appears to initiate, for Brand, a moment of dwelling.

At the same time, the restratifying quality of Brand's observations, seemingly unacknowledged in the Toronto courtroom scene, is explicit on the Granville bus: "The bus is full, but there are really only four of us on it. The driver through lost paths stops and lets someone on and someone off, people who don't realize that the bus is empty but for the four of us" (221). In this foregrounding of blind spots, the need for provisionality in Brand's creative reterritorializations is clear. Here, *Map*'s fragmented, "drifting" style comes into play: the scene on the Granville bus ends with unsettling abruptness as Brand shifts her focus to another space of landing, elsewhere. In the process, the "map" that the four passengers "perfect" is displaced, made conditional, deterritorialized.

The relation between drifting and landing is integral to Brand's project in *Map.* Her text fragments; her narrative loses its way and discovers another. When it does, Brand works to describe the space in which she finds herself,

employing as cognitive and affective schema a careful interrogation of social relations that—for a moment—can open up the possibility of alignment across socially constructed boundaries. Reflecting on how we might begin to make sense of Canadian community differently, Brand insists that "[w]hat we have to ask ourselves is, as everyone else in the nation should ask themselves also, nation predicated on what?" (68). In wandering and wondering her way into her desired country, she suggests that the answer lies in a particular kind of asking—in a sustained, attentive querying of the contours of belonging.

NOTES

1   Goldman complements this reading of *Map* with a similar interpretation of Brand's novel, *At the Full and Change of the Moon*.

2   Wah offers the following background for his use of the term "ethnic":

> the term "ethnic" has been shunned as "incorrect" or "unusable" as a description of non-mainstream, visible/invisible minority, marginalized, race, origin, native, or otherwise "Other." Linda Hutcheon, for example, argues for the use of the term "multicultural" as a more inclusive term instead of "ethnic" which "always has to do with the social positioning of the 'other,' and is thus never free of relations of power and value" (2). To me, her rationale is similar to Atwood's view of a generic immigrant experience. (54)

For Wah, social positioning is key to the poetics he proposes, which involves the work of complicating (rather than obscuring) difference, in part through a "figuring out" of where one is positioned, and how one moves and dwells in the place where one lives (56-57).

3   Turnbull makes this comment in a chapter on "Maps—A Way of Ordering Our Environment," in which he explains that the bird's-eye view characteristic of European mapping tends to carry with it the illusion that a map, while useful for way-finding, has not been produced by a subject engaged in the work of finding his or her way. Of course, all maps, he notes, do in fact have what he describes as an indexical dimension, produced as they are through particular methods of navigating and interpreting space (50-51).

4   I am grateful to a particularly helpful anonymous reader for encouraging me to return to this other important dimension of Turnbull's observation.

5   In an article on Brand's novel *What We All Long For*, Kit Dobson responds to recent Deleuzian analyses of deterritorialization in Brand's work—including Goldman's discussion of "drifting" in *Map* and Ellen Quigley's examination of rhizomatic forms of political struggle in *In Another Place, Not Here*—by recalling the connection between deterritorialization and reterritorialization in Deleuze and Guattari's thinking. Dobson makes the important argument that because "[m]ovements to decode or decolonize the self . . . have the potential . . . to leave the individual open to being recoded or recolonized by the emerging dominant structures of society," decolonizing the self must therefore be an ongoing project, "constantly renewing [itself]" (88). In my analysis of *Map*, I

foreground Brand's negotiation of the ever-present threat of reterritorialization by dominant systems of power; however, in emphasizing that Brand necessarily marks herself in space (however creatively and provisionally), and in suggesting that, consequently, her "landings" involve restratifications of social relations, I am also querying the tendency to conceptualize reterritorialization only as a recoding of individuals by larger social forces. In other words, I am interested in the ways in which the practices of individual agents are, in themselves, reterritorializing.

6 Ahmed notes that the cognitivist view of emotion can be traced back to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*; in her survey of the recent scholarly literature on the relationship between cognition, emotion, and bodily sensation she highlights in particular the work of Alison M. Jaggar and Elizabeth V. Spelman (5-7; 17n10).

7 Notably, Brand acknowledges a First Nations presence, suggesting that it still haunts Burnt River:

> sleeping in the upstairs of my house someone had a dream of something with a great wing passing over the house. The next morning one of those friends who was Six Nations asked, "Whose land is this, I wonder?" Whoever's it was, they had passed over the house. I thought of this winged being when I was alone. Sometimes at night I felt it pass and linger. . . . It was not a peaceful thing, though it meant no harm to me, I think. (150-51)

8 Brand later unsettles her embeddedness in this particular history of association by locating the source of her fear elsewhere, in her memories of the American invasion of Grenada, which took place while she was working on the island (155). In this way, Brand's experience as a diasporic subject proves repeatedly deterritorializing, making her readings of particular spaces, at particular points in time, provisional and contingent.

9 I am grateful to Patricia Smart for her insight regarding the relation of Frye's garrison mentality to *Map*.

10 In "Letter to Miguel Otero Silva, in Caracas (1948)," from Section XII of the *Canto General*, Neruda recalls how he found his hands "stained with garbage and sadness" after observing the working conditions of miners, and in so doing connects the act of witnessing to a sense of implication.

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