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EDITORIAL

Aubrey Hanson and Heather Milne

Feminist Critique Here and Now

In recent years, feminism has taken on new urgency in the wake of #ubcAccountable and #MeToo; movements like #BlackLivesMatter and #IdleNoMore have drawn renewed attention to the importance of intersectional feminism; and the COVID-19 pandemic has focused attention on questions of class, gender, immigration status, precarity, mental health, and disability rights. These events were at the forefront of our minds as we came together to conceptualize this special issue in the summer of 2021.

As we have worked on this issue over the past two years, events both close to home and global have further underscored the continued relevance of feminism "here and now." We would often begin our editorial check-in meetings by talking about what was happening in the world and how these events affected us. We began to draft the call for papers at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic while we navigated online teaching, public health orders, and our children's remote learning. We were acutely aware of the burdens placed on parents, especially mothers, in the context of this ongoing public health crisis. As the first drafts of articles landed in our inboxes in February 2022, the "Freedom Convoy," with their anti-vaccine and anti-mask sentiments and their ties to the far right, was assembling in our cities. A few months later, as articles were making their way through peer review, the Supreme Court in the US struck down *Roe v. Wade*, making access to abortion illegal in several states. As we prepared to sit down to write this introduction, two students and a professor in a Philosophy of Gender class at the University of Waterloo were stabbed in their classroom, an incident that left us reeling but also more resolved than ever to commit ourselves to the work of feminism. As

we write this introduction, Camp Marcedes has been set up at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in an effort to implore the Manitoba government to search a Winnipeg landfill for the remains of Marcedes Myran and Morgan Harris, two Indigenous women murdered by a serial killer; so far, the government has refused to conduct a search. In the two years over which we have collaborated on this special issue, we have also witnessed a sharp rise in hatred directed towards the 2SLGBTQ+ community (and especially the trans community) as misinformation about gender-affirming care for trans youth, comprehensive sex education, and drag queen story hours at public libraries is weaponized against the community.

These events, ever-present as a backdrop of crisis against which we teach, write, and do research, remind us that feminism is more urgent than ever, but that we need a feminism that is intersectional in its commitment to Indigenous sovereignty, the rights of migrants and refugees, and the rights of 2SLGBTQ+ individuals. We write this introduction during the hottest summer on record, a summer that has seen devastating forest fires and floods across the country and beyond. Caring for the earth and working towards sustainable futures and divestment from fossil fuels is also an integral part of feminist work.

However, despite the urgency of feminist critique, many of us in our fields tend not to centre feminism as a methodology in our work. As an entrypoint to feminism in the introduction to the recent volume *In Good Relation*, Sarah Nickel points to "a general anxiety around the term itself" among Indigenous feminists and "a desire to explain" how they arrive as feminists (2). Amid contextual complexities, many scholars adopt what Rosi Braidotti calls a "nomadic feminism," which she describes as "an opening outwards of the process of redefining female subjectivity . . . that calls for a broadening of the traditional feminist political agenda to include, as well as the issue of women's social rights, a larger spectrum of options, which range from cultural concerns related to writing and creativity, to issues which at first sight seem to have nothing to do specifically with women" (83). However, as Chandra Talpade Mohanty reminds us, "imperialism, militarization, and globalization all traffic in women's bodies, women's labour, and ideologies of masculinity/femininity, heteronormativity, racism, and nationalism to consolidate and reproduce power and domination" (9). Given these perspectives, this special issue is interested in exploring

the continued resonance and urgency of feminist thinking in the twenty-first century.

Our call for papers began by asking, "What is the continued role of feminist theory and feminist analysis in literary studies today in these lands claimed by Canada? How and why is feminist analysis still relevant to our work?" Our call invited contributors to reflect on how and why feminism is instrumental—either directly or indirectly—to their thinking. This invitation was inspired in part by our observation that feminism has fallen out of academic fashion in recent years, but also our conviction that feminism remains relevant, and perhaps increasingly so, in our current geopolitical context. We were excited to think together about the relevance of feminism here and now in a world that feels like it is at a tipping point ecologically, politically, and technologically.

As we collaborated on this issue, we enacted care and kinship by visiting together, talking about our families (chosen and otherwise), discussing what was happening in our lives, and fostering hope and joy about the thinking we were doing together. It felt vital to come together around this work and it was enlivening to be able to do so. In spite of the bleakness of the times in which we live, we have taken great joy in this collaboration and in working with all of the authors in this issue. We want to extend our gratitude to each and every contributor, and to *Canadian Literature* for offering a space for our thinking.

Before going on to introduce the individual pieces, we will pause to introduce ourselves, in keeping with Indigenous protocols around relationality, as well as feminist understandings of situated knowledges.

I (Heather) write from Treaty 1 Territory, the traditional home of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, Dene Peoples, and homeland of the Métis Nation, where I have lived for the past seventeen years. I am a queer, gender fluid settler of Scottish and English descent, raised on Vancouver Island on the traditional unceded territory of the K'ómoks First Nation. I am a scholar of poetics, queer theory, and feminist theory. I came to feminism as a teenager through witnessing multiple friends endure gendered and sexual violence without redress. When I arrived at university, I found a language and set of ideas to describe my feelings, and I have been building on these ever since.

I (Aubrey) am a member of the Métis Nation of Alberta, of mixed Indigenous and Euro-settler heritage. I am writing from the traditional

territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy. This territory, where we honour Treaty 7, is also home to the Tsuu T'ina and Stoney Nakoda First Nations, as well as the Métis and many diverse peoples. I am a queer woman, a relative to many blood and chosen family members, an avid reader and writer, and a long-time educator. I came to feminism through critical training in literary theory and gender studies, as well as through a love of women's writing, which led to work in anti-oppressive and decolonial education. Growing up working in a pool hall also helped me hone my skills in feminist critique.

The pieces that we received in response to our call for papers illustrate the diverse ways in which scholars are taking up feminist theories, methodologies, and practices through and in relation to literary works. The authors of the following essays address the complex notions of feminist critique and its relevance in literary studies, as well as the nature of the "here and now" invoked by our call for papers—the present moment in lands claimed by Canada.

Jennifer Brant's article, "Indigenous Literary Expressions of Matriarchal Worlding as Kinship," explores the concept of "matriarchal worlding" through the writings of Beth Brant and Lee Maracle, while also exploring her own scholarly journey in relation to feminism. Regrounding in Indigenous "matrilineal knowledges" and spiralic conceptions of time, Brant considers what is possible for decolonial feminisms.

In "Without Togetherness: The Intersectional Impasse of Syd Zolf's Collaborative Poetics," Jessi MacEachern draws on Lauren Berlant's concept of "genre flailing" to explore flailing as a productive state of incoherence for ethical feminist engagement. MacEachern places Zolf's work within a network of innovative feminist poetics and, through a specific focus on collaboration, entanglement, and appropriation, explores the ways in which white feminist thinkers can grapple with their complicity in national myths that uphold white supremacist forms of dominance and colonial control.

"Undernarrated Emotional Landscapes in Toronto's Scarborough: Téa Mutonji's *Shut Up You're Pretty*," by Zsuzsanna Lénárt-Muszka, considers the narrative strategy of "undernarration" in Mutonji's short story collection. Lénárt-Muszka illustrates the ways in which undernarration can be read in relation to the protagonist's own "disrupted emotional landscape" and speaks, in a more general way, to the erasure of Black women from the Canadian cultural imaginary.

In "Mistaken Identity: 'Asian/Indigenous Relation' and the Afterlives of Feminist Critique," Rusaba Alam challenges the flattening of "politics of difference" in the context of the neoliberal university. This paper looks to Lee Maracle's story "Yin Chin" and related texts, as well as to the story of the *Telling It* conference on literature and politics held in Vancouver in 1988, to examine feminist genealogies and to challenge the ways in which politics of difference are appropriated in academic work.

Erin Akerman's essay "Home '[H]eart-sweet' Homeland: Jane Johnston Schoolcraft's Domestic Decolonial Literary Methodology" engages with the work of nineteenth-century Ojibwe writer Jane Johnston Schoolcraft. Theorizing with Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson to posit that Schoolcraft's domestic experiences can be framed as a decolonial methodology, Akerman shows how this methodological orientation unsettles Indigenous-settler relations in that historical period and region.

We conclude with Camille van der Marel's essay, "Theory in Practice; Or, CanLit's So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is about You," because we see this essay as offering our readers an alternative to the "paranoid" reading practices that have come to characterize much of our work as feminist scholars focused on identifying inequitable and oppressive systems. By reading the responses to the #CanLitDumpsterFire alongside a close analysis of the protagonist from Dionne Brand's *Theory*, van der Marel considers the limitations of a "hermeneutics of suspicion" as an interpretive practice, suggesting that this approach risks reiterating damage rather than repairing it. Instead, van der Marel directs us towards reading practices that are anchored in desire and reparative intimacies.

We see a number of generative connections and resonances between these articles that we hope readers will find fruitful. Brant's and Akerman's articles, for instance, explore tensions between Indigenous and white conceptions of feminism and gender from different places in feminist genealogies. Foregrounding Indigenous women's literary engagements and lived experiences, these papers illuminate understandings that sustain decolonial and Indigenous movements and worldviews. Alam's article, relatedly, explores solidarities between Indigenous and Asian communities in British Columbia in relation to intersecting feminist genealogies. This exploration invokes the theme of collaboration, which also arises in MacEachern's thinking about how

feminist entanglements can work to undo colonialism and white supremacy. The questions of entanglement or intersectionality are crucial across all of these articles, as each essay grapples with feminism in relation to other aspects of identity, such as race, language, Indigeneity, embodiment, or queerness.

The process of narration is explored and challenged in Alam's and Lénárt-Muszka's articles, as the former takes a deconstructive approach to reading narrative and the latter examines undernarration, or what is present in the unsaid, the gaps, and the aporias in the text. These examinations remind us of how feminist tools enable readers to push beyond accepting what is said explicitly, instead asking critical questions about what is not acknowledged, whose voice is missing, or which stories are not valued. Reading through absence also resonates with the theme of complicity across these papers, whether it is the possibility of being complicit with white supremacy and colonial violence as explored by MacEachern, with the erasure of Black women as explored by Lénárt-Muszka, or with the perniciousness of paranoid reading as explored by van der Marel. We see MacEachern's and van der Marel's articles as offering some possible critical tools for opposing complicity in their consideration of poetic flailing and reparative reading, which we hope readers will be able to find useful for their own thought.

Brant's broad questions on feminist critique are also usefully brought into dialogue with van der Marel's big-picture considerations of reading practices and critical approaches. In response to these papers, we are left asking important questions ourselves. How do we engage more fiercely in feminist critique? How do we undo the dynamics that bring us to resist meaningful engagement? What are the limits of certain reading practices and critical approaches from within feminist theory? How do we keep our feminist work rooted in Land, community, and relations with matriarchies and queer kin, while leaning into desire and reparation? The papers in this issue open up numerous questions and reflections for us, and we hope that readers will find their own connections and inquiries, as well.

Finally, this issue features a readers' forum on the theme of feminism here and now, with contributions from seven scholars and leaders in our fields: Asha Jeffers, Lily Cho, Linda M. Morra, Hannah McGregor, Sophie Moulaison, Tanis MacDonald, and Erin Wunker. In sharing how feminist critique resonates in their work,

these thinkers offer a pulse point for contemporary feminism and its significance for literary studies in Canada. We provide a brief introduction to this forum to speak to its curation.

We look forward to ongoing dialogue in response to this special issue, as we are excited about the set of ideas these essays present. We hope that they provoke further thought about the ongoing relevance of feminist critique in the work we do. We wish to express our gratitude to the exceptional people who contributed to this issue, as well as to the *Canadian Literature* journal team who welcomed us in and guided us along as guest editors. Finally, thank you, merci, maarsii to all our readers!

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Heather Milne is a Professor of English at the University of Winnipeg. She works in the areas of poetics, feminist theory, queer theory, and museum studies. She is the author of Poetry Matters: Neoliberalism, Affect, and the Posthuman in Twenty-First Century North American Feminist Poetics *(U of Iowa P) and editor of* Social Poesis: The Poetry of Rachel Zolf *(Wilfred Laurier UP 2018) and* Prismatic Publics: Innovative Canadian Women's Poetry and Poetics *(Coach House Books, 2009). Her co-edited collection of essays* Museum Queeries: Two-Spirit, Indigiqueer, and LGBTTQ* Interventions into Museums and Curation *(co-edited with Angela Failler, Sabrina Mark, and Michelle McGeough) is forthcoming with Jageillonian UP in 2024.*

Jennifer Brant

Indigenous Literary Expressions of Matriarchal Worlding as Kinship

> Where do you begin telling someone their world is not the only one?
> — *Lee Maracle*, Ravensong

I open with the above sentiment written in Lee Maracle's *Ravensong* because it offers a simple opening to understanding my experiences as an Indigenous scholar navigating the colonial terrain of academia. Indeed, the academic spaces where I find myself teaching, writing, and theorizing are rooted in Western-centric modes of knowledge translation that tend to be paternalistic and are fundamentally different than the matriarchal orientations intrinsic to my understanding of the world. My entry point into feminist understandings of the world stems from my positionality as a Haudenosaunee woman from a matrilineal community and as a mother-scholar who theorizes about Indigenous maternal pedagogies as liberatory praxis. It is from this ontological space that I engage in feminist analysis of literary texts. My work has centred racialized, sexualized, and gender-based violences, and carved out spaces for activist practices in academia. This work is inspired by a genealogical legacy that I was born into and indeed one that is guided by spirit. These Indigenous feminist roots are firmly grounded in community experiences.

As a Kanien'kehá:ka woman and member of a matrilineal community, I theorize matriarchal worlding from my ontological understandings of the world. Matriarchal worlding is inspired by the Haudenosaunee creation story and our original teachings about Sky Woman that continue to guide our ceremonies today. As Lee Maracle's *Ravensong* reminds us, Indigenous ceremonies were outlawed for many years across Turtle Island, and our current state of affairs is in dire need of repair. I introduce matriarchal worlding here by theorizing it as praxis for inspiring a reckoning and reimagining of

our current world. This praxis involves honouring the spirit and intent of Indigenous literatures as mnemonic devices for spiralling backward and forward in time as we journey towards matriarchal worldviews.

This article documents my journey into the world of Indigenous women's literatures, where I understand Indigenous literary expressions of matriarchal feminism as kinship. I extend selected works to document a vision of decolonial feminisms through a curation of Indigenous women's literatures. I have selected writings that help me to understand what it means to be an Indigenous feminist within the context of the white heteronormative violences that shape our contemporary world. As I express throughout, Indigenous feminist literatures are resonant and offer a felt sense of home and community. Finally, these writings are timeless, rooted in particular moments in history and serve as instruments of prospection that impart powerful lessons for advancing Indigenous survivance. As a segue into literary expressions of matriarchal worlding, I engage writings that prompt readers to consider the implications of applying feminist analysis to Canadian literature. I end this essay by offering a textual analysis of Lee Maracle's *Ravensong* as an expression of matriarchal worlding as kinship. Specifically, I urge readers to consider the critical lessons that *Ravensong* offers us about the state of our world today and to imagine the altered possibilities of matriarchal worlding.

Indigenous Feminist Writing Aesthetic

This article is presented in a style that moves away from western literary aesthetics (Gunn Allen 2). Following Indigenous literary aesthetics and Indigenous pedagogical approaches to academic writing is common within Indigenous women's literatures as we journey through and mark our spaces in academia. This style guides us as we chart out new, albeit familiar, pathways for theorizing the beauty of our worldviews and the violence and oppression that strives to dehumanize us and dismantle our community structures. At times, my writing moves from spiritual to physical realms, and I weave together pieces from the Indigenous literary world that move, inspire, and foster my sense of self as I move with/in community and academia. As I seek to honour the reverence of Indigenous stories, I make note of literary works without sharing a full analysis. There are

pieces that might not be fully understood by all, but my intention is to provide a lens for appreciating these works and inspiring readers to add them to their own bookshelves. In time, when they are ready to receive the stories with an open heart, they will be there.

The resonance within Indigenous literatures is beautiful to experience; it is felt and reverberating. It transports us backward and forward and connects us to spaces that are beyond words. As an example, I recently finished reading Michelle Good's *Five Little Indians* and wondered how many readers like me were brought into another space when they read one of the main characters singing along to Buffy Sainte-Marie's *Starwalker*. I was equally moved reading Eden Robinson's *Son of a Trickster* and recalled the winter of 2012, when Indigenous folx from across Turtle Island staged flash-mob round dances in city centres and shopping malls. While Good and Robinson do not describe these experiences in detail, they hint at them in ways that can only be felt by the knowing reader. There are editors, however, that will want more of the details. As Beth Brant recalls, "The story is always enough for me, but editors insist on explanations, details . . . Does it matter? Isn't story why we are here, no matter the mode of transportation?" (*Writing* 106). The story has always been enough for me. Indigenous women's writings offer the kind of representation that engages spirit and enters into relationship with the reader and, in this way, offers an intellectual site for community building. I am moved by the message shared by Helen Knott in her debut novel *In My Own Moccasins: A Memoir of Resilience*: "As Indigenous women, we sometimes must unapologetically write for ourselves" (xvi).

An Indigenous feminist writing aesthetic must be understood as relational. The words of those who marked the literary path for a new generation of Indigenous writers have birthed a writing style that is interwoven with spirit and community; this style calls on our matriarchal teachings and offers them as lessons for our contemporary experiences. Indeed, the past, present, future continuum is a guide for thinking about Indigenous resurgence and a vision of decolonial feminisms.

Indigenous Literatures as Felt and Embodied

As I recently articulated in "Finding Homeplace within Indigenous Literatures: Honouring the Genealogical Legacies of bell hooks and Lee Maracle," Indigenous women's literature offers an important theoretical site for documenting Indigenous women's feminisms. The power of Indigenous women's writing is also connected to felt theory. Million describes felt theory as a model that understands emotional knowledges and analysis as informed by lived experience ("Felt Theory: An Indigenous Feminist Approach" 54). As Million explains, felt theory is an important analysis for understanding the power of Indigenous women's literatures. I share this here because integral to an understanding of felt theory is Million's assertion that the current generation of Indigenous women's writing "shares a direct lineage" with earlier Indigenous women writers ("Felt Theory" 268). This sentiment is also echoed by Beth Brant in her comments on the early writings of E. Pauline Johnson, who, well over a century ago, drew attention to racialized, sexualized, and gender-based violences faced by Indigenous women at the hands of the colonial state (*Writing* 5–24). For Million, unpacking the felt experience of reading Indigenous women's literatures through this lens entails an analysis of "colonialism as it is *felt* by those who experience it" (272).

Felt theory, then, offers a framework for understanding Indigenous women's literatures as sites for unpacking the felt experiences of colonial violences. It also offers an important framework for understanding matriarchal worlding as a felt experience that is ontologically understood as a process of dreaming. For example, Million defines dreaming as a transformative and imaginative process that weaves theory, narrative, and critical thinking:

> Dreaming to me is the effort to make sense of relations in the worlds we live, dreaming and empathizing intensely our relations with past and present and the future without the boundaries of linear time. Dreaming is a communicative sacred activity. Dreaming often allows us to creatively sidestep all the neat little boxes that obscure larger relations and syntheses of imagination. ("Intense Dreaming" 314–15)

This process of advancing felt theory through expressions of dreaming can also be understood within what Leilani Sabzalian documents as

cartographies of survivance (364), which Joy Harjo beautifully weaves in the breathtaking and worldmaking collection *A Map to the Next World*. Related to these cartographies of survivance is the understanding of Indigenous futurities. In *Spiral to the Stars: Mvskoke Tools of Futurity*, Laura Harjo describes futurity as a process that weaves together the visions of the future that our ancestors desired with the reality we desire in the present. As she explains, "The notion of futurity challenges a conventional reckoning of time and the future, and pushes us to create right now—the present moment—that which our ancestors, we, and future relatives desire" (4). I consider these sentiments of futurity alongside the matriarchal writers who helped me understand Indigenous feminisms through literature. The understanding of futurity in relation to a past-present-future continuum is represented in the works of Beth Brant and Lee Maracle, who conjure up community narratives as visions of survivance. Beth Brant documents Indigenous women's writings as survival tools and Lee Maracle writes about survivance through stories about matriarchal societies as kinship. I extend these analyses to define matriarchal worlding as a process that is rooted in community knowledges, specifically matriarchal worldviews, that have existed since time immemorial and govern our relations to our human and non-human kin.

Matriarchal Worlding

Matriarchal worlding is an ontological orientation that is understood within a process of spiralling backward and forward. It extends the idea of worldmaking and acknowledges the "kind of livingness . . . we see emerging, as always-already in the works" (Maynard and Simpson 27). If we think with Kevin Quashie, who "highlight[s] time as a feature of prospection" and "conceptualizes experience as a toggling between then (past), now (present), and what may come" (59), this spiralling backward and forward offers a cartography for rematriating a vision of worlding that has always-already been. Matriarchal worlding serves as both an intervention and a rupture into our current state of affairs; some understand this as post-apocalyptic and others remind us that there is no Anthropocene (Maynard and Simpson, 12–20). As a justice-oriented call for returning to our original teachings,

matriarchal worlding asks: How might we imagine (or return to) a more beautiful existence?

Matriarchal visions of worldmaking are interwoven throughout the stories of Lee Maracle, Beth Brant, and Patricia Monture-Angus, whose writings offer profound lessons about kinship, community safety, and radical love. It was through their writings that, for the first time, I could see my experiences as an Indigenous woman reflected in academic writing. I say *academic writing* with the caveat that the kind of writing that I consider Indigenous feminist scholarship is written *for* and *with* community. In an essay entitled "Women's Words: Power, Identity, and Indigenous Sovereignty," Monture-Angus makes this point clear by stating: "I don't write like an academic. Not because I can't, but because I don't. Because that does not fill the silence that has existed between 'Indian' nations, our citizens, the women, and power" (155). When I think of this task of filling the silence, I recall the worldmaking process Brant undertook in putting together *A Gathering of Spirit: A Collection by North American Indian Women* (1984). Brant was committed to ensuring the voices of Indigenous women whose lives existed on the periphery of the periphery were included. Brant wanted to document the stories of the most silenced Indigenous women from across Turtle Island and sent requests for submissions everywhere she "thought there was a story to tell" (*A Gathering* 9). She writes about this process of collecting stamps, making phone calls and trips to the post office, and writing letters to Indigenous women in prisons, health networks, and community centres across Canada and the US. As she expresses, *A Gathering of Spirit* took on a spirit of its own and filled the vast silences as the collection became an intellectual site of community and sisterhood (8–11).

Inspired by the work of Lee Maracle, Beth Brant, and Patricia Monture-Angus, I too am committed to write to fill the silences and intentionally weave together literary works that showcase the beauty of Indigenous women's worldviews. Indeed, Indigenous women's writings are gifts that mark our collective journeys of decolonial feminisms.

Envisioning Decolonial Feminisms

> My words are a colourful tapestry. They are my art. My struggle is to recover the identity that allows me to walk in the way of beauty.
>
> — Patricia Monture-Angus,
> *Thunder in My Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks*

> I look on Native women's writing as a gift, a give-away of the truest meaning. Our spirit, our sweat, our tears, our laughter, our love, our anger, our bodies are distilled into words that we bead together to make power. Not power *over* anything. Power. Power that speaks to hearts as well as to minds.
>
> — Beth Brant, *Writing as Witness*

I open this section on envisioning decolonial feminisms by sharing two profound quotes from Haudenosaunee writers that I include on the cover pages of my Indigenous literatures course syllabi. These quotations document the power of Indigenous women's writings through a lens of cultural identity, but they also invite reflection. To incite the relationality integral to matriarchal worlding, I invite the reader to reflect and make meaning from the above quotations, as I urge my students to.

In *Literatures, Communities, and Learning: Conversations with Indigenous Writers*, Aubrey Jean Hanson explains that it was not until roughly her third year of university that an Indigenous-authored reading was assigned as part of her formal education (146). I was also in my third year of university the first time I was assigned an article authored by an Indigenous person. This speaks to a larger issue of representation that I will return to in a moment; I will first express how profound it was to have an Indigenous-authored article included in the course syllabus. Not only was the author an Indigenous scholar, but she was an Indigenous woman who, like me, was a member of the Mohawk nation: the late Patricia Monture-Angus. The article, entitled "Women and Risk: Aboriginal Women, Colonialism, and Correctional Practice" (1999), brought me to Monture-Angus' *Thunder in My Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks* (1995), and I was forever changed. In this work I found the language to articulate my experiences as an Indigenous woman and young mother in academia with a desire to contribute to community well-being. I was also in my third year of university when I purchased Lee Maracle's *I Am Woman: A Native*

Perspective on Feminism and Sociology (1996). As I have written elsewhere (J. Brant, "Finding Homeplace"), these books offered me an entry point into the world of Indigenous feminist scholarship, and I finally saw a place for myself within feminist theory. Although I continued to sit with the tensions that had pushed me to reject feminism altogether, I now had a critical lens to understand the experiences of Indigenous women in relation to matriarchal feminism. As Lee Maracle metaphorically invited me to her kitchen table and I entered the sacred territory of words and meaning, I found a new language to resist the heteropatriarchal lens of white feminism.

The sophisticated stories I find in Indigenous women's writings impart vital lessons about matriarchal worlding that I bring forward as liberatory praxis. There is a profound difference between literature that is written about Indigenous women and literature that is written by Indigenous women. In *Iskwewak Kah' Ki Yaw Ni Wahkomakanak: Neither Indian Princesses nor Easy Squaws*, Janice Acoose-Miswonigeesikokwe documents this distinction through archival accounts of the representations of Indigenous women in the Canadian literary canon. As Acoose-Miswonigeesikokwe points out, literature serves as a political instrument that not only perpetuates harmful stereotypical representations of Indigenous women, but also justifies numerous legally sanctioned initiatives that target overall livability for Indigenous women, such as the racist and sexist legislation embedded in the Indian Act of Canada, Canada's troubling history of eugenics that led to the forced sterilization of numerous Indigenous women, recent cases of coerced sterilization that we see today, and the continued racialized and sexualized violence that has become endemic throughout Canada.

Acoose-Miswonigeesikokwe explains that Canadian literature has been ideologically instrumental in disempowering Indigenous women. She draws parallels between the derogatory ways Indigenous women have been presented in mainstream literature and the "cultural attitudes that legitimize rape and other kinds of violence against us" (71). In this way, Canadian literature has historically been a powerful and political tool of Indigenous women's disempowerment and oppression. The kind of disempowerment that Acoose-Miswonigeesikokwe expresses in her book is connected to the disempowerment Indigenous women experience from the white feminist movement, and this helps us to understand the tensions

Indigenous women face in identifying with the word *feminism*. This tension is complicated by the fact that early feminists were complicit in violence against Indigenous women, specifically in the control of our bodies and reproductive rights. For example, although they were known for their work as maternal feminists, Nellie McClung and Emily Murphy were also supporters of Alberta's Sexual Sterilization Act, an act that largely targeted Indigenous women. Numerous Indigenous women continue to come forward about recent cases of forced sterilization. This racialized and sexualized violence supported by early feminists continues to target Indigenous women today.

Feminism on Turtle Island, then, is entangled in this messy history. When I ask myself why I would want to identify as a feminist, I am humbled by the lessons of Lee Maracle, who reminds us of the matriarchal roots of this land, colonially referred to as Canada:

> In our families we need to reconceive of our family relations . . . We must rear our children . . . in a way that breaks down patriarchal thinking and being. We need to *rematriate* our families . . . If you come from a matriarchal society, why would you need feminism? Many of our societies were either matriarchal or co-lineal (gender complimentary). Anyone who argues that this is still the case is delusional. Reinstituting either of the above structures is a feminist act. (Qtd. in Fiola, 166)

Maracle's words stand as a reminder of the way patriarchal worldviews have collided with matrilineal worldviews. Patriarchy has trickled into our families and communities and, as Maracle consistently reminded us, Indigenous feminism begins with the rematriation of our homes. Many of these profound conversations took place in Lee Maracle's home, the place where *Ravensong* was birthed. In other conversations and readings, I have learned about the many gatherings that took place at Maracle's kitchen table. As a site for envisioning matriarchal worlding, I believe Maracle has extended an invitation for many to join this relational conversation. When I reflect on what it means to be metaphorically invited to Lee Maracle's kitchen table, I am fuelled by the desire to document and share stories that "land on our kitchen tables" and that will dismantle the racialized, sexualized, and gender-based violences we continue to face (Moraga and Anzaldúa xviii). This work moves from the kitchen tables of our homes into our

communities' gathering spaces and to the boardroom tables where we work to enact political change. It begins with language and with the legacy of translating our world into the pages that will shift the Canadian literary landscape: "Recognizing that language can and does shape our experiences, it is vitally important that Indigenous women appropriate the english [*sic*] language in order to represent our experiences" (Acoose-Miswonigeesikokwe 58).

Indeed, this is what Lee Maracle and Beth Brant did in their writings: they offered a language for me, and many others, to find a "space" to exist and "breathe inside the claustrophobic world of Canadian literature" (Elliott 25–26). In doing so, they inspired visions of decolonial feminisms. As Lee Maracle (2019) points out, the Indigenous literary canon has been shaped by Brant's generous writings, which have carved out spaces for us to write back against the heteropatriarchal world that shapes Canadian literature:

> Her life was too short, like so many of our people. Colonial poverty and oppression took away some of our best sons and daughters. Beth left early, but she had accomplished so much. She inspired a generation of two-spirited authors who followed her to publication. There would not have been a *Johnny Appleseed* without there first being a Beth Brant. There would not have been no Connie Fife without Beth Brant. There would be no *I Am Woman* without Beth Brant. We were feminists when everyone objected. Feminism is a white thing, they said. Beth's response, so is patriarchy. (7)

Lee Maracle testifies to the community of Indigenous feminist writers who have written back, particularly during a time when Canadian literature served as a tool of Indigenous women's disempowerment. When I think about what it means to be an Indigenous feminist as a member of a matrilineal community, I am humbled by the rich genealogical roots of Turtle Island, the Land on which I am firmly grounded. Indeed, as Million contended, Indigenous women "developed a profound literature of experience" that must be at the centre of decolonial feminisms (272). Engaging with Indigenous literatures is a humbling opportunity to honour and enter community with the writers whose matriarchal legacies continue to guide our words and visions for worldmaking.

Indigenous Women's Words: Gifting a Matriarchal Legacy

My journey towards learning about feminism was complicated and intertwined with the tensions between matriarchal worlding and the white feminism that sought to erase and silence Indigenous voices. Yes, it is through Indigenous women's literature that I have reconciled my relationship to feminism. Indeed, this is an intergenerational quest, and I honour the genealogical legacy of Indigenous matriarchs who continue to feed my work. Beth Brant writes about the spiritual grandmothers who continue to guide our writing and mark the Indigenous literary path for us. My familial story on this path is marked by a photograph of my late grandmother holding a copy of E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake)'s *Flint and Feather*, a book that I continue to teach today. I am honoured to extend this matriarchal Indigenous literary legacy in my own feminist praxis as I carry and teach from the very same physical copy of *Flint and Feather* that my grandmother read. As Brant writes:

> Pauline Johnson's physical body died in 1913, but her spirit still communicates to us who are Native women writers. She walked the writing path clearing the brush for us to follow. And the road gets wider and clearer each time a Native woman picks up her pen and puts her mark on paper. (*Writing* 7–8)

Johnson inspired a literary movement across Turtle Island. She might be defined as a woman before her time, but as Brant and Monture-Angus point out, she was an Indigenous woman from a matrilineal community, and her writing is deeply intertwined with her matrilineal calls for Indigenous sovereignty. She wrote about both the injustices that troubled her spirit and the beauty of Turtle Island's landscapes. Johnson was writing about racialized, sexualized, and gender-based violences well over a century ago ("A Strong Race Opinion"). While some might note that she was a woman before her time, others recognize that after centuries of silencing Indigenous women's voices, Canada is finally starting to listen and catch up to the lessons of the past. Indeed, our past, present, and future continue to spiral through the profound writings of Johnson and her literary descendants.

Gifting a matriarchal legacy entails empowering future generations of Indigenous writing that "incite[s] relationality and

worldmaking" (Quashie 69). As noted earlier, this vision of relationality is inspired by our human and non-human relatives and attends to the dreaming processes that continue to spiritually feed our intellects. Brant eloquently expresses this vision:

> I no longer feel that the words come directly from me. There are spirits at work who move my lips, my fingers. Who call me, who take over my clumsy attempts to put one word after the other to make some kind of sense. An automatic writing of sorts. I used to fight the spirits. Now I accept them. (112)

Brant explains that writing comes from a deeper place to inspire visions of transformation. The above affirmation showcases the spiritual essence of Indigenous literatures and the depth of wisdom that guides Indigenous women's writings. This sentiment aligns with Lee Maracle's assertion: "I conjure stories because they come to me" (170). This spiritual writing process also guided the development of *Ravensong*. As Maracle explains, "The characters in the story took on a life of their own. After the first day, it was as though I were following the telling of the story rather than writing it" (xii). Thus, the literatures that inspire matriarchal worlding transcend the physical world. I share this here to highlight the spiritual element of worldmaking that aligns with a past-present-future continuum and spiralling backward and forward with time. This non-linear view of an Indigenous literary legacy helps us to understand the ancestral knowledges of Indigenous women's literatures as a vision for matriarchal worlding.

This spiritual call to write also entails a particular responsibility. Brant has explained that she was called at the age of forty. As Spirit called her to write, she reflected on the great responsibility of being gifted with this power to write: "[W]ords are sacred . . . I must choose each word carefully, aware of its significance, its truth, its beauty. As a writer, I must honour my ancestors, and the people I respect and love through the written way" (*Writing* 3). This responsibility can also be understood alongside the misrepresentations of Indigenous women in Canadian literature. Writing for Brant was as much about writing back to racialized and sexualized violence as it was about survival, relationality, and worldmaking. As Lee Maracle explains in the preface to *A Generous Spirit*, Brant's stories offered nourishment:

> So few Indigenous women were publishing in 1981, when Beth Brant came forward with her first work. In those days, the few of us that were writing were so hungry for each other's work that we snapped her up. She transformed us. (7)

Thus Maracle honours Beth Brant as an Indigenous literary matriarch. I imagine that like E. Pauline Johnson, Lee Maracle, Beth Brant, and Patricia Monture-Angus, as literary matriarchs, themselves provide spiritual guidance for new generations of Indigenous writers. Their influence on us in the world of the living is immeasurable and continues to provide liberation as we find ways to return to our kinship teachings. As we map out matriarchal worlding, not only do we document a world that refutes the heteronormative, patriarchal social structures that are rooted in settler-colonial imagery, but we work within spaces that are "firmly entangled with the beautiful, tenacious stories of connection, invention, and renewal—in other words, love" (Justice 105). It is from within these spaces that we listen to our literary matriarchs, with all our being, to begin "telling someone their world is not the only one" (Maracle, *Ravensong* 61). As Justice writes, "Our lives are incarnations of the stories we tell, the stories about us, and the stories we inherit" (34). As Million articulates, these liberatory stories are also felt and embodied. Thus, felt knowledges can be understood from positions of strength that plant radical visions for renewal. The power of understanding Indigenous women's writings through a strength-based lens of radical love is reflected in Brant's sentiment of Indigenous women's writing as a flowering gift: "These flowers give us survival tools" (*Writing* 9). This lens helps bring into focus the way that Indigenous literatures engage with colonialism but are not defined by it (Justice xix). This framing of radical love is evident in the works of Lee Maracle, who conjures up stories and imparts powerful lessons offered by Raven and Cedar. *Ravensong* calls readers into a new world—or perhaps reawakens us to what once was: a world where Indigenous matriarchs return to and assert their rightful places as heads of our family and community structures. In the following section, I share the lessons from Lee Maracle's *Ravensong* as a vision of matriarchal worlding that is rooted in a past-present-future continuum.

Matriarchal Lessons from Lee Maracle's *Ravensong*

Ravensong, originally published in 1993 by Press Gang Publishers, was reprinted in 2017 by Women's Press. The story of *Ravensong*'s development is integral to an understanding of matriarchal worlding. As Maracle explains in the preface to the reprint of *Ravensong*, the original manuscript was written in several days and the characters seemed to guide Maracle's writing. As I wrote earlier, this attention to the spiritual essence that inspires Indigenous literatures helps us to recognize the ancestral knowledges that inform visions of matriarchal worlding. That publishers picked up this book during a time when Indigenous writing was on the margins of Canadian publishing is also worthy of note, especially as the novel reveals the injustices and violences faced by Indigenous peoples from settler communities. More than that, *Ravensong* is transformative, as it incites visions of matriarchal worlding and ways of living ethically and relationally with our human and non-human kin. Narrating events related to segregated health care, racialized sexualized violence, environmental crises, and the interrelatedness of these issues, Maracle weaves a storyline that demonstrates an urgent need for transformation.

Ravensong is a coming-of-age story set in a 1950s Pacific Northwest Coast community, "the village" (2), that borders a settler community known as "white town" (5). Although *Ravensong* was written years before COVID-19, it seems to foreshadow the lack of care Indigenous communities received at the height of COVID-19. The story takes place amid the 1957 influenza epidemic, and the lack of care offered by the people of white town is eerily similar to the lack of care we continue to see today. Maracle calls upon the reader to see the world through the eyes of young Stacey, a seventeen-year-old woman who walks into white town every day to attend high school. Stacey is one of the only Indigenous students in a world defined by rules and roles significantly different than those of her home community. Although the novel is set in the fifties, this is a reality that many Indigenous youth of today can relate to. Through Stacey, readers witness the injustices faced by Indigenous communities, along with the dehumanization of women in patriarchal white town. Stacey offers a glimpse into what it is like for one to witness this world when their upbringing is firmly planted in a matriarchal society. At times, the values of white town begin to trickle into Stacey's community, and Raven watches from above, trying to

sing her song as she calls upon the community to live in harmony beyond the confines of the bordering town. Cedar also witnesses Raven's song and tries to ease Raven, who seems to be less thoughtless, though still determined, in her desperate plan to save the human spirit and prevent the destruction of Land. Cedar sings a softer song.

Raven, a character often represented in Salish storytelling traditions, appears in this story as a guide for Stacey, who is called upon to cure a suffering community succumbing to the despair of drought, disease, and ongoing racism. Elsewhere, Maracle explains the value of Raven and Cedar in Salish storytelling. As Maracle argues, Raven cannot be understood in her simplicity but rather as a transformer who has survived centuries of colonial destruction and calls us back into the "remembered repertoire of story" (*Memory Serves* 104) to inspire rebirth and reclamation as the keys to social transformation. Cedar serves both as a literary device and muse that calls Maracle into dream space and fosters the imagination required to advance social change (109).

As representations of social transformation, agency, and change, Raven and Cedar inspire us from Maracle's stories to recall and reimagine a world that is within our reach. The lessons of *Ravensong* speak of liberation and highlight the empowerment that comes from a matriarchal worldview. Raven sees Stacey as a hope for the present. Raven, who has witnessed centuries of ecological transformation, understands that Indigenous peoples hold the solutions to environmental and global crisis, and Raven is convinced that young Stacey will help reconcile the multiple crises under which our current world is suffering. As Raven reminds the reader, Stacey's journey to university takes place just years after the ban on ceremonies was lifted. This ban that prohibited Indigenous ceremonies, including the Potlatch and Coast Salish dancing, was in effect from 1885 to 1951. The lingering effects of genocidal policies in Canada resulted in myriad tensions between Indigenous communities and the education system, but in the years that followed, Indigenous peoples began to attend post-secondary institutions. Maracle weaves these tensions into the storyline. As Raven reminds the reader, the story takes place during a promising time for bringing Stacey's deep knowledge of Indigenous ways into conversation with the philosophical debates that would reconcile "white folks' ways and their own" (125). Raven sees this as an opportune time for change and her desire is for Stacey to move the community beyond its current paralysis.

Despite this calling from Raven, Maracle weaves in a series of cautions that young Stacey must be aware of before entering white town and leaving for UBC. Although Steve, a young man from white town, appears enamoured by Stacey, she is well aware of what the union between an Indigenous woman and a non-Indigenous man entails. Stacey is not willing to give up the matrilineal protections offered by her community and refuses to be threatened by the marriage laws embedded in the Indian Act of Canada. Moreover, Stacey is shocked when she witnesses the exchanges between her friend Carol's parents; it seems as though the women of white town must seek approval before speaking of matters related to the business of the home. Stacey ponders the lack of women's authority in white town, a strikingly different balance of power than that of her community. The separation of Carol's parents by the people of white town leaves Carol and her mother in a precarious situation. Carol becomes ashamed and worried about her future. Stacey thinks of her cousin, who married a white man for the dreams of a white picket fence and well-manicured lawn. Upon separation, her cousin ended up homeless in Vancouver. This troubles Stacey, and she wonders why "any woman agreed to leave the safety of her family to marry out" (134). Maracle uses this scene to demonstrate the ludicrousness of the Indian Act of Canada's rules governing the regulation of Indigenous women's status (see Lawrence 13) alongside the patriarchal laws that leave women unprotected in western family units. In contrast to the women of white town, the women in the village are cherished mothers, sisters, and daughters, and have a kinship that protects them from violence.

This kinship model becomes evident when a woman in the village is abused by her husband, the old snake (134). Her husband has spent many years working in white town, and Raven witnesses him turning to alcohol and bringing patriarchal ways into the community, boasting: "I am the head of the household" (134). The old snake is banished from the village as the community comes together to care for and protect his wife. Throughout *Ravensong*, readers are acquainted with the ways Indigenous women are honoured as heads of the household, how the community comes together to care for their Elders during the epidemic, and how relationships subvert the patriarchal and heteronormative ideals of white town.

The beautiful, sustainable, and sophisticated lessons of communities past, witnessed for centuries by Raven and Cedar, offer the solutions we so desperately need to imagine a future in which we all thrive. Maracle's characters reflect the dangers of patriarchal ideals slipping into Indigenous communities, as well as Indigenous women's lack of safety when they are removed from their matriarchal protections. Today we continue to witness the disregard for Indigenous women, as evidenced by the travesty of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, trans and Two-Spirit peoples. And as the country continues to fall short on responding to the 231 Calls for Justice in *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* ("Calls for Justice"), Indigenous communities have had to take matters into their own hands. In recent years, we have witnessed the revitalization of kinship models upholding Indigenous women's safety through community led initiatives such as Winnipeg's Bear Clan Patrol, a non-profit organization of Indigenous community members that works to secure the safety of Indigenous lives. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Indigenous communities across Turtle Island lobbied for safe and culturally relevant vaccine clinics, and others worked to ensure Indigenous communities had access to hand sanitizer and face masks. These are only two examples of the way kinship models such as those represented in *Ravensong* are being restored and practised in contemporary spaces.

In the spirit of rekindling matriarchal worlding, Maracle calls the reader back to the kitchen table. One of the profound lessons from *Ravensong* is the togetherness of women in the kitchen, who work in harmony canning berries, singing songs, and sharing tea. In the kitchen, generations of women, some who have been to residential school and some who have gone to school in white town, are brought together by a unifying thread of community survival. The kitchen is often a site that demonstrates matriarchal empowerment in Black and Indigenous feminist literatures. The kitchen scene in *Ravensong* evokes one in Katherena Vermette's *The Break*, where a generation of women also come together. Both scenes transport me to my grandmother's kitchen and the smells of the wood-burning stove, the bird feeders, and the bush out back. In an article that theorizes the conception of home in *The Break*, Hanson explains that "this sense of home is the home of women's relational resilience: they are enduring

violence, supporting each other, surviving . . . the city, embodying care, sharing stories, tears, laughter" ("Holding Home" 34). Their shared experiences, from picking medicines to cultivating and reseeding trees, offer humble lessons that bring the community together as they envision their futures, despite the illness that has ravaged not only the villagers, but also the trees that sustain them. It is in this final scene that Stacey's cousin, Annie, ponders: "Maybe we are being driven from our insulated little lives into the other world because they need something we have" (128).

I connect this notion—of white town needing something the villagers have—back to Raven, who calls upon Stacey to be the one to bridge the community and white town. Of course, the story is set in the late 1950s, and we know too many stories of Indigenous knowledge extraction before and since, but Raven is specifically thinking of the knowledges the villagers have that will heal Mother Earth and create a sustainable future for Raven, Cedar, and the humans that make Turtle Island their home. I use the word *Mother* intentionally: Maracle reminds us that violence against Mother Earth and our non-human kin is intertwined with violence against Indigenous women. Katsi Cook, Kanien'kehá:ka midwife and founder of the Akwesasne Mother's Milk Project, also connects violence on the land to violence on our bodies. The Mother's Milk Project was created because Akwesasne women were concerned about the reproductive health effects, including high miscarriage rates and birth defects, of toxic contaminants found in breast milk. Maracle weaves these timely and urgent socio-political realities together as Raven calls on Stacey to work within this already altered world and carry Indigenous knowledges and matriarchal stories with her on the journey to UBC. It is in this spirit that, through *Ravensong*, Maracle engages readers in thinking deeply about these entangled and complex relationships. This relationality among one another and our human and non-human kin is the essence of matriarchal worlding: we come to understand the human actions that ripple out and affect Raven and Cedar.

Matriarchal Worlding as Kinship

When I read *Ravensong*, I kept coming back to Stacey's question, which also opens this essay: "Where do you begin telling someone

their world is not the only one?" (61). Like Maracle, "almost all of my understanding of any word, English or otherwise, is connected to my Indigenous point of view, our stories, and my particular interpretation of them" (qtd. in Fiola 162). The very word *matriarchal* can be contested when considering it through a patriarchal and heteronormative lens. Yet my ontological understanding of matriarchal worlding is rooted within the Indigenous ideologies of maternal teachings that entail kinship and ethical relationality. Likewise, my interpretation of *Ravensong* stems from my ontological understanding as a member of a matrilineal community. Indeed, *Ravensong* offers the intersecting backstories that illuminate matriarchal worlding as kinship.

Lee Maracle has asserted her position as an Indigenous feminist by explaining that "Indigenous feminism seeks the restoration of matriarchal authority" and highlights the responsibilities of upholding "these matriarchal structures to reinstate respect and support for the women within them" (*Memory Serves* 149). As mnemonic figures in the novel, Raven and Cedar bear witness to the long, reverberating effects of two vastly different worldviews colliding, and the devastation this collision has brought to our communities and surrounding neighbourhoods. Seeking the restoration of matriarchal authority is inherently about the communal care and kinship embedded throughout *Ravensong*. This restoration entails community responses to crises, the disruption of gender binaries, the eradication of racialized sexualized violences, and a stance against the control and extraction we see in the paternal forces that have been seeping across Turtle Island for centuries.

As a matriarchal mother and Kanien'kehá:ka woman, I have some understanding of the world that Maracle invites us into, but I also long for the old ways that Raven and Cedar remind us of. Maracle transports me into this world, and I am inspired to continue carving out empowered and liberatory sites that honour and embrace matriarchal worlding as kinship. Matriarchal worlding is not merely in opposition to the patriarchal world in which we live; rather, it calls for a return to what once was as a vision for what remains in our reach.

Concluding Thoughts

> I want to be able to fictionalize our lives and still hold fast to truth, yet our lives are so rich with death. Yet I fear that in storying this death in numbers so immense, with love so deep, I may not survive. I spiral down into the silver streak of solitude to find my ceremonial self. From within this bright womb I can spiral out into the world again to reconceive of place. I can stretch time. I can erase the artifice of separation that divides today from yesterday and yesterday from tomorrow. In this place all time is the same time. In this place images speak reality—paint truth in believable pictures.
>
> — Lee Maracle, "The 'Post-Colonial' Imagination"

As I bring this paper full circle, I reflect on the spirals of matriarchal worlding. In some ways my conclusion is actually a starting place, as I leave the reader with empowered possibilities for decolonial feminisms. Indigenous literatures become the meeting place that transcends our physical and spiritual worlds to reawaken our maternal teachings as past, present, and future continue to spiral around us. The writings of Brant and Maracle offer analytical tools for charting out non-linear pathways that spiral backward and forward to advance matriarchal worlding in our present time. I extend the stories by Maracle and Brant, who invited generations of Indigenous writers to their kitchen tables in the spirit of rekindling matriarchal worlding. Now, as these literary matriarchs have moved on to the spirit world, their writings continue to spiral backward and forward, imparting powerful lessons that map a return to matriarchal societies. Their stories offer alternative worldviews to the ones that continue to harm not only Indigenous women, but all our relations who push back against the harmful effects of patriarchal worlds and heteronormative mindsets.

Going back to Harjo's expressions of futurity, I intentionally have selected texts that I believe are timeless and offer important lessons for Indigenous survivance. The texts inspire readers to humbly journey with time and interrogate the past that has so powerfully shaped our current realities as pathways toward envisioning just and empowered futures. As readers, we are called to spiral backward and forward throughout the storylines so we can imagine altered visions of matriarchal worlding. This spiralling continuum resonates with my lived experiences and ontological understandings as a Haudenosaunee scholar and also as an Indigenous woman who is part of larger Indigenous communities. The

texts are also justice calls, and they ask readers to open their hearts and minds to the matriarchal lessons that remind us of a time when "Turtle Islanders built an understanding of the world rooted in the goodwill of safe womanhood . . . [when] Turtle Island women had no reason to fear other humans" (13–14). Matriarchal worlding offers space for all of us who make Turtle Island home to embrace the ethical and relational responsibilities we have with our non-human relatives, as well. In this way, Cedar and Raven remind us of the connections to Land, home, and community that are interwoven with the beautiful and sustainable teachings of matriarchal worlding.

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Jessi MacEachern

Without Togetherness: The Intersectional Impasse of Syd Zolf's Collaborative Poetics [1]

Introduction: A Flailing Poetics

Feminist critique is a flailing embrace of hybridity and difference. As I open up the possibility for a radical genealogy of feminist poetics in and beyond contemporary Canadian writing, I introduce the successes and failures of radical citation or creative plagiarism, the proliferation and commodification of intersectionality, and the reproductive capabilities of cyborgs. Thus, in examining the state of feminist critique in the practice of literary production and criticism, I begin by insisting on the importance of what Lauren Berlant terms "genre flailing." That slippery term—*flail*—immediately invites us, with the word morphing on the tongue or under the fingertips, to fail. But in f(l)ailing as feminist writers and readers, we are closest to the possibility for *success* in feminist practice, for it is, I want to suggest, the *failure* of various communities to cohere, their excitable and exciting flailing in multiple intertwining directions, that provides feminist critique with a necessary way forward in literature and politics. To be wary of this method is natural and invited. For, as Lauren Berlant explains:

> often what distinguishes a successful work from a less successful one—and I'm not at all excepting myself from this—is a confusion on the writer's part about whether the writer is trying to open up the object or close the object, extend a question or put it to rest. It's as though it's impossible to distinguish a defense against knowledge from its production, and here's the thing—you can never know. ("Genre Flailing" 156)

As (feminist) writers and readers, we must accept that we work from an originary position of *never* knowing whether our practice will be a success or a failure. It is from this position of uncertainty, from the confusion of genres, that fiercely innovative works of poetry open up and extend questions about "what it is for a person (a human being-in-society) to be a citizen (standing not just in societal relation to the Other but in historical relation) in an age when virtual connections alter notions of physical place, and underlie as well a globalization of culture and economy" (Moure, *My Beloved Wager* 158). To investigate the degree to which the personal and political, local and global, are interlocking and contaminating features of one another, the feminist poet moves their focus ever increasingly to the unit of the page, the phrase, and the syllable: "word as material" (Moure, "On *A Frame of the Book*" 29).

I want to make apparent the transformative potential of innovative and conceptual poetry practices and the ways in which they illuminate the productive flailing of feminist critique through attention to the collaborative and appropriative poetics of contemporary Canadian poet Syd Zolf (formerly Rachel). To approach a situation—a praxis of feminist critique and theory, perhaps—in which we may render "the errors of face-to-face ethical recognition" readable (*Janey's Arcadia* 116), I first want to position Zolf's innovative strategies in a larger network of radical (and, often times, radically dissimilar) poetics by writers and feminists, including Dionne Brand, Anne Carson, Canisia Lubrin, Erín Moure, M. NourbeSe Philip, Lisa Robertson, and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson.[2]

Within such a web, genre flailing is inescapable. Simpson's *Noopiming: The Cure for White Ladies*, for instance, reimagines genre by reshaping the novel: the narrative arc is split into vignettes and poetry and voiced by human figures, ancestral spirits, and (perhaps most tantalizingly) a flock of geese. As a response to a text that is often read and taught as a canonical and primary Canadian document, Susanna Moodie's 1852 memoir *Roughing It in the Bush*,[3] *Noopiming* manifests—in the blank space of a page holding a single line, in the reconstituted uses of Canadian Tire's blue tarps—a new, yet ancient, form of reciprocity. Indeed, in *Noopiming*, Simpson addresses the failure of white settlers and settler institutions to practise reciprocity through the character of the old woman: "Last year, Mindimooyenh had a job at the university advising the big shots on how to appear to change things without changing a single thing. But of course

Mindimooyenh advised too much, in an un-reconciliatory tone, and of course they got fired" (54). Humorously, Simpson reveals that the university wanted the appearance of change without embarking upon the laborious reality of making change. In the settler institution, Mindimooyenh is reduced to a symbol whose "un-reconciliatory" words and actions are cause for dismissal. Mindimooyenh's experience in the university provides important insight into the difficulties of implementing reciprocal practices within settler institutions. What this brings to the fore is the notion of care—for example, taking care to welcome Indigenous critiques of settler institutions—as involved in the work of producing art or scholarship in the university.

In her widely cited work on representations of Black life, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, Christina Sharpe calls for "'care' as a problem for thought" (5). I want to take up this praxis of thinking care as I, a white scholar, read the work of feminist Canadian poets by foregrounding the work of Indigenous and Black artists. I take care in order to be transparent about the role of their voices in challenging and reshaping my thinking. I am committed to reciprocity here, but I recognize the uneven standards that continue to be applied across diverse intersections of identity. I emphasize, then, the im/possibility of feminist critique here and now by foregrounding a recent failure in reading and translating the work of M. NourbeSe Philip.

Philip's 2008 poetry collection, *Zong!*, asks readers to actively engage with the text at the level of syllable, fragment, sound, and space. Such a level of care is necessary if we wish to extract feminist poetic work from the logistics of an unfeeling or indifferent state. In *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*, Stefano Harney and Fred Moten write: "To work today is to be asked, more and more, to do without thinking, to feel without emotion, to move without friction, to adapt without question, to translate without pause, to desire without purpose, to connect without interruption" (chapter 6). Harney and Moten demonstrate the ways in which logistics has violently rendered the human into something unhuman—just as the captain and crew of the *Zong* rendered the African men, women, and children into cargo, an inert substance that can be insured in case of loss.

In *Zong!*, the story that cannot be told, but must be told, is accomplished largely in the spatial arrangement of language. Philip explains: "every word or word cluster is seeking a space directly above

within which to fit itself and in so doing falls into relation with others either above, below, or laterally" (203). *Zong!* unites visual irruptions and sonic disruptions in order to articulate the inarticulable: that the English language is both the vehicle for identity production and the impasse against which postcolonial or Black identity finds itself arrested. The relational quality of word to word is integral to the tribute Philip pays to the dead—the murdered persons, enslaved and transported as cargo to be sold, aboard the slave ship *Zong*—and is a key reason the author has called for the destruction of an unauthorized Italian translation of the work that fails to honour these relations by "fail[ing] to respect . . . that no word or cluster of words can come directly below one another" (Philip, "Outline of Events"). The Italian translator's failure to acknowledge the role of the poetry's visible and oral utterances in this performance of past-present-future reciprocity, is a forceful reminder of the ethical difficulties facing the writer, translator, and scholar. The individual's relationship—and complicity—with the unevenly distributed disasters of what Zolf, via Walter Benjamin, calls "now-time"—moments of arrest, "moments where the progress of time is interrupted," and the full elaboration of human suffering is a flickering possibility—cannot be evaded (Heller 211).

So It Doesn't Matter What Time

In what ways can the white scholar honour the relational aspects of the trenchant art by postcolonial (or postnational)[4] Indigenous and Black writers? One mode for a reading and scholarly practice rooted in care may be to, first and foremost, acknowledge the role of complicity. It is in Robertson's *Debbie: An Epic* that I find one difficult unfolding of complicity with past, present, and future harms, for Debbie is the bastard daughter of Virgil, the epic poet, and cannot be disentangled from the father's filial faults. It doesn't matter what time or nation the white settler finds herself in: this complicity is built into the structures of gender, race, and class. "So it doesn't matter what time," a voice insists in the video translation of Zolf's *Janey's Arcadia*. In this, Zolf's video art, the feminist poet seeks to subvert the order of events by which a colonial nation has forgotten its responsibilities of reciprocity. Similarly, in Robertson's poetry collection, the feminist poet seeks to recognize, with Theodor Adorno, that, for the private

individual critiquing the society to which they belong, "[t]here is no way out of the entanglement" (Adorno 27; see *Debbie*, "Interlude"). We can observe the complicit poet flail in Robertson's *Debbie*, in which the feminist reappropriation of the masculinist genre of the epic is first and foremost a re-evaluation of canonical genres (including the lyric and the pastoral). Robertson's dizzying poetry collection—part art book, part parody, part manifesto—is a feminist re-visioning of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Like Virgil, Robertson is concerned with intermingling the public and private, such that the successes and failures of the larger-than-life hero (Virgil's Aeneas or Robertson's Debbie) are in constant tension with the joys and struggles of everyday individuals (soldiers or majorettes). In Robertson's book, as in Zolf's *Janey's Arcadia*, visual irruptions, or "screens" (*Debbie*, "Legend"), are utilized as material evidence of the destruction that has been wrought on the bodies of woman and nation (Collis 157). The feminist poet's epic is a testament to excess, as the feminist politics of surfaces jostle in the reader's frenzied pursuit of Virgil and his "bastard daughters" (Robertson, *Debbie: An Epic* line 705).

Stephen Collis writes that "Robertson's work explores the ornamental and emblematic as pure surface" (155). What we see jostling on the surface of the difficult poem is the interplay of past and present in the postmodern or postcolonial text. Collis demonstrates this in terms of poetic architecture: "imagining, and thinking, poetry's impossible, its enunciation of public space, its verbal creation, of *polis*" (145). Our attention to surfaces allows us to think of the feminist poet's "attitude to the past" as one that is architectural and "revisionary" (155). For Robertson, genre (flailing) is a "'classically styled folly' used to 'decorate'" (*Debbie: An Epic*, "The Nurses," qtd. in Collis). Collis introduces us to Ann Bergren who, in "Female Fetish Urban Form," explores the incursion by women into classical houses of male authority, thus providing a model for the feminist poet who wishes to mount "a rebellion against the Classical architecture of the house and city" (Bergren 304). The women of the classical dramas under analysis in Bergren's chapter are rebelling against the city's attempt "to maintain the female as architectural difference"—that is, as the "inside" of the house itself (313). Deviating from the classical maxim to "form your body in the image of male desire" (325), Bergren and Robertson both wonder: "What form of city will a woman build, if left to her own devices?" (304).[5]

Robertson's epic strips the private home so that the domestic interior becomes the wall, textile, or screen on which feminist re-visioning takes place. For example, on one such screen in the text—a margin-blurring instance of visual poetry in which font size and colour signal the importance of the page, line, and syllable—Robertson writes "maybe this dress shall some day be a joy to repair" (*Debbie: An Epic*). Collis explains: "This screen's masked quotation is of Virgil's *Aeneid*: 'Some day, perhaps, remembering even this / Will be a pleasure.' It is the heroic speech of Aeneas 'feminized' by the insertion of 'dress' mending" (157). Insistently, however, Robertson's re-visioning does not happen on the level of creative citation alone. The short phrase occupies a single page, each word blown up to such a size that it occupies a single line. The vertical text is overlapping and alternate words are weighted differently in black, grey, and light grey. Like the recurring barcodes in Zolf's *The Tolerance Project* or the scrambled type in *Janey's Arcadia*, as I will discuss below, these overlaid visual textures make felt the necessary border crossing of innovative feminist poetics.

In "Aerial Letter," the Québécois poet Nicole Brossard writes: "Identity turns into a project when the border between what's tolerable and what's intolerable disintegrates or, one might say, when it no longer holds up" (67–68). I label the poetry of Robertson and Zolf feminist because it unfolds in a spiralling like that of Brossard's six figures in "Aerial Vision"—a series of circular diagrams that form a visual demonstration of the call, from prefeminism through to contemporary feminism-and-beyond, for a "movement towards female culture" beyond masculinist conventions of sense (116). I follow this gendered language, while stipulating that I believe any community of feminist poets makes for a radically dissimilar unity, wherein fixed categories of identity disintegrate and no longer hold up. Brossard troubles—that is, provides the possibility of rupture within—the identity claim "I am woman" by insisting on the application of accent: feminine, feminist, or lesbian. The result is a dissonant vocal performance by communities of difference. Of course, this claim is also importantly interrogated by a different means, by the Black feminist Sojourner Truth, when she asks "Ain't I a Woman?" (Collins 17–18).[6] Intersections of gender, sex, race, and class are complex lived realities that must trouble any neat conclusions which these poets or critics, among whom we count ourselves, are tempted to draw. Furthermore, the recent "commodification" or "fungibility" of

intersectionality—which coincides with its extraction from Black feminist thought—demands that we practise utmost care when positioning ourselves alongside racialized, gendered, or other identity claims (Bilge 2300–01). According to Brossard, the female subject, whom I want to think of as a feminist subject marked by a difference that floats in an elsewhere adjacent to sex and gender, speaks traditional narrative "with *an accent*" (105). This accent is responsible for generative "misunderstandings, ambiguities, even non-sense" that form the building blocks of the creative site from which feminist poetics declares its difference (107).

To declare a difference is to bear witness to one's self or the other. Yet, as demonstrated in the concrete silences of a radical poetics like that of Simpson, Philip, or the Jewish poet Paul Celan, to bear witness may be an impossible feat. In *No One's Witness: A Monstrous Poetics*, Zolf provides a theorization of the "im/possibility of witnessing" in the poetics of Celan (5), making visible the entanglements[7] of now-time and its ongoing disasters in the positionality of writer, reader, and page:

> "Witness" operates under a contradictory signification, whether we are discussing its juridical definition of giving testimony in a court of law or its theological definition of testifying spiritually/bearing witness to something beyond knowledge and meaning. Indeed, thought reaches a limit in trying to grasp the conceptual contours of witnessing, but it is a *necessary* limit, a limit that can *perhaps* become a threshold[.] (2)

What that threshold may perhaps permit is "a new form of life both immobile and proceeding with a slow and even step, a new 'genre' of the human,' to apply Sylvia Wynter's terminology, outside the shopworn white-western-imperialist scope of humanist Man" (3). How can we intimately and productively address the "ethical discomfort" of these entanglements in the application of feminist critique and theory to issues of racialized and gendered violence, Indigenous sovereignty, and experimental cultural production (Walkowitz 140)?

This Collaboration Includes You

In June 2009, Zolf set out to complete an MFA in creative writing at New York's The New School. On *The Tolerance Projec*t blog, which served as document of Zolf's progress from June 2009 until their graduation in May 2011, they describe their project this way: the creative writing thesis would be composed of work donated by other living writers and would be figured as a living text according to the feedback of the online public. Thus, in terms of the many voices it brings together, the *tolerance* project would be a *togetherness* project. Zolf's project treats the source poems as *commerce*, for each poetic trace has a barcode, and *biodata*, for each poetic trace is described by Zolf as DNA. According to this vocabulary, Zolf is assembling a living thing that can be bought and sold. Strikingly, in bold letters, you and I are implicated in this process: "**This collaboration includes you**" ("How the Tolerance Project Works").

Zolf's procedural poetics demonstrate a mode of collaborative response to the settler-citizens who stop their ears to the now-time of Indigenous presence through the performance of Janey, who luxuriates in the concrete obstructions of (white) intersectionality as represented by the repeated errors in the (hu)man- and machine-made text. Janey resists parody[8] in their reproduction of the institutionalization of intersectionality as "feminism's most viable future"—a future, Sirma Bilge writes, that is provided only so long as "it become an ever-expanding lens that can and must attend to 'all subjects' experiences'" (2308). By critiquing the institutions of whiteness that foment the violent nation-state of Canada, Zolf and Janey refuse to collapse the distinctions between "all subjects" and "white women," thus assembling an embodied demonstration of white settler entanglement in the violence of past and present.

Bilge provides a useful lens through which to examine the difficult entanglements inherent to feminist critique here and now. Her critique of white intersectional feminism targets not "an intrinsic quality of intersectionality" but "the structural and ontological (anti)Blackness embedded in modernity's construction of the 'human'" (2308). Bilge's claim is "that intersectionality is and should be considered as a Black feminist intellectual production" (2309). Following Bilge, I too understand intersectionality as emanating, first and foremost, from the intellectual labour of Black women. In analyzing the intertwinements

of race, sex, gender, and class in the colonized nation-space of Canada, I fix my gaze on the white settler in order to demonstrate its place, and my place—as a white settler on these lands—in what is too often feminist scholarship's ongoing commodification of the life and thought of Black, Indigenous, and other marginalized subjects. In Zolf's difficult poetry, both reader and writer are repeatedly invited to create, recreate, and de-create their own poetic traces in response to the impasse of contemporary dailiness.

I introduce these projects because I think their flailing—between understandings of genre, notions of ownership, and the spaces of the intimate and the historical—are illustrative of the curious potential of feminist critique and theory. As I envision it, feminism is a mode of togetherness in which a dissimilar community works not to achieve a singular vision of being, but instead works to make visible the intimate impasses within the spaces from which artists produce, labourers toil, and governing bodies f(l)ail. Both the collaborative thesis and *Janey's Arcadia* are assemblages of commerce and biodata. One cannot assemble such a text, a living thing that can be bought and sold, without entanglement in the very forces that text may wish to critique: the Atlantic slave trade, the neoliberal institution, the forces of settler colonialization, and the national erasure of Indigenous presence.

As barcode and DNA, the poetic traces of Zolf's collaborative project are entangled in the logistical process of the human body's usefulness as commodity and biodata. Present time is stripped away to reveal now-time and the restrictive intertwinements of the past in the present. Since discovering Zolf's tolerance project, I have come to think of all my critical, creative, and pedagogical work as collaborative projects: with the writers whom I read, with the colleagues whom I think, and with the students whom I teach—and who, most importantly, teach me. Words matter and these words appear upon a palimpsest of previous critique and theory that—in the material folds of a page, the digital reverberations of our online lives, and the affective discomfort of leaning into difficult edges—could not exist without the intimate impasses that structure the relationships between reader and writer: of barcode and DNA, of private and public.

Hijacking of Author/ity

The word *impasse* suggests that these relationships are difficult ones. The paradoxical productivity of such a relational risk is demonstrated in the literal difficulty of reading an experimental text like Zolf's *Janey's Arcadia*. When teaching the poetry collection, I instruct my students to consult the book's back matter—not to find clear answers, but to invite further lines of question. In one afterword to the book, Zolf writes of the author of the text in a defamiliarizing style (i.e., they use the third person) that separates the writing subject from the author's persona: "In dealing with social facts and theories, [their] plan of freely using quotations from recognized authorities gives special value to the book, particularly for those who have not had much opportunity of becoming acquainted with the teeming literature of the subject" (116), i.e., "The Canadian North-Wasp [*sic*]" (116, brackets in original). The reader, or student, of this "teeming literature" is immediately confronted with several general queries: What are the "social facts and theories" laid out by the previous pages of poetry? Who are the "recognized authorities," and—more importantly—who recognizes their authority?

In the next paragraph, the "subject" is transformed—or, perhaps more accurately, translated—into a new term: "The author has not set out to 'write a book,' but rather to present a *situation*" (116, emphasis mine). What is now implied by this new term, *situation*, that was lacking in the general term *subject*? Only one person clearly emerges in this situation: it is the author, and "*he* has tried to place the study-class 'next to' the authoritative source of information" (116, emphasis mine). The spatial component of the text is thus further affirmed, such that the visual proximity of words is rife with meaning: this is a "situation" in which particular persons or things are laid "next to" one another by a male author.[9] The author's male sex having been confirmed, authority is conveyed by the patriarchal right of the male of the species to say what is good and right, and so the text begins to reveal the other persons and things in the text, including Janey Canuck, "the settler Rachel Zolf," "the settler Kathy Acker," several settler-reverends, the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Red River Colony, and "the errors of Optical Character Recognition (OCR)" (116). Zolf insists, however, that above and beyond these errors—the text as occupied by these settlers is the error itself, such that error is synecdoche and metonym for the life

and nation of settler colonialism—"there is an Indigenous 'going on' that is not about the settler at all" (116).

Another afterword follows the book's difficult, error-embedded articulation of the situation. Here, the curtain is pulled back on "Janey Canuck" to reveal the settler Emily Murphy: "a 'Famous Five' first-wave feminist (not to mention eugenicist), who successfully fought for certain women to be deemed 'persons'" (117). The situation at hand "seeds a savage, flesh rendezvous between Janey Canuck and punk pirate Kathy Acker's guerrilla icon Janey Smith," and the result is "Janey Settler-Invader, a fracked-up, mutant (cyborg?) squatter progeny" (117). The implications here are many: Early Canadian literature and first-wave feminism are splintered by an icon of twentieth-century American literature in whom is read the excesses of sex and appropriation. The interaction of these two women, Murphy and Acker, and their respective avatars, Canuck and Smith, across the fields of time, place, literature, and sex results not simply in a biological child, but in a mutant or cyborg. This is the stuff of horror, or it is the stuff of changing the world. I think here of Sylvia Wynter's call for an understanding of the human not simply as *bios* but as a hybrid creature of *bios* and *logos* or *bios* and *mythoi* (Wynter and McKittrick 16). *Janey's Arcadia* takes this call quite literally, assembling the body of the *bios-logos/mythoi* human-machine in order to place her squarely at the border or threshold of intimacy or history: the white settler faced with the violent errors of colonization.

Alongside Murphy and Acker, Janey's other progenitor is the OCR software that produces the "noisy glitches" and "errors of recognition" in the text's reproduction of white-settler archives (117). Zolf categorizes these errors as "hauntological" (117)—a term commonly associated with another text of difficult poetry, another text invested in "the errors of face-to-face recognition" (116). In the "Notanda" to *Zong!,* Philip explains:

> I come—albeit slowly—to the understanding that *Zong!* is hauntological; it is a work of haunting, a wake of sorts, where the spectres of the undead make themselves present. And only in not-telling can the story be told; only in the space where it's not told—literally in the margins of the text, a sort of negative space, a space not so much of non-meaning as anti-meaning. (201)

In *Black and Blur*, Moten defines Philip's text as an "antenarrative, interesting insofar as it is of the ones who are without interests, the ones who, therefore, cannot have (a narrative)" (160). Sounding not unlike an anti-narrative, the *ante*narrative is a non-linear mode of not-telling, depending upon a prefix that signals what has preceded the starting position. The antenarrative provides a method for the feminist poet who, like Philip and Zolf, seeks to disrupt the "classically styled folly" of established myth (Robertson, *Debbie: An Epic*). Like the Italian translation of *Zong!* that fails to honour its submerged starting position, Zolf's translation of the national archives in *Janey's Arcadia* is similarly unauthorized, but in its intertwinement with the hauntological, it tirelessly re-enacts the relations between settlers and Indigenous peoples within the archives it translates. Through the act of *gendered translation*, as a *feminist hijacker*, terms I derive liberally from Sherry Simon (see pp. 13–15), Zolf demonstrates to English-Canada the fact that a translation of our daily entanglements in settler colonialism is much needed. Our easy-to-understand myths—purity, whiteness, and peace, for example—have obscured the violent relations underpinning land and nation. The result, in the body of Janey Settler-Invader, is a longing for "a poesis of acknowledgement and response-ability and honouring treaty" (Zolf, *Janey's Arcadia* 117). This longing, however, does not equate to an accomplishment. At the close of the video translation of three poems from the book, a voice repeats "So it doesn't matter what time" (0:09:55–57; 0:10:41–42). The video closes with a visual flash of two lines of text that appear nowhere in *Janey's Arcadia*: "Honour the treaties and territories. It doesn't matter what time" (0:10:44–47). Immediately before each of the audio renditions of the line, the poet's voice engages in a violent, reverb-induced stutter: "Verb. Me" (0:09:49–51) and "It was a fountain" (0:10:13–15), respectively. These nonsensical lines, drawn from the poem "Face to Face to Face" (*Janey's Arcadia* 97), emphasize the impossibility of ethical witnessing by the white settler in the entanglements of violent nationhood through their sonic and disruptive engagement with non-meaning.

Invading Response-ability

The first poem in the collection eases its readers into the experience of reading an error-ridden text. Though the *Arcadia* of the book's title "directly invokes the pastoral" (Milne, "Post/National Feminist Poetics" 202), even the first lines of the book throw into doubt the pastoral promise of reconciliatory nationalist discourse. Heather Milne cites Robertson, who similarly intervenes in the pastoral genre "to gloss my ancesstress' complicity with a socially expedient code; to invade my own illusions of historical innocence" ("How Pastoral: A Prologue"). Both Robertson and Zolf write texts that "expose the acts of genocide, misogyny, and oppression that haunt the pastoral and that have informed Canadian governance and narratives of nation-building" (Milne, "Post-National Feminist Poetics" 201). As the book begins, the reader is firmly within the realm of sense, at least sense as registered by a smooth situation in the English language. "Janey's Invocation" begins:

> Infallible settlers say this is the latest season
> they have known. All seed life seems somnolent,
> yet a delicate suggestion of colour is at the tips
> of the willows. An insidious, slow-moving process
> is at work in the trees— (Zolf, *Janey's Arcadia* 9)

The "slow-moving process" of settler colonialism, enacted on the land in the violences of imperialism and industrialization and enacted on the persons of the land in the violences of exploitation and state-sanctioned mass death, has as its mirror the slow-moving process of the OCR. In this way, uneasily, the author—and their avatar, Janey Settler-Invader—are never without entanglement in the complicitous violence of the past, present, and future. Error enters the text and the next lines are unreadable, or at least outside the sense of "recognized authorities" (116):

> THE COPS- FIND- 2 J3<3
> I H • ^ / Hn is a Goad of Death Gourd of chanqts Takt
> Life is totally totally lonely of Nature. (9)

While Zolf's techniques are radically dissimilar to most conventional poetry and prose, they can nonetheless be productively compared to long-standing strategies in feminist literature, such as the evasions of Virginia Woolf in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Finding in Woolf's

polyvocal novel a transposition of the modernist age's entanglement in the horrors of war and fascism, as per Adorno, Rebecca Walkowitz writes: "Woolf's style of composition rejects what Adorno has called 'the dream of existence without shame.' For Adorno . . . writers seeking to resist social conformity must develop strategies of critique that exceed homogenous or merely pious styles of expression" (140). Zolf, too, has created a diversion; Zolf, too, rejects "the dream of existence without shame." Like Adorno (see Walkowitz 140), Zolf revisits the possibility of poetry in the aftermath of horror: "One supposedly radical contemporary philosopher recently declared that there was no more poetry after Celan, which not only is an insult to Celan or Adorno or the metonym known as Auschwitz but willfully ignores the radical poetics responding to now-time and its ongoing disasters" (*No One's Witness* 85–86). As an acknowledgement and response to the now-time and ongoing disaster of settler colonialism, *Janey's Arcadia* ruptures language itself in order to make tangible the ethical discomfort that any making visible or sounding out of entanglement in the complictous violence of past, present, and future may provoke. Unlike Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway, however, Zolf's Janey has no hope of evasion. As the reproductive material (*bios*) of Murphy and Acker, Janey is the product of at least two settler nations (Canada and the US); as the performative product (*logos/mythoi*) of the OCR, Janey is also progenitor of the nation-space's ongoing disaster.

Recalling the visual irruptions or screens of Robertson's *Debbie: An Epic*, Zolf's text begins to exceed the margins of the page as the interventions of the OCR become increasingly evident in "Who Is This Jesus?" Here, Janey Settler-Invader has recreated the settler narrative found in a chapter of the same name in Egerton R. Young's *Indian Life in the Great North-West* (1900). Jane Boyes writes that, in Zolf's rendering of this moralizing allegorical tale, "it is implied that Astumastao, an orphaned 'Indign' girl, is sexually assaulted by the same Reverend James Evans credited with inventing Cree syllabics" (77). Janey introduces the story of "the Reverend's horrific treatment of Astumastao" as follows (Boyes 77): "Here is a sweet story of a little Indign [*sic*] girl" (Zolf, *Janey's Arcadia* 74). The text reproduces Young's opening line exactly, save the recurrent machine-error "Indign," which is the OCR translation of the recurrent human-error, "Indian." From here, Janey's version of events begins increasingly to interpose and contest those of Young as the text runs into the gutter of the page:

"fired with a zeal he" (74), with the next line beginning "peculiar" before returning to Young's original: "It shows how few lessons . . ." (74). Janey and Zolf's concern is not the readability of the OCR error, but a making-visible and a sounding-out of that error. The visual obstructions on the page charge the appearance of the material artifact of the book; when treated as the score for a performance, as in the video translation, the sounded error of *Indign* is an intertwinement of human and machine obstruction. For instance, when reading the poems aloud, Zolf at one point prolongs the word "Indign" into a stutter that forbids the reader or listener any comfortable elision of the inappropriate language (0:04:53–54).

In the fifth in "Seven Discourses with Rachel Zolf," a conversation between Zolf and Divya Victor published a few years before *Janey's Arcadia*, Victor writes: "Ventriloquy as vocality allows for the corpse to remain visible, ghastly, unbearable, bodily—rather than engaged as transcended or haunting." Zolf responds with the complete, unscrambled text of Astumastao's story as recorded by Young and later reprinted and reshaped by the errors of the OCR and other alterations in *Janey's Arcadia*. In the discourse that follows, Victor writes: "Responding to stories with stories is appropriate, and defines appropriation. The shift of property from mouth to mouth seems to take place in whispers and during in-between states." Significantly, in its later transformation by the OCR, Astumastao's story shifts not just between two mouths but many, for Zolf is critical of the "mouth-to-mouth" or "face-to-face" ethics of Western imperialism. As Milne writes, "Zolf considers how the introduction of a 'political third' can interrupt the 'ethical two of the self-other relation' that underscores Levinasian thinking on the face-to-face ethical relation to one's neighbour" ("Introduction" xv). Thus, Zolf appropriates an already-appropriated story to envision a new mode of entanglement. This is "Face to Face to Face" ethics, as declared in the title of the eponymous, above-mentioned poem in *Janey's Arcadia*. The first line provides a way to read Young's rendering of Atsumastao's traumatic experience: "This chapter may be likened to a walk through a hospi-tal. / As the creamy hand turned my body around, the other shoved / my chin up" (97). Both Janey and Young's texts, like "a hospital," contain evidence of violence and harm, yet both texts further obscure that reality through their excessive visual style or moralizing allegorical tone. Either method is, in a phrase that implicates the reader in the discomforting

sexual connotations, a "creamy hand" turning the reader's face away; either method, Boyes writes, "contributes to the dismissal of [the Reverend's] actions since it diverts attention away from them" (77). That "Face to Face to Face" is a difficult poem riddled with scrambled type, new dialects, and unreadable symbols makes this diversion, and the complicity of the present-day Janey in its obfuscation, still more visible. In the discomfort of these "hospi-tal" corridors, the corpses "remain visible, ghastly, unbearable, bodily" (Victor).

Conclusion: A Mutating Thinkership

Like the collaborative thesis on which Zolf embarked, the concrete errors of *Janey's Arcadia* are "not simply a set of poetic gestures," but demonstrations of border-crossing with "daily real-world implications" (Zolf, "The Tolerance Project"). The intimate and historical situation in which the poet finds themselves constitutes the specificity of the assemblage: in the case of the collaborative thesis, Zolf requires a visa to follow their lesbian partner to the US and, subsequently, enters the MFA as "an award-winning mid-career poet with four books published by established literary presses" (Zolf, "Statement"). The intimate and historical situation simultaneously un-anchors the subject from time and place: in the case of the white settler archives, Janey and the OCR must create visual chaos to render erased Indigenous presence visible. Gillian Roberts describes this disruption as one that creates a "palimpsest of past and present" in order not to "absolve present-day Canada" (75). The poet encounters an impasse at the border or threshold between the intimate and the historical, but it is exactly at the point of this *impasse* that rupture—opening onto a new aesthetic, a new reality—becomes possible. What the innovative and appropriative poetics of Zolf's *The Tolerance Project* and *Janey's Arcadia* permit is an alternative to what is promised of the MFA workshop: a possibility for community beyond that of the paying *readership*; alongside this community (for even the difficult feminist poet hopes to be paid for their artistic production), Janey foments a mutating "*thinkership*" (Fitterman 12). The aspiration is to conceive of an alternative to colonial-capitalist logics of production and being.

In conclusion to this evocation of a thinkership, a community characterized by its intimate impasses and diverse entanglements, I

want to re-emphasize the intertwinements of gender, sex, race, and class necessary within such dissimilar communities. To do so is to invoke intersectionality, for which we must return to Bilge's insistence "that intersectionality is and should be considered as a Black feminist intellectual production" (2309). As I understand it, intersectionality is an element of the life and thought of Black women scholars who have made visible the processes by which certain subjects are conceived as human or non-human. I cite and honour this thinking as I, a white settler poet and scholar, explore the entanglements of being in Zolf's *Janey's Arcadia*—a book written by another white settler poet and scholar embodying the speaker-persona of a white settler hybrid human-machine. The nation-space from which Zolf writes (Canada) remains a colonized space in which the Indigenous subject has been declared—by history, law, and public discourse—invisible or non-existent. That "the violence of colonization . . . is very much a present-day condition" is embodied in handwritten lists of names interspersed throughout the book (Dowling 799). These are the names of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit persons and "each name is written in a different hand" (799). Sarah Dowling describes the effect of this "bodily specificity" as follows: "Zolf offers a reminder of the women's communities and social ties—there is no such thing as an abstractly individual victim, there are only friends, lovers, parents, and members of families, communities, and nations" (799). Throughout the book, through machine error and other visual irruption, Zolf makes seen and heard the processes of making the other invisible, silent, or non-existent to fix attention on the violent white settler and demonstrate their place in fungibility, commodification, and logistics. To fix our attention on feminist community is to invite error inside (the body, the nation) but, perhaps,[10] through f(l)ailing to assimilate or become operative hybrid beings, it is also to succeed in altering not just the page but the accented (female, nonbinary, or "queer-in-more-ways-than-one" (Zolf, "The Tolerance Project") formations within and beyond its language of complicity.

Notes

1. This paper is partly written in response to a series of conversations held in an Advanced Canadian Studies class on "The Feminist Epic in Contemporary Canadian Poetry." I am forever indebted to those brilliant and engaged students

for challenging and expanding the role of feminist critique and theory as it applied to the innovative works under study.

2. This dissimilar community of writers emerges from the reading practices of the aforementioned class on the feminist epic, wherein the "genre flailing" texts under study included Brand's *Thirsty*, Carson's *Autobiography of Red*, Lubrin's *The Dyzgraphxst*, Philip's *Zong!*, Robertson's *Debbie: An Epic*, and Zolf's *Janey's Arcadia*. In our thinkership, enjoined in reading difficult poetry, we were attuned to the relationship between the masculinist epic (Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Pound) and the feminist re-visioning of the anti- or ante-epic. Future iterations of the course may include Moure's "citizen trilogy" (*Search Procedures, A Frame of the Book / The Frame of a Book*, and *O Cidadán*) and Simpson's *Noopiming: A Cure for White Ladies*. Both texts have formed the basis of other classroom studies into Anglo-Québécois writing and contemporary Canadian literature, respectively. Simpson's text provides an especially incisive rupture in the myth of Canadian nationhood.

3. The publisher website explains: "*Noopiming* is Anishinaabemowin for 'in the bush'" ("Noopiming").

4. Arianne Des Rochers defines postcolonial literatures within and beyond Canada as "postnational": "In other words, they choose not to map linguistic practices according to dominant national-linguistic borders, which amounts to a refusal to address the imagined communities of Canada and/or Québec according to their settler monolingual modes of expression" (264). For writers like Simpson and Philip, "the use of multiple linguistic, communicative, semantic, and expressive resources that are not organized, categorized, or hierarchized is thus fundamentally more important than following the linguistic lines drawn on imperial, colonial, and national maps" (264).

5. An answer to this question may be found in "Theory, A City," Robertson's introduction to *Theory, A Sunday*, in which she names the Québécois writing of women in the 1980s as a key precedent to the feminist poetics and politics of the following decades:

> The feminist writers of Montréal have altered their city irrevocably. When women write about and from the cities they live in, they are transforming the material city into a web of possibility and risk. This description of the city bends back on itself—it not only represents, it opens up a site for the political imagination. Through the fictive and theoretical act, the city is re-inscribed as a space for radical otherness." (11)

6. The editors of this issue have helpfully pointed out that, in the years since Collins' book, Frances Gage's transcription "falsely attributed a southern slave dialect" ("Compare the Speeches") to Truth's speech.

7. In addition to referring back to Adorno, I use the terms *entanglement* and *intertwinement* after Judith Butler, who employed them as a way of making care visible in a recent keynote delivered at the 2022 NEMLA Conference in Baltimore.

8. In response to this article, Reader A notes that Zolf's poetics move beyond mere sarcasm in order to become "a painful acknowledgement of entanglement that

comes from the complex directionalities of 'appropriation' in their writing. As Zolf writes in their exchange with Divya Victor 'there is appropriation and appropriation, and I know both are violent, and I am trying not to appropriate as I appropriate, but that doesn't mean I can't appropriate from the appropriators.'"

9. The afterword had previously used the feminine pronoun *she* in reference to the individual that compiled the quotations that constitute the book. There are at least two implications of this switch in pronouns from *she* to *he*: (1) the gender identity of the author is represented as inherently fluid; or (2) the individual who compiled the quotations is not presumed to be the same as the individual who wrote the book. The second implication further fractures the myth of the singular genius as inherent to the process of writing, in a way not dissimilar to Zolf's *The Tolerance Project*. Both implications permit a reading of the author as a many-gendered being.

10. In response to this article, Reader B notes that this ending may be a "tad optimistic." I acknowledge that this places me, as the reader generously suggests, in "the spiralling position of someone who does not know and perhaps never will," to return to the mode of Berlant's flailing feminist critique.

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Zsuzsanna Lénárt-Muszka

Undernarrated Emotional Landscapes in Toronto's Scarborough: Téa Mutonji's Shut Up You're Pretty

Emerging Toronto author Téa Mutonji's debut short story collection, *Shut Up You're Pretty* (2019), follows the coming-of-age of Loli, a Black Canadian woman from a Congolese immigrant family living in contemporary Scarborough, a low-income, multicultural district of Toronto. This paper joins the conversation in recent literary criticism that increasingly focuses on the intersections of cultural geography and the lived experience of Black womanhood in Canada by discussing how Loli's racialized and gendered body interacts with the urban landscape and what the narration—specifically, the *under*narration—of this process reveals about Mutonji's treatment of her narrator-protagonist's emotional landscape. I will first offer a brief socio-cultural contextualization, as well as locating those nodes in recent literary criticism that may serve as departure points in investigating Loli's (lack of) attachment to Scarborough and other locations. I will argue that the marked contrast between the volume's conspicuous narrative gaps and the intensity with which Loli describes places and spaces of various scales underscores her struggle with living in a highly visible, racially marked body. As the authors of a 1994 collection on African Canadian women's history assert,

> the history of Black people in Canada and of Black women in particular is missing from the pages of mainstream Canadian history. Black people in Canada have a past that has been hidden or eradicated, just as racism has been deliberately denied as an organizing element in how Canada is constituted. (Bristow et al. 3)

Framing the prevalence of systemic antiBlack racism as a matter of denial, artists, academics, and other public figures, including Dionne Brand (126–27), Cecil Foster (20–29), George Elliott Clarke (35), and Rinaldo Walcott (27), have argued that Canada is, to say the least, slow to recognize Black people's historical and contemporary contributions to the country. Black feminist theorists Katherine McKittrick and Sharon Beckford-Foster argue—in tandem with the editors of the aforementioned collection on Black Canadian women's history—that the material and literary contributions of Black women have only begun to be recognized in the past thirty years or so (Beckford-Foster, "A Geography" 462; McKittrick 91–99), as signalled by publications such as the edited volume *Back to the Drawing Board: African-Canadian Feminisms* (2002), Beckford-Foster's *Naturally Woman: The Search for Self in Black Canadian Women's Literature* (2011), or Paul Barrett's *Blackening Canada* (2015). Efforts to resist this "systemic Blacklessness" (McKittrick 93), and specifically the discursive erasure of Black girls from Canadian society (Brown 211–18), include increasing scholarly and artistic output, as well as reports subsidized by the federal government and NGOs attending to the position of Black girls and women in Canada (see, e.g., Katshunga et al.). Concurrently, Black women—as well as other BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of colour)—are increasingly encouraged to inscribe their stories into the literary fabric of the country. It is in this context that *Shut Up You're Pretty* was written and published by vs. Books, an imprint of Arsenal Pulp Press set up specifically to support writers of colour. That the imprint's founder, artist Vivek Shraya, a trans woman of colour, aims to support and mentor young Black and Indigenous writers of colour (Robertson), is in itself an example of the measures taken to ensure Black women's continued participation in the literary industry and to counter their erasure.

Mutonji's book focuses on a young Black woman not only inhabiting but also deeply embedded in an urban environment, thereby thematizing the individual's relationship to the urban landscape, while also depicting how this relationship unfolds as she attempts to cope with the implications of living in a highly racialized and gendered body. The winner of the 2020 Trillium Book Award and the 2020 Edmund White Award for Debut Fiction ("Téa Mutonji"), the short story collection follows Loli from her early teenage years to her mid-twenties, with flashbacks to her childhood and through her

coming of age and sexual awakening as a queer woman. Already by her early teens, Loli has a strained relationship with her family: she has eating disorders and is on antidepressants. Having dropped out of college, she makes a living as a waitress and a sex worker, and her life is punctuated by several traumatizing incidents such as separation from her father, who came to Canada years before the rest of the family; her own immigration with a forged passport, and having to pretend to be a boy; her early sexualization and adultification, that is, the worldwide tendency to view Black girls as more mature, less innocent, and less deserving of nurturance and protection than their white peers (Epstein et al. 2–3, 8); the murder of a gay Black youth living in the neighbourhood; several distant boyfriends and one particularly emotionally abusive one; an unexpected pregnancy and the ensuing abortion; and the death of her father. All these events impact how she relates to herself and to others, as well as affecting her self-worth and her coping strategies—in short, her emotional landscape.

Narrative Design

The major events enumerated above are narrated in a conspicuously laconic fashion. The pieces in *Shut Up You're Pretty* function as brief, cinematic snapshots or vignettes of Loli's life, with little attempt by Mutonji to craft an overarching narrative or by Loli to dwell on her emotional realities. In the author's words, "I wanted the stories to jump from one scene to another without too much unpacking or history needed to fill in the blanks" (Mutonji, "Exclusive Interview"). Not only do the stories tend to be unconnected, but there are also narrative gaps within the individual stories that leave key events either completely unaccounted for or their causes and emotional effects unexplained. Even though Loli notes that seeing her brother naked is a fundamental experience in her life, for example, she never elaborates on the circumstances ("Phyllis Green" 51). She describes in detail how her friend Jolie kisses her, but after they are goaded into performing a sexual act, Loli enigmatically says: "The last thing I remember: she grabbed a bouquet of her hair and tied it with her bracelet. Then we smoked cigarettes on the damp grass" ("The Event" 25). Comparably, the boy selling drugs to Loli asks her "to give him something in return," to which Loli reluctantly agrees, and it is only her silence that

implies that "something" is a sexual favour ("Ten-Year Reunion" 61). That Loli needs an abortion is revealed abruptly and narrated laconically ("Women Talking" 118); in fact, the story focuses on her conversation with another woman at the clinic instead. The contrast between a long list of personal questions that a roommate asks her and Loli's complete lack of answers is striking ("Common Room" 80–84). Whenever she does introspect, her analysis feels truncated and always partial; about a conversation with her father, for example, she only says, "I froze. Not entirely sure where the anger came from. Though I didn't feel rage. I was just tired. I was just annoyed" ("Down" 29), without disclosing why. The admission that it feels "freeing" to move out of a boyfriend's apartment comes unexpectedly, as the reader has not been led to believe that Loli has any difficulties with living there ("The Boy from My Youth" 75); and when a roommate she is attracted to and hopes to date suddenly turns up with a girlfriend, Loli merely says before the story's abrupt end, "I laughed. What else was there to do but laugh?" and never returns to the topic ("Common Room" 84).

While this sparse narrative style results in events and emotions being repeatedly thrown into sudden sharp relief with their backgrounds concealed, Mutonji is deliberate in oscillating between revealing explicit but minor details and stopping short of exposing Loli's inner life; in fact, its narrative design hinges on this contrast. Therefore, Loli's unwillingness or inability to share more than she does is best approached through narratologist Robyn Warhol's classification of the unnarrated elements of a story. In arguing for a differentiation of what goes unsaid in a narrative, Warhol contends that events that are not narrated because they "defy narrative, foregrounding the inadequacy of language or of visual image to achieve full representation," are *supranarratable* (223). She refers to events that are unspoken because narrating them would transgress social taboos as *antinarratable* (224). The banal details of everyday life that usually go unnarrated constitute the *subnarratable* (222–23), while events that regularly happen but are usually not the subject of fiction because they would defy formal and generic conventions are *paranarratable* (228–29).

Loli as a narrator—along with, by implication, Mutonji as a writer—seem not to concern themselves with the latter three categories. *Shut Up You're Pretty* is unflinching in its portrayal of topics such as sex work, intimate erotic relationships between women, sexual experimentation between barely pubescent children, gritty urban

scenes, suicide, and drug use. Therefore, it does narrate many elements that would typically fall into the category of the antinarratable. The issues it thematizes—especially sex work and sexual experimentation—are perhaps more readily associated with the generic conventions of niche erotic novels and lurid potboilers by underground publishing houses, but *Shut Up You're Pretty*, a book published by a new and progressive imprint but unequivocally aimed at mainstream audiences and embraced by the University of Toronto ("Author"), also depicts these realities as worthy of narration, meaning that it also does not withhold the paranarratable. The nuts and bolts of walking in a city that smells of excrement, cleaning, cooking, or of sitting on the balcony and watching the unchanging dynamics of the same intersection again and again would normally be subnarratable; that is, the fact that Loli keeps returning to them means that the volume narrates what is usually subnarrated. Yet her focus on narrating the anti-, para-, and subnarratable is intertwined with her avoidance of the supranarratable, as well as with a curious emphasis on describing various places and spaces that her life is lived in.

Scales of Spaces and Places: From the Intimate to the Global

Throughout the collection, there are conspicuous references to a multitude of places and spaces, which I define here in accordance with cultural geographer Jon Anderson's terminology. He argues that *places*, to which humans have affective and experiential ties (as opposed to abstract or impersonal *spaces*), can range from the skin and body to more substantial areas such as the city or country (38). The fundamental interrelatedness of urban areas and individuals or communities has been approached from a variety of perspectives,[1] but, crucially, it is Anderson's framework that allows not only for examining Loli's (lack of) attachment to the Congo, Canada, Toronto, Scarborough, and smaller places such as beds, but also for positing the skin as a place.

Anderson contends that categorizing the body as a place opens up "geographical contexts" that are "unorthodox but nevertheless fascinating" and, I would add, productive (3), especially if read synchronously with Black Canadian feminist geographers' and other theorists' work. For example, Katherine McKittrick and M. NourbeSe Philip have prominently argued that the Black female body is

inherently geographic. According to Philip, the Black woman's body has served as the locus of economic and sexual exploitation. Relying on spatial metaphors, she argues that Black women in North America were assessed historically by and for "that most precious of resources," that is, "the space between their legs" that connects them to the outer world through its potential to "populate . . . the outer space" of the plantation (Philip 76). McKittrick argues that Black women continue to move through places and spaces in a way that is always already tied to their gender and race even today (xi–xiv): the racial, sexual, and geographical dimensions of domination interact to render certain groups—such as Black women—Othered and displaced (xviii). Understanding Loli's gendered and racialized body through these frameworks of place, geography, and body makes it possible to account for her struggles with embodiment and for others' reaction to her skin and features. This accounting, in turn, helps contextualize her detachment from her body against her attachment to other places.

The Body and Its Immediate Surroundings

Throughout the collection, Loli is constantly categorized and labelled based on her looks to such an extent that living in a Black female body that is deemed attractive becomes one of her primary experiences. Accordingly, she learns to understand her embodiment through two primary filters: her womanhood and/as femininity and the colour of her skin. Already as a young teenager, she is acutely aware of the perils of being a woman:

> you go through life being touched, you go through life being looked at, you go through life with an uncle commenting on your breasts, or your brother's friend giving you a condom for your birthday then denying it, you go through life being called a cunt on public transportation, you go through life being followed at midnight. ("Phyllis Green" 54)

Loli thus faces the threat of the most significant place-related breach, according to Philip: the constant threat of her most private place—that "between the legs" (Philip 75). While she describes an unsettling episode of witnessing (and indirectly abetting) an ambiguous case of sexual

assault against a Black girl, she merely gestures to assault she herself has suffered. Nevertheless, having learned how to benefit from male attention, she deliberately modifies her appearance in order to gain social capital: highly sexualized clothing helps her fit in with her friends and classmates ("Tits" 12; "Phyllis Green" 49). She intentionally—albeit less than happily—relies on seduction for certain benefits. When she and her friend Jolie repeatedly kiss each other in front of boys for money, for example, Loli's participation seems to be enthusiastic, but an underlying tone of sadness, her attraction to Jolie, and her desperation when Jolie suddenly exits her life to be with a man suggest that Loli's real aim with this performance is to share some intimacy with her friend. When they kiss in front of Jolie's boyfriend, Loli recalls, he "smirked. He had hit the jackpot and we all knew it" ("If Not" 35). She is aware of the male gaze and the social capital it might bring, conceptualizing her body as a locus of others' attention; a place that can—and should—be exploited in exchange for social currency.

After a few years of denying her own wishes while using her body for social gain, she learns to use it for financial profit as well. She treats sex work at a spa and trading sexual favours for money for older men nonchalantly and is surprised to find that her "body ha[s] successfully been detached from [her] mind" ("Men" 88). These feelings of alienation do not cease even after leaving sex work: following a sexual assault by Jonas, her white boyfriend at the time, Loli reflects: "I couldn't locate myself in my skin" ("Shut Up" 106). While she experienced genuine sexual desire as a young teen, now she wants to cater to her male and white partners' wishes, yet suspects that their exchanges lack true intimacy: she has sex with Dylan, another boyfriend, "whenever he want[s] because he [is] just so nice" ("The Boy" 72); lets Ben sleep with her whenever he wants ("Old-Fashioneds" 119–21); and has sex at Jonas' insistence because, she explains, "I thought it might make him stay a while longer. In the morning, when I woke up, I was alone again, and perhaps I had been alone all along" ("Shut Up" 103). Loli's depression deepens over time, evidenced by her lying "bodiless on [Jonas'] mattress" for entire days, forgetting to eat (105). The only time she is explicit about what she does not want—an unspecified, forceful act—is when she says, "You're hurting me. It hurts when you do that" (105). Jonas responds by abandoning her immediately, leaving Loli suicidal and feeling like her "body [is] a concussion" (106). Ironically enough, Jonas loses all interest in her the moment Loli expresses her needs, teaching

her that it is indeed the suppression of her bodily sensations that has made her a desirable sexual partner.

Her white male partners tend to see Loli as an intriguing and racialized beauty who is only fit to become their short-term lover. After spending weeks having sex, Dylan abruptly leaves Loli, saying, "I just never pictured myself with a black girl, you know?" ("The Boy" 74). Both Dylan and Jonas admire and compliment her nose ("The Boy" 72; "Shut Up" 99). Similarly, Ben sees her as an exotic Black beauty who enhances his status as an aging, average-looking white man ("Old-Fashioneds" 122). All three men appropriate her body, enacting what McKittrick terms the territorialization of the Black woman (45), a process that ultimately renders her subordinate and, by implication, objectified and commodified. Indeed, fascinated by her looks, Ben calls Loli the "girl I've always dreamt of" and tells her, "You're the most exciting *thing* that's ever *happened* to me" ("Old-Fashioneds" 122, emphasis mine). Even though nearly half of Scarborough's population is made up of visible minorities ("Toronto Map"), Loli's skin and features seem to stand out—probably because she is considered beautiful by the (mostly) white men in her community. Her Black femininity is emphasized to the point that it overdetermines her sense of self: she is, on the one hand, sometimes objectified by her female peers (often with her consent, but she is always aware of the male gaze); on the other hand, she is directly and aggressively praised and valued for her looks by her male partners and clients, who regularly compliment her as if her appearance was her primary, and, indeed, only defining feature.

Hence the title, *Shut Up You're Pretty*: even though the verbatim phrase is not present in any of the short stories, a male client tells Loli, "Shut up, you know you're perfect" ("Men" 88), when she worries that he cannot relax because of her inadequacy. Her painful internalization of the tension felt by a paying client—one who is cheating on his wife—signals her acceptance of the responsibility to sexually satisfy men's needs without attending to her own. While, in any other context, "Shut up, you're pretty" might merely be a compliment meant to assuage the fears of someone who feels less-than-pretty, it takes on another meaning in the context of the collection. As Mutonji explains, a potential downside of a woman being deemed beautiful is that she might be treated as a mute object; that is, "shut up, you're pretty" can become a "double-edged sword" ("*Shut Up You're Pretty*: An Interview with Téa Mutonji"), with the subtext that one is lucky to be regarded as

conventionally attractive, and therefore that one's problems are insignificant and one should not complain. This is the exact subliminal message that Loli keeps getting on account of being a "pretty" Black woman. The missing comma in the title suggests the (imagined) speaker's flippant attitude, further heightening the remark's dismissiveness. The phrase thus reveals the collection's larger statement regarding the stifling effects of an age-old problem: were she not conventionally attractive, Loli would not be in a position to command male (or possibly any) attention, yet the fact that she conforms to beauty standards only intensifies her silencing.

As we have seen, a key component of how Loli is perceived is not only her womanhood, but also her Blackness: a feature that similarly overdetermines her and profoundly impacts how she inhabits her body. Even before she is fetishized by her lovers, she understands that her Black skin sets her apart, even in multicultural Scarborough. In her Catholic school, she "passes" as white, though less for her skin colour than in cultural terms: Loli's white classmates seem to accept her, at the cost of her sexualizing herself to fit in. Her relative ease fitting into her school's white social life changes with the arrival of another Black girl, Phyllis Green, whose treatment reminds Loli how close she is to being just as animalized and exoticized. When the white girls talk a somewhat reluctant Phyllis into performing fellatio in front of an audience, Loli's quiet and sudden devastation testifies to her realization that she is always in danger of not being able to pass anymore. Phyllis' friendly attitude and her desire to be on good terms with the only other Black girl in class also reminds Loli that she herself is, in fact, Black: not only does she start noticing the subtle ways her environment has been racializing her, but she also seems to be taken aback by her skin. As she passes a note to her classmate, she stops abruptly: "I looked down at my hands. My hands" ("Phyllis Green" 53), as if suddenly realizing the colour of her skin. After observing Phyllis' round nose, athletic build, and "untamed eyebrows" (57)—all features that differentiate her from their white classmates but might make her similar to Loli—she is quick to distance herself from Phyllis. Even though she remarks that the somewhat objectifying nickname the other girls give Phyllis, "P. J.," does not make much sense, Loli also uses it.

Loli is pushed into despair by the combination of witnessing Phyllis' coerced sexual act with a classmate and the half-realization of her own racialization, as well as by the recognition that it is her own

racializing tendencies that compel her to Other Phyllis. Her visceral, corporeal reaction during and in the hours following Phyllis' rape bespeaks Loli's horror:

> My body weakened, and I leaned against the wall. And then I was on the ground too, holding myself up the best way I could. . . . I don't remember what happened afterwards. I blacked out. I fell asleep. I went elsewhere. I was so tired. I remained, my fingernails attempting to travel through the brick wall. . . . I didn't know what anything meant. . . . I felt dizzy and fever-ridden. (56)

After the incident, Loli does not develop a friendship with Phyllis, nor does she stand up for her, but she makes sure to give her the dignity she deserves: "I couldn't imagine what it must have been like for P. J. I mean, for Phyllis. For Phyllis Green" (57). This mental act of humanization is rooted in Loli's unspoken realization, in her above-mentioned reflection on Phyllis' appearance, that her environment always already Others Black girls.

In *Shut Up You're Pretty*, the body thus features as the primary site through which people relate to Loli, resulting in connections that are superficial and oversexualized. It is also something that Loli views from the outside: her teenage and early adult years are spent being alienated from her body, with Loli seeing it as a location through which she is approached and appropriated, as something to rely on for money, but rarely, if ever, as a source of pleasure or connection. The white supremacist, colonial legacy of racist misogyny against Black women is thus evident in how Loli's body is perceived and Othered: she is deemed valuable only for the location "between her legs." If a place is a location to which we have affective and experiential ties, then it is through this process that Loli's body slowly becomes a space: it gradually ceases to exist for her as a meaningful, beloved place, and she treats it as a neutral, utilitarian interface through which communication takes place.

Along with references to Loli's body, the text abounds with descriptions of the places where scenes of sex and sexual assault take place. The incident with Phyllis Green is the first episode to feature a marked emphasis on detailed and negative place description. As Loli sickens at what she sees, her attention turns to her surroundings and her body's exact location in them: "My body weakened, and I leaned

against the wall. And then I was on the ground too, holding myself up the best way I could" ("Phyllis Green" 56). She even refers to the changes in her emotions in terms of spatial movement, saying "I went elsewhere" (56). Feeling compelled to watch the assault, but trying not to, she devotes more attention to the corridor, the brick wall, the light coming from the window, the staircase, and the newly waxed floor than to her thoughts. Her fixation on the school building's architecture can be attributed to a need to lessen the emotional impact of what she is witnessing: an insidiously violent act involving a Black girl and a white boy. The degree of detail underscores the connection Loli has made between places, discomfort, and men: this is the clearest instance in which a demeaning sexual act involving a boy has Loli turning away from her inner conflict and her body and turning towards describing an external place. Throughout the collection, sexuality and negative feelings are also connected with places such as beds: when Loli provides services to men at the spa, for example, as well as when she feels destitute, expecting emotional connection from Dylan, Jones, or Ben, but only getting empty sexual encounters.

Curiously enough, Loli feels more secure on the ground or the floor at certain points in her life. In a bizarre episode, Loli, aged about ten, lies on the floor of her mother's kitchen while Theresa, her cousin, attempts to remove Loli's pubic hair; it is there where she first feels sexual desire, causing her to "slip[] away" and only focus on the "sensation inside" ("Parchment Paper" 19). Theresa, apparently accidentally, penetrates Loli with a butterknife in the process, an event that horrifies Theresa but kickstarts Loli's sexual awakening. Whereas she longs to capture the "sensation inside" with Theresa, she later attempts to disassociate when she is with boys and men, seeking sexual encounters despite now conceptualizing them as negative. The fact that her experiences with girls are either positive or ambivalent, by contrast, is mirrored by how she relates to the places where these experiences take place. Intimacy does happen in beds and on the floor, but only with women: she enjoys it when a roommate rubs her back while they are lying in bed and is comforted by her as they both sit on the floor ("Shut Up" 104), and she connects with another roommate as they sit on the floor for hours ("Common Room" 80–84). Loli feels safe and cozy on the ground in the park with Jolie, thinking of it as a "place of serenity" where they can be together ("The Event" 21). Years later, after losing her virginity to Dylan, she sits in the same grass but

is less than enthusiastic about sharing it with him: she briefly describes sitting there and listening to the noises of the city at night, but, unlike in the scene with Jolie, she never reflects on how comfortable—or uncomfortable—she feels with him.

Scarborough

It is not only the grass in the park that is significant for Loli; the park itself also features as an important Scarborough location that ties her to the wider community: it is a place of intimacy *and* the figurative bridge between Loli and the Galloway Road neighbourhood at the same time. Whereas the media stresses that the park is rife with gang violence ("This Is" 45), Loli enjoys its "simplicity" as she is sitting with Jolie on a quiet weekend:

> The park would have been empty if not for us. But the shadows of the housing complex felt like company. We could see Mrs. Broomfield behind the fence that led to the south block sweeping leaves in her backyard. Next door, Darnell's silhouette seemed to be stroking guitar strings in the dimness of the kitchen light. And outside, though we couldn't see them, we heard younger girls laughing. ("The Event" 24)

Loli feels at home outside, in a place that is both public and tranquil, quiet and full of life. Significantly, she and Jolie are not alone in the park, even when no one can see them: Loli emphasizes the sonic and visual connection between herself and the inhabitants of the housing complex in order to underscore her belonging to the community.

Even though Loli moves several times and gets farther away from her beloved Galloway community, she mostly remains in Scarborough, whether close to her parents' home, to the campus, or on the westernmost border of the suburb. Something that never changes, even when she is unmoored, is Scarborough, especially places that are emblematic of it for Loli, such as the intersection of Galloway Road and Lawrence Avenue, the vicinity of the Scarborough campus of the University of Toronto, and a few other streets and intersections. She moves and breathes with Scarborough life, observing its smells—of "piss," "dog shit," and gasoline ("Shut Up"

113)—its raw noises, and its audible rhythms. Cars honk and jerking sounds come from the laundry just as conversations—and, what is more, relationships—start and stop suddenly: staccato rhythms that mirror how the stories are told as the reader is exposed to apparently random episodes from Loli's life. Despite all the impermanence that suffuses Loli's quotidian reality, Scarborough has an unchanging quality to it: when Loli is surprised that life goes on, she observes that the intersection of Galloway and Lawrence functions the same way after she is abandoned by a lover, and such scenes remind the reader that the stories are set in Scarborough. The district is imbued with a much stronger local significance than Toronto; in fact, Loli attributes little meaning to the latter. She identifies—and is identified by—her environment, not as a Canadian, a Torontonian, or an immigrant, but as a woman from Scarborough. She looks to the grids of her district as something known and knowable while her macro environment remains an abstract space.

The Congo

While Loli feels deeply connected to Scarborough, the Congo is clearly a faraway, abstract space that does not seem to play a significant role in her life. Only six years old when she left, she appears not to have any memory of it except that her mother used to sing a song there, but stopped soon after they immigrated ("Tits" 9). Nor does she have any interest in visiting it, either out of nostalgia or a desire to know her birthplace. The Congo is present only in echoes, faint memories, such as when a depressed Loli rinses her "mouth with salt and water, something people did back home when they didn't have anything else" ("Shut Up" 106). She acknowledges that her family has lost connection with the Congo: "Instead, we were making things up as we went" ("Theresa" 68). Her father, whose mental health troubles are hinted at but never explained, commits suicide; after his death, Loli and her mother smoke cigarettes and talk on the porch:

> "He wanted to paint the porch red." Mother coughed a little in between each draw. You know, like the gates in Kinshasa."
>
> "That would have made no sense. It wouldn't have gone with anything."

"Yeah, but you know your father."
"He's so fucking weird, right?"
"He's just nostalgic." ("Ten-Year Reunion" 63)

The father's suicide, as well as the mother's sadness that both ensues and predates his passing, signal the sense of loss underlying both parents' lived experiences. Loli seems disaffected by losing her home as a six-year-old and feels an easy belonging to Scarborough instead. Her attachment might stem from this prior loss, in fact: the dislocation from the distant Congo heightens her affection towards what is right in front of her. That is, her love for Scarborough might be linked to the rupture caused by having to leave her first home.

The presence of the Congo is indirectly indexed in part by warm dishes that crop up several times across the stories, exemplifying Loli's association of certain foods with the Congo and her fading yet persistent attachment to her childhood. When Loli needs comfort after a breakup, she picks up one of her Ethiopian Canadian roommate Patty's "African cookbooks" to make some stew ("Shut Up" 113), a phrase which suggests that Loli makes a generalization across the two countries and their cuisines; however, she still relies on what she thinks of as African food when she is upset. She also asks Patty to cook her "something that could take the smell of everything else away. Something hot. Spicy and thick" ("Shut Up" 113). Loli does not specify that this "something" should conform to her idea of "African" or Congolese food, but her request hints at her wish to be comforted by Patty's food because she associates Patty with her own sense of Africa and what she thinks African food is. Although food is constituted in these instances as a source of comfort, Loli barely eats; instead, several of the stories reference her starving herself without ever explaining why. Her eating disorder might stem from the instability surrounding her at home, which, in turn, might be rooted in her parents' traumatic separation from their homeland and, in the course of their migration, temporarily from each other; and since the etiology of anorexia is thought to be linked to early sexual trauma (Madowitz et al. 282–86), Loli's refusal to eat might also be explained by her early sexualization. Reasons notwithstanding, not eating food yet associating it with the Congo—while never feeling particularly connected to the country—testifies to a troubled relationship between various levels of place in *Shut Up You're Pretty*:

Loli has a deeply embodied reaction to her troubles, manifested in at once desiring and rejecting the culinary traditions she may associate with the Congo, or with Africa more broadly, but which she experiences in Scarborough. Meanwhile, Loli goes to a party in the Distillery District (west of Scarborough), looks at the Toronto skyline, which she describes as miraculous but disorienting, and starts missing her mother. In the final story, she goes home and observes her mother cooking tilapia, a fish used in Congolese cuisine, while musing about the initial trauma of starting a new life away from the Congo. Although it is only implied that Loli eats the fish, this scene connects food and the places of Loli's life: eating—that is, feeding the body—is of paramount importance, connected both to her Scarborough community and to her sense of Congolese food.

Another point of connection emerges among the various geographical scales if we consider Loli's apparent lack of engagement with places/spaces of a wider scale. The most immediate places seem to carry the most weight in the collection: Loli's body—both through how it is perceived by others and how it feels for Loli to live in that body—as well as Scarborough, and within it, the neighbourhood and district she knows best. The Galloway neighbourhood and the whole of Scarborough are depicted as tangible, knowable, and stable. Since Loli does not travel beyond Toronto in the collection, the reader has little information about how she interacts with more dynamic, expansive, or farther locations. However, the global scale is present in the book through the implications of Black women's presence in North America. Even though Loli is a recent immigrant and not a descendant of enslaved people, her dark skin functions as a repository of white men's sexual anxieties and desires. Centuries of North American and other European colonial histories of viewing Black women as licentious seductresses are pivotal to understanding why Loli's white male partners objectify and exoticize her. Comparably, the fact that her schoolmates, teachers, and other adult men in her community sexualize her is tethered to adultification. The most immediate place—that of the skin—thus interacts with the global context of colonization through Loli's inescapable encounters with prejudice, revealing the degree to which the intimate and the global are intertwined. Similarly, the fact that she can barely afford to rent an apartment and lives on noisy streets is a question of Toronto housing and urban planning policies—that is, it relates to the local scale—and

a matter of (inter)national context, as are the family's financial hardships that arise in large part due to their immigrant status. If "it is not only larger scale entities (global or national) that contain smaller scale entities, but that the larger scale entities are at the same time contained within smaller scale entities" (Howitt 305), then the places of Loli's life are not bounded, self-contained units, but interrelated, superimposed entities with blurred boundaries.

Undernarrated Landscapes: Conclusion

Loli's attention to these interconnected locations, coupled with Mutonji's narration of what would otherwise constitute the antinarratable, paranarratable, and subnarratable elements of life, sheds all the more light on Loli's resistance to engaging with the supranarratable. The taboo, mundane, and unexpected, almost genre-bending details of her life only occlude what remains supranarratable, thereby heightening the reader's understanding that what remains unspoken is indeed too traumatic to tell.[2] The ubiquity of the strange gaps in the otherwise detailed narrative, coupled with its heightened emphasis on places of various kinds and scope, puts the spotlight on Loli's lack of attempts at meaning-making and introspection, implying that the horrors that happen to her are unspeakable: they push "the limits of language, comprehension, [and] representation" (Mandel 4). If an amoral, multiply taboo-breaking character presents her shocking stories unapologetically and matter-of-factly, yet holds some details back, the reader might be all the more fascinated by what remains unsaid. If Loli is candid about her quasi-breakdown after seeing Phyllis Green cajoled into performing fellatio but withholds the circumstances of what she terms "the worst experience of [her] entire life," the reader is led to believe that the latter event is even more painful. If Loli's drug use is detailed, along with the exact sexual choreography of Loli and her sexual partners and clients, then it becomes even clearer that what goes unsaid is indeed too monumental or perhaps, for Loli, too shameful to express, regardless of whether it arises from sexual trauma, dislocation from her childhood home, or quotidian racial and gendered microagressions.

Were Loli to engage with the supranarratable, *Shut Up* might be considered a neonarrative: a story that, for Warhol, extends the limits

of narratability. Warhol argues that Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is an example of a neonarrative: it focuses on supranarratable trauma that Morrison eventually renders narratable, thus making space for healing to occur (224). *Shut Up You're Pretty* stops short of doing this: Mutonji deliberately hides as much of Loli's emotional landscape as she shows of the urban landscape, meaning that even if not completely unnarrated, some events in *Shut Up You're Pretty* are most certainly undernarrated; that is, spoken of in fragments and allusions, through partial silences and conspicuous gaps. Being a first-person, autodiegetic narrator who is nevertheless quite distant from the object of her narration—that is, from herself—Loli is just as detached from her own self as she is attached to Scarborough's parks and intersections. The sparseness of narration and the fact that the reader is shown in explicit terms the effects, but rarely the causes, of Loli's suffering function as symptoms of her disrupted emotional landscape. As an aesthetic-poetic choice on Mutonji's part, the gaps and ensuing lack of coherence signal Loli's difficulties with narrative self-constitution, defined as the ability to synthesize the seemingly disparate flashes of one's life into an intelligible, unified self-narrative (Mackenzie 275).

Notably, there is one moment in which Loli unexpectedly attempts to cohere the events of her life into a meaningful plot. Facing the fact that Ben has a girlfriend he does not intend to leave, Loli speculates about why she willingly returns to him time and again: "Perhaps because I was so used to being there. So used to being that person. I could barely imagine it any other way. I was always the whore. I was always the mistress. I was always the one they reached for then they needed a drink. And maybe, after years of this, I was ready to accept it" ("Old-Fashioneds" 124). Shortly after arriving at this conclusion, she sits in her mother's kitchen and muses about the fragmented way the older woman used to speak after first arriving from the Congo. The fact that the last pages of the collection feature Loli thinking back on her mother's insistence on speaking and meaning-making in the face of knowing little English may herald her own future attempts at coming to grips with her own experiences—and hopefully arriving at a more affirming self-definition than the one above.

Acknowledging that the landscape has served as the metaphor for national identity in mainstream Canadian literature, Beckford-Foster argues that a contemporary corpus by Black women immigrants

"represents a collective site of expression for . . . issues of Blackness and belonging" ("A Geography" 464), and that "Black female characters . . . remap the land in their own terms and reinscribe images of themselves into the Canadian geographic imagination in which they are often rendered invisible" (465). As I have shown, Mutonji's protagonist describes in detail certain places—interiors, parks, intersections. However, to use Beckford-Foster's term, Loli does not seem to inscribe: she merely observes but for the most part does not shape the places she inhabits, not even the intimate ones. Loli does not map Scarborough, nor does she map herself, rendering her unknowable both to herself and the reader. While her dark skin and beauty make her hypervisible, her humanity remains invisible to most of her partners.

Still, her selfhood is affirmed and rendered visible for the reader: Loli fends for herself the best she can and negotiates her racialized and gendered identity while facing the uncomfortable realities of living in her beloved Scarborough amid the challenges of those subtle forms of racism and misogyny decried by the artists and theorists I refer to in the introduction. She does stake a claim to Scarborough: her love for and deep embeddedness in it attest to the fact that Black women belong in Canada, even if official narratives tend to exclude them. The exigencies that frame her life might only allow her to construct the spaces and places around her to a limited degree, but she does become a "viable geographic subject[]" who can "live and negotiate the world around [her] in complex ways" (McKittrick 92). While the fragmentary nature of the snapshots fails to give a well-rounded, in-depth account of the trajectory of Loli's personal life, this is not a shortcoming of the narrative; it is, instead, its defining feature, a form that reflects the content perfectly. The aesthetic and affective impact that this narrative bareness achieves testifies to the difficulties of being a young, "pretty" immigrant and, above all, a Black girl in multicultural Toronto. Undernarration and an emphasis on place thus work in tandem; form and content align to produce a puzzling book that plays with the notion of in/visibility and clearly contests Black women's erasure from Canada.

Notes

1. See Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life"; Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*; and de Certeau, "Walking in the City," in *The Practice of*

Everyday Life (91–110). For context on the competing definitions of *place* and *space* in cultural geography, see Hubbard 41–47.

2. Other potential, less pertinent reasons could account for these lacunae, including several stemming from Loli's diegetic reality. First, it is clear that she is suffering, even if for unknown reasons, and pain has been theorized as something inexpressible, not only because the vocabularies regularly employed by several discourses—such as medicine and even art—are inadequate to fully transmit what the individual is going through, but also because the intensity of pain often impedes its telling (Scarry 3–5). The eloquent and sometimes poetic language of Mutonji's stories makes it unlikely that Loli is prevented from fully verbalizing what she feels by a linguistic barrier; however, her potential lack of emotional maturity could be construed as a reason: it is possible that she genuinely lacks the self-understanding to render her innermost feelings legible, even to herself. Having been socialized into an environment where no one puts their anguish into words, it is probable that Loli's upbringing delineates the limits of what she sees as shareable or expressible. Additionally, Loli's depression might preclude the articulation of her pain in spite of her poetic fluency, as might the traumatic nature of her un(der)narrated experiences, since a fundamental characteristic of a traumatic event is that it tends to render linguistic expression difficult or impossible (Caruth 4; van der Kolk 93).

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Rusaba Alam

Mistaken Identity: "Asian-Indigenous Relation" and the Afterlives of Feminist Critique

I would like to open the question of literary method as it relates to the stakes of feminist critique here and now by returning to a short story widely taught and cited over the years as an expression of solidarity between Indigenous and racialized communities: "Yin Chin" (1990) by Stó:lō writer Lee Maracle. In the story, an Indigenous woman writer in so-called Vancouver narrates her experience of coming into political consciousness through reflections on her relationship to Chinese Canadians. Tracking between past and present, the narrator describes her own prejudices in childhood, her meetings with Chinese students at her college dining hall, and her participation in lively gatherings of Native and Asian writers set fifteen years after her student days.[1] The narrator's recollections are held together by an episode set in the present in which she intervenes to help an elderly Chinese woman being harassed on the street. This story of writerly alliance as a basis for action has been a major inspiration for a growing body of critical work engaging with literary practice as a site of "Asian-Indigenous relation," much of which has been formative for me. Yet I also find myself troubled by a tendency in the field to read characters in literary texts primarily as mimetic representations of their racial positions, which draws on plot events involving Indigenous and Asian characters, for instance, as models for political solidarity.[2]

I take up Maracle's story and its uses through a deconstructive reading of discursive gaps and fragments, a practice which has enabled many a feminist and queer critique of essentialism, but which has fallen out of favour in a contemporary scholarly field conditioned by precarity and by the ever-diminishing time and space available for

sustained attention to language.[3] My reading of "Yin Chin" follows a thread of political and ethical teaching that is irreducible to the events of the plot, reassessing a pivotal scene often cited by critics, the moment when the narrator steps in to help the old woman. For me, the political force of this scene materializes in its stylistic complexity: jokes, insults, misnamings, and textual absences weave together the narrator's reflections and make up a series of intertextual references to Maracle's place in a network of writers working in Vancouver in the 1980s and 90s, drawn together in no small part by shared commitments to transnational and anticolonial feminist struggle.

Appearing in her 1990 collection *Sojourner's Truth and Other Stories*, "Yin Chin" is dedicated to two celebrated Chinese Canadian writers, Jim Wong-Chu and SKY Lee.[4] The story opens with a poem referencing Maracle's friendship with Lee: "I am weary / of North Americans / so I listen to SKY" (65). This is a lesson on reading the text to follow. Maracle's story of writers making community together speaks directly to Lee's novel from the same year, *Disappearing Moon Cafe*, which follows four generations of a Chinese Canadian family in and beyond Vancouver and represents a significant milestone for racialized writers in Canadian publishing.[5] Around the time of the publication of these works, both women were also engaged in collaborative political projects, including Telling It: Women and Language Across Cultures, a 1988 conference in Vancouver gathering Native, Asian, and lesbian writers, and a 1990 collected volume about the event, in which Lee and Maracle recount the experience as by turns fractious, infuriating, and enlivening.[6] Their essays in the *Telling It* volume describe serious and painful rifts along the lines of race, class, and sexuality that complicated this project of collectivity among women writers, destabilized as it was by endless difference within the category of woman, as well as Native, Asian, lesbian, and other signifiers mobilized by the gathering. In what follows, I read names and intertextual references deployed in "Yin Chin" alongside the contested terms of this political scene to consider what the antiessentialist genealogies of feminist literature, theory, and activism offer those of us interested in the aesthetics and politics of anticolonial relation today.

Mistaken Identity

> There is a hilarious but also devastating scene in which Fat Man drives Tokyo Rose and Little Boy from his house because they are aliens and he has to protect his family from them . . . He is stumped and dismayed by the recognition that his family members *are* aliens.
>
> — *Larissa Lai, "Epistemologies of Respect: A Poetics of Asian/Indigenous Relation"*

As critics have often noted, the title of "Yin Chin" references a scene from *Disappearing Moon Cafe*.[7] The novel is framed at its beginning and end by a relationship between Wong Gwei Chang, a Chinese man who arrives in "British Columbia" in the late-nineteenth century, and Kelora Chen, an Indigenous woman from the Shi'atko clan. Their relationship ends when Gwei Chang abandons Kelora, a point frequently read as a reflection on the political and ethical status of racialized settlers on stolen land.[8] The title of Maracle's story cites these characters' first meeting, when Kelora rescues Gwei Chang as he is wandering lost in the woods, having been sent to recover the bones of Chinese men who died building Canada's railroads. Lee's depiction of this encounter is humorous, with Kelora playfully following Gwei Chang before revealing herself and what they have in common: "'Look, a chinaman!' She crept up behind him and spoke in his language" (3). In response to his confusion, Kelora goes on to explain, "My father is a chinaman, like you. His eyes are slits like yours. He speaks like you" (3). Embarrassed by his lack of understanding, Gwei Chang insults her, or tries to: "'But you're a wild injun.' He spilled out the insults in front of her, but they were meaningless to her. In chinese, the words mocked, slang-like, 'yin-chin'" (3). The words are "meaningless" because, in his pronunciation, they no longer resemble the insult he intends and because he does not yet understand that the stranger he is insulting is also one of his own.[9] "Yin-chin," the insult that fails to land, becomes the title of Maracle's story, establishing misrecognition as the register in which the text will unfold.

The epithets from the novel repeat with a kind of symmetry throughout "Yin Chin," refracted by the perspective of the Indigenous woman narrator. She recalls, for instance, a childhood memory of blurting out a racist comment about a "Chinaman," much to her mother's shame (71); meanwhile, "yin-chin" is refigured in this story as "Indian" in the vocabulary of her self-identification, which will

become especially significant for me in the scene where she stops to help the elderly Chinese woman (68). To read the function of these identifiers in the text, I take a cue from Larissa Lai's essay on the "poetics of Asian/Indigenous relation," which discusses "Yin Chin" and *Disappearing Moon Cafe* and offers an extended reading of several other works, including Métis writer Marie Clements' 2003 play, *Burning Vision*. The play concerns the effects of the atomic bomb on the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as well as the Sahtu Dene people around Great Bear Lake who mined the uranium for the bomb without knowledge of its purpose or of the catastrophic effects of uranium exposure for themselves and their community. Lai describes *Burning Vision*'s experimental form, including characters who embody multiple contradictory positions at once—both a Native child and a personification of the uranium itself, for example—as a staging of the concept of radioactive instability, a figure for the unevenly distributed but globalized experience of mutual implication in the suffering of others. As she points out, the play characterizes this experience as a kind of kinship, in the sense of a binding relation not entirely of one's own choosing, as in a scene where Fat Man, a character named for one of the atomic bombs, makes the unwelcome discovery that those he identifies as foreign others are also his own kin (120). Like much of Lai's work, this essay is marked by a poststructuralist denaturalization of the grounds of identity, challenging readers interested in Indigenous and diasporic solidarities to describe the political imagination of literary texts without requiring characters and events to stand in for fixed categories of experience that feminist, queer, and anticolonial interventions in the academy have laboured to deconstruct.[10] In my view, this is a challenge that the field has largely declined to take up in the decade since, which I will try to address in my discussion of Maracle's story.

To Lai's generative reading of the instability of names and positions in *Burning Vision*, I would add that I see this quality in "Yin Chin," too, in a scene of mistaken identity emerging from the narrator's increasingly mutable sense of community. At the beginning of the story, she says of her hesitation to sit with Chinese students at her college dining hall, "No place to sit—no place meaning there aren't any Indians in the room . . . the absence of Indians not chairs determined the absence of a space for me" (66).[11] She attributes this hesitation in part to her emerging shame over anti-Chinese myths she encountered as a child:

> "Don't wander around town or the old Chinamen will get you, steal you . . . Chinkee, chinkee Chinamen went down town, turned around the corner and his pants fell down," and other such truck is buried somewhere in the useless information file tucked in the basement of my mind, but the shape of my social life is frighteningly influenced by those absurd sounds. (66)

Like Gwei Chang's "meaningless" insults, these "absurd sounds" are both overdetermined and emptied of meaning, a process the narrator articulates as the racial tropes begin to register to her *as* tropes: "The movie is just starting to lag and the literary theme of the pictures is coming into focus" (67). In a subsequent scene set fifteen years later, this understanding grows into shared literary and political commitments with Asian writers. The narrator recalls:

> The table-load of people was Asian/Native. We laughed at ourselves and spoke very seriously about our writing. We really believe we are writers, someone had said, and the room shook with the hysteria of it all . . . It only took a half-dozen revolutions in the Third World, seventeen riots in America, one hundred demonstrations against racism in Canada and thirty-seven dead Native youth in my life to become. (68)

But this sense of belonging in a broken world comes with a lingering shame and guilt: "We could laugh because we were no longer a joke. But somewhere along the line we forgot to tell the others, the thousands of our folks that still tell their kids about old chinamen" (68). If there is a kinship that binds these writers, it arises from what is unexpectedly familiar in another's experience as well as from what is troubling or disorienting within one's own.[12]

The significance of this sense of disorientation comes further into focus as the story's unstable name, "Indian"/"injun"/"yin-chin," reappears in the scene where the narrator describes stopping to defend an elderly woman from being harassed:

> An old Chinese woman swings a ratty old umbrella at a Native man who is pushing her, cursing her and otherwise giving her a hard time. I lean toward the passenger side

> and shout at him from the safety of my car: "Leave her alone, asshole."
>
> "Shuddup you f.ck.ng rag-head." I jump out of the car, without bothering to park it. No one honks; they just stare at me. He sees my face and my cowichan, bends deeply and says sarcastically that he didn't know I was a squaw. Well, I am no pacifist, I admit: I belt him, give him what for, and the coward leaves. (68)

In an encounter set on the streets of Vancouver, the word "rag-head" is legible as an insult for Punjabis, Sikhs, and South Asians, so when the Native man addresses this insult to the narrator, he fails to recognize her at first as one of his own, so to speak; in the terms of the story, he misrecognizes her as the wrong kind of Indian. This scene of mistaken identity functions as another refracted citation of the "wild injun" epithet from which "Yin Chin" draws its title, deployed in the moment when Gwei Chang refuses to recognize Kelora as one of his own. At the same time, when the man misidentifies the Native narrator as a South Asian woman, this moment stages the colonial misnaming of "Indian" as a term for Indigenous peoples in the Americas, the discursive scene that founds the loaded racial trope that Gwei Chang addresses to Kelora. In placing the trope of colonial discovery in the words of the Native man in this scene, Maracle is, I think, also making something of a feminist joke, though a dark one, alluding to the ways that settler-colonial genocide continues in the everyday register of violence against Indigenous women perpetrated by both strangers and kin—when this character realizes his mistake, he simply substitutes out one derogatory name for another to ridicule the narrator and call her a "squaw."[13] As Maracle articulates the fracturing of Indigenous community and kinship ties along the lines of gender, she situates herself in intertextual dialogue with SKY Lee, another feminist writer who is both differently positioned and similarly attuned to the complexities of gender and coloniality. This formal move functions no less than the events of the plot to complicate the narrator's earlier conviction that "the absence of Indians . . . determined the absence of a space for me" (66).

Given the amount of critical writing and teaching referencing "Yin Chin," a seven-page short story, I am somewhat surprised to find no mention of this complex use of the word "rag-head" in any

discussion of the text. The desire not to look too closely or too long at the ugly language in this passage may be, in part, a form of academic politeness or a reluctance to engage as an outsider with terms that are violent to another. But beyond an aversion to the racial and gendered slurs, I also see the absence of discussion of this aspect of the story as a symptom of the tendency in the field to work by taking characters as metonyms for racial positions and histories, that is, to read Indigenous and racialized characters in terms of the information they do or do not impart about the political coordinates of their identities. Thus, the significance of the word "rag-head" fails to garner critical attention in a scene where no South Asian character is actually represented. This is a basic approach shared across most of the critical references in this essay by scholars who offer a wide range of readings of these texts and with whom I share a deep commitment to articulating the political stakes of the writing. But in locating the characters' narrative functions by their names and social positions, these readings have been unable to articulate the workings in Maracle's story of a disorientation that is, for her, best named in the form of a misnaming.

"Yin Chin"'s account of solidarity as a process of becoming disoriented requires a practice of reading informed but not enclosed by identity. I take this to be Lai's point in her reading of *Burning Vision*, which follows the radioactive instability of names in the play "as far as it will go" in an example of deconstructive responsibility to the language of the text (Miller 443).[14] Also instructive in this regard is a recent essay by Dina Al-Kassim that takes up Maracle's impact on poetry engaging with the politics of water by Chinese Canadian writer Rita Wong and Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish.[15] Drawing on the feminist and anticolonial genealogies of the deconstructive practice of reading traces, Al-Kassim tracks a technique in this poetry of listing names and references that mimics water's form and flow and brings together the fragmented histories of interconnected struggles, an approach that these writers develop in conversation with Maracle:

> Darwish, whom Wong cites as an inspiration, represented the Palestinian delegation to the 1976 United Nations Habitat Vancouver conference . . . This historic event also marked the meeting of Lee Maracle and Darwish, and became the source of decades of solidarity between them.

> Wong inherits this connection, and repeats Maracle's dictum that no one owns the water, that "*water owns itself*." ("Listing Waters" 254–55)

As the radioactive echo does for Lai, for Al-Kassim, the intertextuality of listing waters invites us to move and be moved by others in solidarity against settler-colonial destruction of land and life, a solidarity she describes as "the unprecedented, incalculable gift of responsibility, rather than something we learn by rote or apply as paradigm" (274). In what follows, I return to the feminist intertextuality of "Yin Chin" to describe the non-paradigmatic practice of reading that the story's fragments and absences invite us to take on, along the lines of Lai and Al-Kassim's examples, which offers a reminder that to read a work by an Indigenous or Asian writer in a deconstructive register is not to impose a white or Western theory that is alien to the literature, but to be open to following the text's own language—its logic and illogic, its dreams and debts, its detours and ruptures—as far as it will go.

Inheriting Feminist Critique

> We had crossed a millennium of bridges the rivers of which were swollen with the floodwaters of dark humanity's tenacious struggle to extricate themselves from oppression and we knew it.
>
> We were born during the first sword wound that the Third World swung at imperialism. We were children of that wound, invincible, conscious and movin' on up. We could laugh because we were no longer a joke. But somewhere along the line we forgot to tell the others, the thousands of our folks that still tell their kids about old chinamen.
>
> — *Lee Maracle, "Yin Chin"*

The scene of mistaken identity in "Yin Chin" is introduced in the text by the lyrical passage above, describing the narrator's place in the raucous gathering of Native and Asian writers seated around a table together. She describes their meeting as an act of crossing bridges over the rivers of "dark humanity's tenacious struggle" (68), in what is unmistakably the idiom of Third World feminism.[16]

In the preface to the original edition of the landmark feminist anthology *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981), Cherríe L. Moraga describes the fault lines in feminist

spaces that led to the book's creation. On feeling the visceral effects in her body of trying to talk about race in these settings, she writes, "*How can we—this time—not use our bodies to be thrown over a river of tormented history to bridge the gap?* Barbara says last night: 'A bridge gets walked over.'[17] Yes, over and over and over again . . . I cannot continue to use my body to be walked over to make a connection" (xlv). This account characterizes the collective labour of producing the text as a record of knowledge to which feminist movements can refer in the future to relieve some of the painful burden of reaching across difference. Moraga attributes this sense of the bridge to a recurring dream in which she and her comrades are lovingly cast as the bridge itself and as those who wish to cross: "For the women in this book, I will lay my body down for that vision. *This Bridge Called My Back*. In the dream, I am always met at the river" (xix). The dream of feminist referentiality is alive in Maracle's image of radical writers crossing the expanse of history: this is citation, though not in the sense that term carries in academic contexts where the quantifiable metrics of publication and circulation inform what it means to acknowledge someone's work.[18] Like her poem for SKY Lee, the bridge teaches us how to read the function of intertextuality in "Yin Chin."

This textual link is one of many joining Maracle and her contemporaries to a transnational network of feminists developing a political vocabulary of solidarity on both sides of the colonial border. I see another in the pages of the collected volume that emerged from the November 1988 Telling It conference in Vancouver. Organized by Daphne Marlatt through the Women's Studies department at Simon Fraser University, the event aimed to bring together Native, Asian, and lesbian writers to speak about literature and politics (Marlatt, "Introduction" 10–12).[19] The book was produced over the two years following the conference by an editorial collective made up of Marlatt and three of the presenters: Lee Maracle, SKY Lee, and Betsy Warland. It comprises retrospective essays by the editors, poetry by several of the presenters, the script of a play performed during the conference by the Vancouver Sath theatre group, and the text of all but one of the talks that were given. This structure arises out of a conflict from the first panel of the conference, when one of the invited speakers, a woman of colour, questioned the inclusion of "lesbian" as an organizing category for the gathering, asking whether lesbians could really be said to have a culture in the way that racialized writers

do, for instance. This is a viewpoint that the other speakers did not accept, but the question of how to respond adequately to the homophobia of her question remained unresolved during the event. In the aftermath of the conference, as the Telling It collective assembled their edited volume, this presenter wrote to them to request to have her name and comments withheld from publication, which is why only seven out of eight presentations appear in the text.[20]

Because her absence shapes the book—her talk is replaced with an editorial note announcing its redaction, and it goes on to be discussed in every one of retrospective essays in the collection—I have followed the practice of other scholars in leaving the eighth woman unnamed in my discussion of these events, though I will note that she is a Punjabi Canadian writer who was working in Vancouver at the time.[21] The editorial collective foregrounds the question of how to respond to her absence by appending a second subtitle to the book—*Telling It: Women and Language Across Cultures, the Transformation of a Conference*. A partial and unstable narrative of the unnamed woman's presentation takes shape over the course of the retrospective essays by Maracle, Lee, and Warland. Lee describes the events as follows: "One woman of colour was defiant enough to say that in her view, the presence of lesbians at this conference discriminated against women writers of different cultures . . . There was a shocked silence, then a polite recovery, but incredibly, no anger" ("Yelling It" 183).[22] Lee says of the group's failure to adequately respond, "I do feel the lack of response-ability was because she was a woman of colour, supposedly speaking from her culture, and no one wanted to risk being 'racist'" (184). The rest of her account considers the burden of simultaneously trying to address this incident while dealing with the forms of racism and tokenization present in the room, a concern that is also reflected in Maracle's essay, "Ramparts Hanging in the Air." Maracle expresses her anger arising from this instance of homophobia as well as from an undercurrent of polite racism from many of the white attendees that made her hesitate to confront another woman of colour in front of them as forcefully as she believed she should. On feeling this impasse take shape, she writes:

> [Tension] was thick in the air, tangible, and it rent great holes in me. Jeannette [Armstrong] felt it too. We held hands for a moment, rooting ourselves in our own places

> and dug deep inside ourselves for the words, special words, that would finally begin to build the ramparts to the bridge which would allow us to meet as equals. Those ramparts are still hanging in the air in that room, dusty and unused. (163)

As I see it—in, for instance, the poetic scene of Native and Asian writers who cross a "millennium of bridges" together—those words are being assembled in "Yin Chin," too, a story made up of one intertextual reference after another, first published in 1990, the same year as the *Telling It* volume (68). In following the bridge of feminist referentiality in the text, I note above that the case of mistaken identity at the heart of the story is legible as a citation of the insult that fails to land in *Disappearing Moon Cafe*: over the course of the narrator's reflections, the name "yin-chin"/"injun"/"Indian" travels across the text and transforms into "rag-head," which fails to find its target in a scene where no Punjabi woman is actually present. But for this reader, the moment also carries an echo of that other conspicuous textual absence, the one that so preoccupied Maracle and her fellow editing collective members in the aftermath of the Telling It conference—that of the woman who refused to be named alongside lesbian writers in the published account of the event, the one particular Indian whose absence resonates within this archive of feminist coalition as a failure of ethical relation.

In this speculative reading of the textual afterlife of a project of Native, Asian, and lesbian solidarity, the absent Indian offers us no allegory of the history or obligations of South Asian settlers on stolen land, and no keyword or model that, as critics, we might take away and apply. Rather, absence presents itself in the text only as the trace of an irreducible particularity: in this case, the specific moment that occasions, for Maracle and Lee, a contingent practice of responding and becoming responsible to someone else's words. Maracle characterizes this responsibility in *Telling It* as the antithesis to settler politeness: "I dream of the day when remarks such as 'so what if you're a woman of colour?' and 'is Lesbian a culture?' will stop all the proceedings and everyone will say, 'Let's thrash this out, let's settle it, let's keep going until we come to a common agreement—consensus—because we aren't going anywhere if we don't'" ("Ramparts" 171). For Lee, too, solidarity is a practice of responding to the language of the

present as it unfolds, a practice always racialized by a Canadian cultural politics of respectability. In her essay, she imagines a confrontation with the unnamed speaker that she has yet to have:

> Let's risk ourselves. Joanne Arnott, a writer to watch out for, suggested that we do a conference called YELLING IT: WOMEN AND ANGER ACROSS CULTURES. I am fascinated by the idea, but for the longest time couldn't figure out a workshop technique to express anger safely. By now, I know we can't express anger safely. We all face a terrible, burning rage. And we probably will get burnt—some just sunburnt, some badly blistered—but we do need to go through the purge . . . As a writer, I have learned to take risks. ("Yelling It" 184–85)

Lee's characterization of writing as risk expresses an insight shared across this history of feminist activism, as in Maracle's description in "Yin Chin" of the writers who inherit the wound of anti-imperialist struggle and in Moraga's account of surviving the disfiguring effects of the political field by writing them into language. This writing holds a fragmented knowledge premised on ruptures, misrecognitions, and absences, which I characterize above as deconstructive, and which is generated out of political necessity in the activist register of feminist critique. The responsibility we inherit as readers of this body of work here and now is to listen for the gaps that language labours to bridge, as in the expanse of "Yin Chin"'s opening provocation: "I am weary / of North Americans / so I listen to SKY" (156).[23]

Yelling It

So, let's risk ourselves. In the space of these close readings, where the most current moves in academic discourse can be suspended to make way for attention to a particular detail of the text, I have taken up "Yin Chin" and the politics of solidarity through the lens of feminist history not to idealize the past, but to ask how and why, through the conditions of our work, the intellectual force of women's anger, racialized anger, has come to be flattened within literary criticism as a lesson in morality.

To jump forward from the cultural terrain of Vancouver in the 1980s, critics today face an updated institutional vocabulary of diversity described by Rita Wong in "Decolonizasian: Reading Asian and First Nations Relations in Literature," an essay that has been generative for much of the writing on Indigenous and diasporic solidarity in this field. Wong's reading of "Yin Chin" and *Disappearing Moon Cafe*, among other texts, focuses on relationships that are unmediated by white characters, like the meeting of writers in Maracle's story, as an intervention against multicultural inclusion as institutional appropriation of difference:[24]

> One of the challenges before contemporary cultural workers is to reappropriate "culture" in ways that lead the reader's gaze back to the social and economic injustices neglected and deflected when multiculturalism's lens becomes too narrow. Cultural labour has a role in fostering such a shift in values away from the economic violence and domination that our current neoliberal government normalizes through its submission to bodies such as the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, bodies that arguably operate against the interests of the majority of the Earth's population (human and otherwise). ("Decolonizasian" 160)

Since Wong's assessment of the field in 2008, the neoliberal exhaustion of our strategies of resistance has only intensified, to say the least. Consider, for instance, this crisis of intellectual inheritance already well under way: the dollar amount attached to the larger of the doctoral scholarships offered by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada remains the same now as when it was first established in 2003, when the cost of living in Vancouver, the city where I am a graduate student, was half what it is today.[25] Yet the demand for publication, circulation, and application of ideas continues even as everyone, however differently situated in terms of title, affiliation, or history, labours to think under profoundly diminished conditions, a fact that shapes the very substance of literary study. Plot and character summary are among the more expedient tools available to us to convey the political stakes of the literature at a moment when all criticism, including my own, is starved of time for

sustained reflection. The result is a loss too often left unarticulated—our knowledge is radically conditioned by precarity.

The distance between the reality of this loss and the business-as-usual of academic life, including of justice-oriented and decolonizing projects, is a gap that my language strains to bridge.[26] All the while, the university goes on invoking the politics of difference as an alibi for sustaining a vanishingly small horizon of possibility for critical research and teaching, individualizing and depoliticizing the terms of social justice struggle. Under these circumstances, much as multiculturalism and diversity have been vulnerable to uses that shore up the settler state and its institutions, so too are words like solidarity, responsibility, and relation, which is to say that without an account of the ways in which the conditions of neoliberal deprivation are reproduced in the substance of our work, even our best efforts become ethical cover for the unlivable present. Against the constraints of this institutional logic—identity as enclosure, not openness—let us cultivate an attention to the radical insight that bridges so many trajectories of feminist thinking, that of the critical encounter with difference as practice of freedom.

Notes

1. I reproduce the terms used in the sources I discuss because they are key to my readings of their instability in the literary texts.
2. I began this writing in Christopher Lee's 2016 graduate seminar at the University of British Columbia, Asia Pacific Cultural Studies, and in a paper for Karina Vernon and Joanne Leow's panel, Indigenous-Diasporic Relations on Turtle Island, at the 2021 Modern Language Association conference. "Yin Chin" has become a canonical text appearing on high school and post-secondary syllabi, in undergraduate and graduate theses, and at literary and academic gatherings. Reading characters and events as information about Asian or Indigenous identities and histories is an approach to research and pedagogy shared across the field. For example, on *Canadian Literature*'s teaching resource, *CanLit Guides*, L. Camille van der Marel's chapter on "Indigenous and Diasporic Intersections in Canadian Literature" cites the story and offers framing questions for study, including: "[W]hat insights does Stó:lō-Salish-Cree author Lee Maracle offer concerning Asian communities' settlement on Canada's West Coast?"
3. I'm here restating an older institutional critique. For example, in her call for a "new comparative literature" in 2003, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues that without resources for developing deep, contextualized knowledge of the gendered and colonial interplay of language and power, literary criticism becomes "plot summary masquerading as analysis of representation" (19).

4. This version of "Yin Chin" differs slightly from the one published earlier the same year in *Canadian Literature*.
5. Malissa Phung aptly describes the novel and short story as "sister texts," reading the poem at the start of "Yin Chin" as a reference to the matriarchs of *Disappearing Moon Cafe* (*Reaching Gold Mountain* 236). Though Phung has published on this in *Canadian Literature*, here I'm citing the longer discussion of this referentiality in her dissertation.
6. See Christopher Lee's afterword to the 2017 edition of *Disappearing Moon Cafe*, which discusses SKY Lee's participation in the conference in relation to the aesthetic interests of her novel; and Janey Lew's essay on feminist meetings in Maracle's writing, including "Yin Chin," which situates literary representations of Asian and Indigenous solidarity in an activist history that includes Telling It.
7. For example, Lo (110) and Phung ("Asian-Indigenous Relationalities" 68n1) note the title references *Disappearing Moon Cafe*. Of particular interest to me, in an essay on "thinking the beyond of identity politics," Roy Miki suggests that this intertextuality invites us to develop methods of reading and teaching that "think back and forth simultaneously" between historical memory and the contingencies of the present (155). My reading offers one such method.
8. For a range of accounts of the political stakes of this novel, see Kim (555–57), Lai ("Bone to Bone" 248–55), C. Lee (177–80), Lo (104–08), Phung ("Asian-Indigenous Relationalities" 56–57), and Wong (162–63).
9. What is significant for me, figuratively, is that Gwei Chang treats as a racial other someone who announces herself as the daughter of a Chinese father. Some textual ambiguity surrounds the identity of Kelora's biological father; Phung's review of the criticism notes a scholarly desire to resolve this ambiguity by positively identifying her as either the biological or adopted daughter of a Chinese character (*Reaching Gold Mountain* 22–25). Lee reflects on this question in an interview with Smaro Kamboureli in the 2017 edition of the novel: "I based my vague manner of settling her patrilineage on two cultural factors. First of all, her own people had a time-honored system of matrilineage. Secondly, I made Chen Kwok Fai refer to being Kelora's father in the same way that any old self-effacing Chinese laborer might refer to this—as if he was merely a third person to it all" (195).
10. To this end, racial passing and misrecognition are significant to Lai's reading of *Burning Vision* (123–24). They also appear in a chapter of her book *Slanting I, Imagining We: Asian Canadian Literary Production in the 1980s and 1990s*, which discusses racist names, deconstructive reading, and the aesthetics of misrecognition in poetry by Rita Wong and jam ismail. In this chapter, Lai describes "a survival . . . that depends on non-knowledge, or on misrecognition" (175). Lai and Wong have long been political, intellectual, and creative collaborators, and Lai's practice as a writer deals with these themes in ways that would take another essay to unravel. Likewise, Wong's own critical writing on Asian-Indigenous relation in literature, to which I will return in more detail in the coda, touches on racial misrecognition and suggests that literature engaging with this topic could be an avenue for future study, an invitation I've only briefly taken up in this essay ("Decolonizasian" 177n5, n10).

11. Tracking negative affects in the literature, Mohawk scholar Gage Karahkwí:io Diabo draws our attention to the density of the meaning of "absence" for the narrator by describing the layering of "alienation, doubt, and denial" in her assessment of the room: "Apologetically and somewhat backhandedly, then, she insists that *she* is not doubting *their* status as people with a right to the chairs, but rather that *their* actions and presence are, whether wittingly or unwittingly, casting doubt on *her* status as both a fellow human and an Indigenous person with a fundamental right to the lands on which the chairs are located" ("Bad Feelings" 265–66). I emphasize that this is a productive strategy of making meaning out of the narrator's account of an absence; for Diabo's further elaboration on this practice of reading, see their recent essay in the "Bad Feelings" issue of *The Capilano Review*, "Listening for Futurity Against the Grain of Absence."

12. For lack of space to define the terms, I haven't elaborated here on the abandoned psychoanalytic histories of keywords deployed in the literary criticism, including *relation*, *recognition*, and *debt*; to start, see Dina Al-Kassim's discussion of Spivak's feminist reading of the myth of Echo ("Listing Waters" 258–60).

13. For me, this literary figure of misrecognition evokes the gendered mechanisms of colonial dispossession: until 1985, under Canada's Indian Act, women who held Indian status rights were legally dispossessed of that status for marrying non-Indian men, barring them and their descendants in most cases from membership, political participation, and residence in their own nations and opening them up to myriad forms of violence enabled by this fracturing of their community ties. On literary articulations of this disinheritance and its persistence in social life, see "The Legal Silencing of Indigenous Women" in *Indigenous Women's Writing and the Cultural Study of Law* by Cheryl Suzack (Batchewana First Nation), especially Suzack's discussion of the use of derogatory language in Beatrice Culleton Moisionier's *In Search of April Raintree* (58–62).

14. Reading Lai reminds me of an older critical reference: J. Hillis Miller's elaboration of deconstruction as "hyperbolic exuberance, the letting language go as far as it will take one, or the going with a given text as far as it will go, to its limits, which is an essential part of the procedure" (443). Miller's 1977 essay, "The Critic as Host," argues against the notion of deconstructive criticism as "parasitic" or "alien" to the texts we study, describing the practice instead as close attention to a text's own logic. A deconstructive idiom saturates Lai's account of the ethical imagination of *Burning Vision*, including her discussion of Fat Man, who finds that those he has cast out of his house as aliens are also his kin.

15. I first heard Al-Kassim's essay as a keynote at the 2017 Mikinaakominis/TransCanadas conference organized by Lai and Kamboureli. Because of the timeline of my own writing, unfortunately, my essay has not been able to benefit from the rest of the *Land/Relations* volume emerging from that conference, much of which also engages with the issues I discuss here.

16. Maracle situates her feminism in a transnational context in her 1988 book *I Am Woman: A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism*: "We are part of a global movement of women in the world, struggling for emancipation . . . For me, Audre Lorde most properly represents the women's movement in North

America. The women's movement is all about the liberation of humanity from the yoke of domination" (137–38). Al-Kassim's discussion of Maracle's long-standing solidarity with Palestine is another example.

17. Moraga is referring to a conversation with Barbara Smith—contributor to the collection, member of the Black feminist Combahee River Collective, and founder of the Kitchen Table Press—with whom she was staying while attending the meeting she describes here (xlv). Lew's study of feminist meetings in Maracle's writing details more of this historical context (229).

18. Besides representing citation as a device of feminist memory, the bridge is a recurring figure in Maracle's work with other resonances also activated here, above all the cultural, spiritual, and political location inhabited by displaced Indigenous people; see, for example, the images of crossing bridges in her novel *Ravensong* (1993).

19. On the Canadian race politics that produced Telling It, see Kamboureli's discussion of the conference in the chapter on ethnic anthologies in her book *Scandalous Bodies: Diasporic Literature in English Canada*, as well as Brendan McCormack's account of its place among anti-racist collaborative projects in his dissertation *Red Tiles, White Mosaic* (Kamboureli 157–61, McCormack 308–24).

20. Simon Fraser University's archive contains a record of handwritten notes transcribed while the presenters and audience members were speaking, necessarily briefer and less complete than the versions of the talks printed in the edited collection ("Proceedings Notes"). Since the eighth speaker did not consent to have her talk published, it cannot be consulted in full; I engage with her contribution as it comes mediated through the accounts in *Telling It*.

21. In a study of Telling It and archival ethics, Andrea Beverley discusses the stakes of preserving this writer's anonymity and of drawing from materials related to her participation ("The Oral, the Archive, and Ethics" 159–60). Beverley notes that although the editors respected this woman's wish not to have her talk printed, her name and comments have been only partially redacted on some archived copies of the conference transcripts and her identity remains legible within the public record of the event (161, 166n12).

22. The sentiments Lee attributes to the eighth presenter also appear in a line Beverley quotes from the woman's letter to the collective withdrawing her contribution: "I don't feel ethically comfortable to collaborate myself as a writer in such a collection which might be indirectly discriminating against certain groups of women writers" (qtd. in Beverley 159).

23. Thanks to the reader who draws my attention to another figure of the gap: the shape of *O*s appearing on a rainy windowpane in the childhood sequence in "Yin Chin," into which the scene of mistaken identity dissolves. I wish I had more space to expand on this image, which Miki's essay reads incisively (155). The empty letter recalls for me the story's characterization of racial signifiers as both meaningless and overburdened with meaning, which, to my ear, also rhymes with Lai's example of an *O* traced on the ground in David Khang's performance piece *How to Feed a Piano*, which she characterizes as "a bit of Derridean humour . . . a void at the site of the signified" ("Epistemologies of Respect" 113).

24. On the neoliberal appropriation of discourses of inclusivity in Canadian writing, see also Lai's discussion of the racist backlash to the 1994 Writing Thru Race conference in the conclusion to *Slanting I* (211–24).

25. The Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship awards $35,000 annually over three years; other SSHRC graduate awards are similarly unchanged and offer less ("Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Annual Report 2003–2004"). On humanities research and the nationalist objectives of Canadian grant culture, see Kamboureli and Daniel Coleman's introduction and coda to *Retooling the Humanities: The Culture of Research in Canadian Universities*.

26. In articulating this loss, I return to Al-Kassim's reading of Darwish and Wong, where the intertextual fragments the writers assemble represent "a poetic struggle to rematerialize a vanishing world" (254). Running through the notes of this essay is a reading of the field assembled out of textual fragments—footnotes, passing comments, and elisions—by which I have tried to piece together the picture.

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Erin Akerman

Home "[H]eart-sweet" Homeland: Jane Johnston Schoolcraft's Domestic Decolonial Literary Methodology

While nineteenth-century Ojibwe[1] poet and storyteller Jane Johnston Schoolcraft (Bamewawagezhikaquay) did not formally publish her literary works during her lifetime, some of her retellings of traditional stories appear in ethnographic texts by her husband, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, the American Indian agent for Michigan, as well as in travel narratives by British and settler writers like Anna Jameson and Chandler Robbins Gilman.[2] Her writings were copied and collected by Henry and appear in two American archives, the Henry Rowe Schoolcraft Papers in the Library of Congress and the Jane Johnston Schoolcraft Papers in the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library (Parker 221–22). Positioned simultaneously within and against such collections and their creators' broader works, Johnston Schoolcraft's writings engage critically with the prejudices and anxieties informing the ethnographic projects of her Euro-Western contemporaries as well as their misrepresentations of Indigenous realities.[3] Drawing upon her domestic experiences as an Ojibwe woman, Johnston Schoolcraft develops an Indigenous feminist relational lens that reframes the Great Lakes region and prompts reconsideration of the Euro-Western writings by those attempting to colonize her traditional lands.

Since Johnston Schoolcraft is American, I will briefly consider how her domestic geographies span both sides of the colonial border, such that her writings may be read as also speaking to the Canadian context. Sault Ste. Marie—the location of her childhood home—was only technically divided by the colonial boundary between America and Upper Canada in the late eighteenth century (Hele 68). At the

time of her death in 1842, "[b]oundary definitions" at Sault Ste. Marie were, as Anishinaabe scholar Karl S. Hele demonstrates, only just being "finalized," and "American and British authorities remained unable to exert effective control over the entire region's population until after the 1870s" (67). In this divisive context, Johnston Schoolcraft's father "never gave up British citizenship," and she appears to have assisted him as a translator for the British during the War of 1812 (Konkle, "Recovering" 86). Reflecting the international confluences of her domestic geographies, Johnston Schoolcraft's writings contest the *hierarchies of credibility* that inform the projects of their Euro-Western collectors in both British North America and the US, asserting the sovereignty and sociopolitical importance of Ojibwe people in the region. Although Ann Laura Stoler conceptualizes hierarchies of credibility as "scales of trust that measure[] what forms of witness, words and deeds, could be taken as reliably relevant" among competing "truth-claims" in archives (23), these same scales of trust structure the published texts containing Johnston Schoolcraft's literary works. Steeped in stereotypes about Indigenous people, Euro-Western texts in the nineteenth century regularly replaced truth with convenient colonial narratives—such as the common belief in Indigenous disappearance—to legitimize settler colonialism on Indigenous lands. Johnston Schoolcraft's writings contest the Euro-Western prejudicial truth-claims that flow freely between colonies and settler states, mutually influencing attitudes towards and relations with Indigenous people.

Recent literary scholarship on Johnston Schoolcraft brilliantly examines her relationship to these international forces through analysis of the Euro-Western literary styles and interpersonal connections that influence her work (Schneider; Cavalier; Konkle, "Recovering"). Although I also consider Johnston Schoolcraft's writings in relation to these influences, I propose to do so within an Indigenous literary methodology. Specifically, while personal experience is often dismissed as subjective within Euro-Western academic discourses, Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson asserts: "My life as a kwe within Nishnaabewin is *method* because my people have always generated knowledge through the combination of emotion and intellectual knowledge within the kinetics of our place-based practices, as mitigated through our bodies, minds, and spirits" (29–30). She writes,

"I understand the word *kwe* to mean woman within the spectrum of genders in Nishnaabemowin, or the Nishnaabe language" though it also "recognizes a spectrum of gender expressions" (29). Building on Simpson's argument that Anishinaabe women's personal experience can constitute a critical methodology, I suggest that Johnston Schoolcraft applies domestic experiences related to her Ojibwe culture as a decolonial methodology in her writing, focusing on works that speak to her role as a host for European tourists, settler travellers, and government officials. Her childhood and married homes can thereby be seen as staging the "tension[s]" as well as the "bonds and commonalities" that shape the Great Lakes (Foster 272, 278). Adapting Kevin Mumford's concept of interzones to Indigenous contexts, Creek scholar Tol Foster describes these spaces as meeting places "where different constituencies collide and, as a result, renegotiate their communal cultural frames" (272).

Johnston Schoolcraft's domestic decolonial literary methodology corresponds with the work of Indigenous feminist scholars such as Mishuana Goeman (Seneca), who notes that "[f]eminist geographers have broken down the dichotomy of public/private" to demonstrate that "[t]he home, in fact, becomes an interior colonial sphere" ("Notes" 173). Johnston Schoolcraft's work also resonates with that of Kim Anderson (Métis), who explains that "one of the biggest targets of colonialism was the Indigenous family" (83). She "argue[s] that until we seriously address the political, social, and economic inequities faced by Indigenous women, [Indigenous people] will never achieve full healing, decolonization, and healthy nation building" (85). By interweaving the home, Ojibwe knowledges, and Euro-Western literatures, Johnston Schoolcraft engages colonial hierarchies of credibility—as embraced by archives, ethnologists, government officials, and Euro-Western intellectuals—in an Indigenous feminist framework to reorder the world through Indigenous ways of knowing. Rather than position Indigenous and Euro-Western peoples in binary opposition, Johnston Schoolcraft uses her personal domestic experiences to rethink belonging on Indigenous lands through an Ojibwe-focused relational lens that dispels deadening stereotypes, recentres Indigenous people, and insists on Indigenous sovereignty.

Motherhood, Mother Tongue, Motherland

Johnston Schoolcraft's interactions with colonial national forces were often overtly personal, domestic experiences. By virtue of her parents' social positions in their communities and her marriage to Henry, Johnston Schoolcraft's childhood and married homes were political, semi-public spaces (Parker 78n15; Konkle, "Recovering" 86–87). She was the eldest daughter of Ozhaguscodaywayquay, an Ojibwe woman of considerable sociopolitical influence, and John Johnston, an Irish gentleman, fur trader, and, in the words of one settler contemporary, "patriarch of the *Sault*" (McKenney 174). Robert Dale Parker notes that the Johnstons "hosted innumerable travellers," one of whom was Henry himself (78n15). According to Maureen Konkle, "Lewis Cass, governor of Michigan Territory, sent [Henry] Schoolcraft to the Johnston family in 1822, charged with learning the [Ojibwe] language in order ultimately to better manage the people. Jane was [his] principal teacher" ("Recovering" 84). Kelly Wisecup explains:

> What the Johnstons established as a space of hospitality—a space created by and necessary to John's trading networks and Anishinaabe practices of reciprocity—also became through Henry's machinations and tourists' curiosity a site of extraction where settlers sought to take both objects and, sometimes, people as specimens for analysis and display. (109)

Notably, Henry took traditional Ojibwe stories. Although he owed his knowledge of these stories to Johnston Schoolcraft and her family, he regularly left their contributions uncredited and repackaged the stories within a colonial framework (Parker 27). For instance, Konkle explains that in the introduction to *Algic Researches* (1839), Henry "delineates the evidence of the 'Indian mind' found in Ojibwe stories, which demonstrated what everyone already thought about Indians: that they were childlike, incapable of reason, improvident, and unable to form true governments" (*Writing* 167). In confirming settler prejudices, Henry's "transformation of the knowledge provided by his wife's family into evidence of Indian's difference, inferiority, and impending disappearance quite literally supported colonial control" because "Cass used Schoolcraft's work to write articles about the

necessity of removal" that appear to have inspired President Andrew Jackson (167).

Henry in fact viewed his collecting as part of a broader project of American nation-building, writing in the dedication to *The Myth of Hiawatha* (1856) that "the theme of the native lore reveals one of the true sources of our literary independence" from European cultural influence. Henry reduces Indigenous oral traditions to a theme in the work of American settler writers, thereby promoting the American settler state by relegating Indigenous peoples to a past time and depicting Americans as rightfully inheriting both Indigenous lands and cultures.[4] Henry's collecting thus corresponds with the project of American archives as they were originally conceived. "[I]n 1785," as Wisecup explains, "Thomas Jefferson named libraries as places where it would be possible to interact with Indigenous languages and literatures after Indigenous peoples themselves supposedly vanished" (13). Throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century and the nineteenth century, "many of the local, state, and national archives now in existence in the US were founded" (3), and these were sustained through "often-enormous collecting projects" (13). The overarching aim of colonial archives was to establish as fact pre-existing Euro-Western stereotypes about Indigenous people—in particular, that they were vanishing in order that settlers might excuse the theft of Indigenous lands (13–14). In this way, as Stoler notes, archives "are products of state machines" as well "as technologies that reproduced those states themselves" (28). However, as Wisecup explains, some Indigenous writings were circulated into colonial archives as well and these texts undermine the credibility of settler state collections by "produc[ing] critical reflections on and corrections of settlers' assumptions" (12).

In the case of Johnston Schoolcraft, her works were archived because Henry collected them and all of these preserved materials eventually made their way into American national and state archives (Parker 221–22).[5] Despite Henry's assistance, Johnston Schoolcraft's voice generates fractures within the driving dispossessive discourse of his own collections, publications, and archived writings. For instance, among the Jane Johnston Schoolcraft Papers in the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library—a manuscript collection consisting largely of Johnston Schoolcraft's poems, transcribed by Henry and likely compiled by him after his wife's death (Parker 86)—is a poem titled

"To the Pine Tree" that puts Henry's and Johnston Schoolcraft's sociopolitical projects into conversation. Johnston Schoolcraft had been sent to her father's family in Ireland briefly as a child (1809–1810) (15), and on her return journey home with her father, she was overjoyed at the sight of pine trees (50). Much later, her husband requested that she "recal[l] her feelings at the moment" when she first spotted the pines on her route home, and she gave him this poem (Henry qtd. in Parker 90). Although Johnston Schoolcraft's joy at seeing the pine trees occurred at "the Niagara ridge" (Henry qtd. in Parker 90), in this poem she is returning from the home (and homeland) of a settler man to her Ojibwe mother and her childhood home. The poem is undated, but it is interesting to consider when it could have been written because, although Johnston Schoolcraft provided Henry with a translation (Parker 51), she originally gave the poem to him in Ojibwemowin (90). While the couple's marriage started out well, it appears to have become strained over time,[6] and one source of tension may have been Henry's involvement in the expropriation of Indigenous lands; for instance, he produced "an inventory of 'improvements'" as part of the removal of "Ojibwes and Odawas in lower and upper Michigan" when the US broke the Treaty of 1836 (Konkle, "Recovering" 95). As part of this process, Henry appears to have required Johnston Schoolcraft to act as his translator because he "did not have facility in Ojibwemowin" and "his early efforts with the language . . . seem to have ended by the late 1820s" (95, 85). By giving this poem to Henry in a language he had to work hard to read, Johnston Schoolcraft not only recalls her feelings upon seeing the pine trees, but she also recalls her first meetings with Henry when, as his host in her childhood home, she worked to teach him the Ojibwe language. No one knew better than she his limitations with the language, and so, through the poem, she brings herself and Henry back to this domestic space, inverting Euro-Western heteropatriarchal and settler-colonial power dynamics to position herself once again as his teacher. Johnston Schoolcraft thereby recentres herself and her Ojibwe community, implicitly delineating that the land is not his.

Through the Ojibwemowin version of "To the Pine Tree" and its English translation, Johnston Schoolcraft draws upon her domestic experiences, and in particular her mother tongue, to resist settler colonialism. Although Ozhaguscodaywayquay was married to a settler and knew English, she apparently refused to speak anything except

Ojibwemowin (Parker 9). Similarly, although Johnston Schoolcraft spoke and wrote in English, she communicated with her children primarily in Ojibwemowin (Jameson 400). By originally writing this poem in Ojibwemowin, Johnston Schoolcraft extends this key aspect of her own Indigenous domestic experience outwards over the land to "(re)map" the region—meaning that she mobilizes her maternal intellectual and linguistic inheritance to recontextualize, as Goeman writes in her definition of (re)mapping, "our understanding of [the] land and" the "relationships" it sustains, as well as "the [colonial] processes that have defined" it, within Indigenous "epistemologies" (*Mark* 3). Specifically, Johnston Schoolcraft's use of Ojibwemowin reminds her audience that colonial society in what are now Canada and the US is situated on Indigenous lands, and she thereby positions Indigenous knowledges as central to how relationships are structured on these lands. Since her experiences with learning and teaching Ojibwemowin are based on home education, she validates Indigenous motherhood, domestic experience, and women's labour by embracing this sphere and this work as essential to the transmission of Indigenous knowledges and therefore the continuation of Indigenous sovereignty. Similarly, in the English version of this poem, she compares her father's England and Ireland to her "own dear bright mother land" (line 10), not simply giving precedence to her motherland but also implying that in returning to Sault Ste. Marie, she is returning to her mother's land. Through these two versions of the poem, Johnston Schoolcraft connects her mother's language, the language she uses as a mother, and her mother's land to politically resist the settler-colonial invasion of Indigenous lands. Twice invoking her "native land" or "native strand" (lines 4, 8), Johnston Schoolcraft signals her own belonging on this land, not only because the pine "hails [her], with a friend's delight" (line 9), but also because the pine's "heart-sweet scene" resonates with her emotionally and intellectually (lines 11, 17). By contrasting the pine and the Indigenous lands it represents with "all the trees of England bright" and "Erin's lawns of green and light" (lines 13, 14), Johnston Schoolcraft gently and respectively proposes a difference between her beloved father's sense of belonging in his homeland and her sense of belonging in hers. Each verse ends by noting that the pine "is forever green" (line 6) or "ever green" (lines 12, 18), suggesting the continuation of Indigenous sovereignty despite settler colonialism.

Johnston Schoolcraft's prioritization of Indigenous motherhood and family life corresponds with Anderson's explanation that, although motherhood is an "essential element[] of womanhood that ha[s] been problematic for Western feminists" (88), women in traditional Indigenous societies often had agency in and through motherhood, which enabled them "to assert their authority at various political levels" (83–84). With "To the Pine Tree," Johnston Schoolcraft engages in a decolonial reordering of the land by mobilizing her domestic sphere in the form of Ojibwe motherhood and language. Situated in relation to Henry's archival legacy, the poem allows Johnston Schoolcraft to assert her authority as an Ojibwe woman and thereby reframe Henry's ethnographic project, and the project of colonial archives themselves, as not only dispossessive but also untrue. While archives, as a national nineteenth-century project, were determined that Indigenous people should vanish, "To the Pine Tree" proposes the land as another type of archive, a record of ongoing Indigenous presence. After all, as Louise Erdrich (Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa) explains of traditional Ojibwe lands in the Great Lakes region, "You could think of the lakes as libraries" (3). According to Erdrich, in the Ojibwe language, *mazin* "is the root for dozens of words all concerned with made images," including *mazina'iganan* ("books"; 2), *mazinapikiniganan* ("rock *paintings*"; 2), and *mazinibaganjigan* ("dental pictographs made on birchbark"; 3). "To the Pine Tree," therefore, participates in a long tradition of marking Indigenous presence, of reading Indigenous lives on the land as opposed to writing them off of it.

Stitching Ojibwe Aesthetics

As in "To the Pine Tree," Johnston Schoolcraft's poem "On the Doric Rock, Lake Superior" draws upon her Ojibwe domestic experience to (re)map the Great Lakes interzone in ways that confront the Euro-Western assumptions of her guests while at the same time extending her domestic decolonial literary methodology by demonstrating that she not only hosts people within her home but also on her traditional lands. "On the Doric Rock, Lake Superior" responds to her role as a host providing company and care for American federal representatives on an 1831 "expedition" that Henry "led . . . to negotiate a treaty,

vaccinate Indians against smallpox, and conduct scientific exploration" (Parker 95). In particular, the poem answers a letter written to her by one of the men on the expedition, an American printer named Melancthon Woolsey (Parker 95–97). His letter's "minute examination of the celebrated Doric Rock" reads like an act of discovery and thereby limits Indigenous and settler interactions to a historical past, a relationship of contact and disappearance, underscored by his comparison of Doric Rock to an "urn of nature's own design" for Indigenous people, whose graves are now "mingling with the common dust" (Woolsey qtd. in Parker 96). Woolsey's representation had the potential for far-reaching impacts because Henry published the letter alongside one of his own poems "in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, a leading journal edited by none other than Edgar Allan Poe" (97).

Johnston Schoolcraft reframes Woolsey's elegiac representation of Indigenous people by engaging Doric Rock as an extension of her home, developing what "Naomi Greyser calls an 'affective geography,' a political and emotional common ground where Americans and Anishinaabe people might meet" (Wisecup 121).[7] As Parker notes, Johnston Schoolcraft and her "children accompanied the expedition on the beginning of the voyage as far as Lake Superior" (95). At the time the letter was written, they had, as Schneider puts it:

> turned back recently enough that Henry and Woolsey wrote to her with the taste of her cooking still in their mouths. "We took our dinner in the little cove near the Doric Rock, partaking of one of your pies, for a desert [*sic*]," Henry reported in his letter, while Woolsey . . . explained that the group had "regaled [them]selves on some of the dainties furnished by [their] excellent friends at the Sault." (126–27)

The nourishment that Johnston Schoolcraft provides the expeditioners complicates their engagement with Doric Rock, which becomes both a site on Indigenous lands and an extension of Johnston Schoolcraft's home, in that it is a place where she continues to exercise her role as host. This transformation reframes Doric Rock as an intimate space and draws out the tensions of her interzone by placing Woolsey's letter, and the Euro-Western prejudices from which it originates, in conversation with her domestic experiences.

Schneider contends that Johnston Schoolcraft opposes Woolsey with a citational methodology that incorporates the Declaration of Independence, Percy Shelley's "Ozymandias," and even the Sistine Chapel to "clear away" Woolsey's claims about Indigenous people (135). For instance, Schneider argues that Johnston Schoolcraft "counters" Woolsey's claim that Indigenous people "act from the impulse of nature" (qtd. in Parker 96) with a reference to "nature's God," which alludes to the Declaration of Independence and "reminds readers that among those who 'act from the impulse of nature' are America's founding fathers, and what nature impelled them to do was declare their freedom and independence from a colonizing power" (134). Citation, as Schneider frames it in her compelling argument, resembles a Euro-Western academic methodology that deconstructs the poem into its component parts (112–13). I propose that "On the Doric Rock, Lake Superior" could be read alternatively as taking its form from practices of "assemblage" in Johnston Schoolcraft's childhood home that reflect her domestic experiences of Ojibwe culture and relationality (Wisecup 11). This argument builds on the work of Wisecup, who studies how Johnston Schoolcraft and her siblings Charlotte and George made numerous albums wherein "they experimented with translating words and stories in English and Anishinaabemowin and with bringing poems, plants, and languages into relation on the pages of their books" to "create[] new relations among them" (105, 135). Wisecup positions their album-making as an extension of their Ojibwe culture because of their location on Ojibwe traditional lands (101), their use of Ojibwemowin (100, 105), and their application of Ojibwe cultural skills, such as their sewing of beadwork projects and makaks ("baskets or boxes" made of birchbark; 107, 99).

As with her and her siblings' albums, when Johnston Schoolcraft assembles references to and excerpts from Euro-Western writings in her poems, she creates new relations between them on the page and thereby reflects upon the relationships in her interzone. For instance, when incorporating Woolsey's letter into her poem, Johnston Schoolcraft re-visions settler tropes of exploration. She writes that settlers and Europeans who remain "at home, in indolence and ease" have a significant "debt" to the explorers who travel "in quest of every art / That science, knowledge, pity can impart / To help mankind" (lines 1, 2, 3–5). Notably, in Johnston Schoolcraft's poem, settlers are in search of knowledge rather than bearing it. Unlike "the untaught

natives" who "act from the impulse of nature" in Woolsey's letter (qtd. in Parker 96), Johnston Schoolcraft insists that Indigenous peoples have important arts, sciences, and social knowledges. Her term "bold discoverers" for explorers has an ironic edge (line 6) because what these travellers are discovering is not knowledge divorced from Indigenous communities, sitting idly in the wilderness and waiting patiently to be found. Rather, discovery is here refigured as intercultural exchange, knowledge-sharing that helps all humankind, including Indigenous peoples. Johnston Schoolcraft's discoverers are mediators because they are discovering how to "renegotiate their communal cultural frames" (Foster 272). The appropriative process of settler treaty negotiations and scientific explorations—as in Henry and Woolsey's expedition—is weighed and found wanting.

"On the Doric Rock, Lake Superior" frames these new relations through an Ojibwe relational lens grounded in Johnston Schoolcraft's family's domestic experiences, especially their communal reading practice. Henry writes that John Johnston would "gather[] his family around the table, and while his daughters were employed at their needlework, he either read himself, or listened to one of his sons" (qtd. in Wisecup 106). Wisecup contends that despite this "gendered . . . act of reading," "Johnston [Schoolcraft] and her sisters expand reading to include listening" and "perform[] their own acts of designing texts, with needles rather than pens. Occupied with sewing *and* with sentences, the sisters drew reading into relation with other ways of making and using texts" (106). Their compiling technique for their albums was, therefore, "informed" by "John Johnston's library" as well as "Anishinaabe women's practices of stitching" (107). Wisecup situates these acts of stitching in the context of Ojibwe relationality when she writes of Johnston Schoolcraft's family's sugar camp, "Sewing was a practical and a social act on Sugar Island, where it may have renewed relationships among Anishinaabe women who were catching up after their families returned to summer planting and hunting lands" (107). The makaks they sewed to contain maple sugar broadened this relational understanding because they were "shared . . . with family members and guests" (107).

In "On the Doric Rock, Lake Superior," acts of literary stitching undermine colonial hierarchies of credibility through Ojibwe-centred forms of relationality without placing Indigenous and Euro-Western worldviews in binary opposition. For instance, Johnston Schoolcraft

responds to Woolsey's artistic references in part through the resonances between her poem and English poet John Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (1820). Although Schneider notes that Keats' ode "was not popular enough in 1831 for us to assume Woolsey's familiarity with it" (142n23), she nevertheless reads Woolsey's letter in relation to Keats because his "description of [Doric Rock's] 'Attic shape' has affinities with Keats's now hyper-canonical" ode (127). I contend that "On the Doric Rock, Lake Superior" bears a similar affinity with Keats' poem. Johnston Schoolcraft writes that Doric Rock seems like a place "[w]here ancient victims by their priests were slain" (line 16), reframing Woolsey's comparison of Doric Rock to an urn by alluding to Keats, who writes, "Who are these coming to the sacrifice? / To what green altar, oh mysterious priest, / Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies?" (lines 31–33).

And yet, Johnston Schoolcraft does not refer to Keats uncritically, but rather uses what Simpson calls the "Nishnaabeg aesthetic[]" of abstraction to "shift[] the relationality to change meaning or to illuminate a different meaning" (201, 202). Keats' urn stills life, illustrating a series of actions frozen in time: the "Bold Lover" that "never, never canst . . . kiss" (line 17), the pipes that play "ditties of no tone" (line 14), and the trees "that cannot shed / [Their] leaves, nor ever bid the spring adieu" (lines 21–22). While Keats remarks on the beauty of the urn, and perhaps even considers longingly its immortality—and that of its subjects, poised as they are forever in moments of anticipation—he nevertheless calls the urn a "Cold Pastoral," a lifeless depiction of life (line 45). Instead of using the urn to still Indigenous life, Johnston Schoolcraft appears to take up Keats' invitation when he writes of the urn that it "shalt remain, in midst of other woe / Than ours" (lines 47–48). Drawing out resonances between the urn and Doric Rock, Johnston Schoolcraft hints at the woe caused by settler colonialism while refusing to acquiesce to Indigenous disappearance. She points out that, unlike Keats' urn, Doric Rock's "fair design" has no other "architect" than nature (lines 17, 18): "'Twas nature's wildest flower, that graved the Rock, / The waves' loud fury, and the tempest's shock" (lines 19–20). Indigenous peoples and their lands cannot be stilled because Doric Rock is a natural artwork that "is *still* in progress," never to be completed (Schneider 131). Rather than stilling life, Doric Rock becomes a symbol of Indigenous resilience against the stilling influence of settler colonialism and the "Cold Pastoral" of

settler accounts like Woolsey's. Through acts of literary stitching, Johnston Schoolcraft critically reorders her interzone, positioning Keats as a helpful interlocutor for disrupting Woolsey's credibility in promoting Indigenous disappearance and drawing their literary conversation into relation with her domestic sphere to advocate for her own experiential authority as an Indigenous woman.

Unruly Indigenous Women and Domestic Felicity

More than a poetic methodology, Johnston Schoolcraft worked to shift the hierarchies of credibility in the Great Lakes region by educating Euro-Western people about the lives of Ojibwe women. Perhaps most famously in this regard, British writer Anna Jameson relies heavily upon Johnston Schoolcraft's experiential authority in her travel narrative *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada* (1838) in order to offer an ostensibly accurate representation of Indigenous women's domestic spheres. As I will demonstrate, however, Johnston Schoolcraft's own defence of Ojibwe women in a letter to a friend belies Jameson's liberalism by throwing into stark relief her continued reliance upon the dehumanizing Euro-Western stereotype of the so-called Indigenous drudge. In refuting this stereotype, Johnston Schoolcraft applies the governing decolonial epistemologies evident in "To the Pine Tree" and "On the Doric Rock, Lake Superior" to consider the meanings of home and family beyond the limits of Euro-Western understandings.

Johnston Schoolcraft was Jameson's host on Mackinac Island and travelled with her to Sault Ste. Marie to introduce Jameson to Ozhaguscodaywayquay and her relatives. Based on these experiences, Jameson re-evaluates Euro-Western perceptions "of the true position of . . . women" in Indigenous societies and the stereotypes that inform these perceptions (28, 513). Konkle notes that Johnston Schoolcraft and her sister Charlotte "appear to have been eager to help" Jameson with her project because she ostensibly "presented an opportunity to tell the truth about Indigenous women's lives to an English-speaking readership" ("Recovering" 92). In particular, Jameson famously examines the ubiquitous Euro-Western claim that Indigenous women are "drudges, slaves" in their societies (513). As Denise K. Lajimodiere (Turtle Mountain Band of Pembina Chippewa) explains, "Early Euro-centric accounts portrayed American Indian women as being forced

to do all the work and being treated very much worse than an animal" (105). This nearly "universal belief" dehumanized Indigenous women based on the "cultural biases" of colonizers "and, perhaps, reflected a desire to manipulate reality to accommodate expectations that American Indian women were to be held in low regard in their tribal societies because women were subservient to men in European societies" (105). Despite the Johnston sisters' hospitality and assistance, Jameson affirmed this prejudice in her travel narrative's ultimate comparison of the social positions of Indigenous and Euro-Western women. Following her stay on Manitoulin Island, Jameson authoritatively states, "Under one aspect of the question, all these gentlemen travellers are right: they are right in their estimate of" Indigenous women as "drudges, slaves" (513).[8]

In reiterating the drudge stereotype, Jameson modestly redefines it, formulating a feminist argument for her own society that questions the Euro-Western dichotomy between the so-called Indigenous drudge and white lady in order to advocate for the rights of British women. For instance, noting that earlier male writers abhor "that not only the cares of the household and maternity, but the cares and labours proper to the men [such as 'carrying burthens' (515)], fall upon" Indigenous women (513), Jameson defends such divisions of labour as "natural and true . . . relatively to the state of society, and the means of subsistence" (515). Although she argues that such dominant Euro-Western perceptions of Indigenous women's labour reflect the writers' own cultural biases, she buries her dissension within a reassertion of stadial theory and its emphasis on "the means of subsistence" and benefits of agricultural development (515). Stadial theory is the belief that "human societ[ies]" progressed in "developmental stages . . . dispensing the benefits of this passage from one stage to the next on the woman progressively removed from a condition of drudgery" (Henderson 90). In making claims about the drudgery of Indigenous women, Euro-Western writers fabricated a narrative about Indigenous domestic space that excused and even enabled colonialism by articulating the beneficence of colonial intervention and supposed progress. Rather than objecting to these terms, Jameson is upset that these writers invoke the drudge stereotype in "a self-congratulatory aggrandizement of white society that ignored women's marginalization and oppression under the constraints of European patriarchy" (Hutchings 60). She offers a

powerful critique of Euro-Western women's labour, contending, "If [some] women are to be exempted from toil" because of their class "while the great primeval penalty is doubled on the rest, then I do not see where is the great gallantry" in British society (516). By refocusing her audience's attention on the "*drudgery*" of the European "servant-maid of all work" and "factory girl" (516), Jameson agrees with earlier writers "that the condition of the women in any community is a test of the advance of moral and intellectual cultivation in that community" (513), but avers that Euro-Western men should not think themselves quite as superior as they do.

Jameson offers an important feminist critique of British society, but she does so by perpetuating dominant racist attitudes towards Indigenous women. This is the standard bargain of nineteenth-century liberalism. Jennifer Henderson notes that "Jameson's ruminations on questions of female character, moral reform, and the progress of 'civilization' belong to [this] liberal discourse" (6). According to Henderson, Upper Canada was "an experimental counter-site through which the gaze of the British reformer was temporarily deflected" (7). While Jameson engages Upper Canada as a feminist counter-site, Henderson explains that the argument for women's right to self-government ultimately supported an entrenched social conservatism (8, 13): "By 1837, earlier arguments for women's right to participate fully in political life in Britain and Europe had been largely recast" to hinge upon demonstrations of these women's ability to moderate the behaviour "of the unruly classes," including Indigenous people (9). Such interference was not limited to personal behaviour, but also encompassed family dynamics. As Mark Rifkin notes of this liberal framework, "Other forms of home and family are measured against the standard of bourgeois homemaking" (11). In order to "preserv[e] state structures and mappings" "nonliberal models of sociality," such as kinship, are considered "failed" forms of family (12). Rifkin asserts that American "imperialism against native people over the past two centuries can be understood as an effort . . . to insert [I]ndigenous peoples into Anglo-American conceptions of family, home, desire, and personal identity" (8).

While Jameson's adherence to a liberal philosophy in describing Indigenous families is unsurprising, what is remarkable is that her famous comparison appears to draw upon the uncredited intellectual contributions of Johnston Schoolcraft, though it significantly distorts

them by reframing them with the drudge stereotype. In her travel narrative *Summer on the Lakes* (1844), American writer Margaret Fuller printed a letter that Johnston Schoolcraft wrote to William Hull Clarke (Konkle, "Recovering" 91). A number of Johnston Schoolcraft's ideas in this letter are similar in terms of content, word choice, and even order to the ideas expressed by Jameson in her evaluation of Indigenous women's social position (see fig. 1).[9]

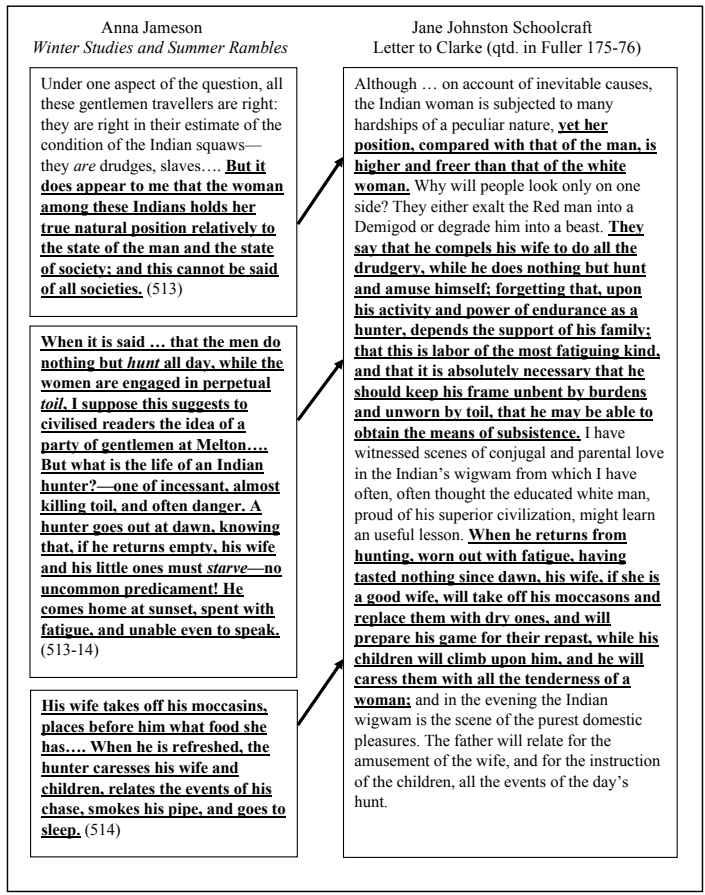

Figure 1: Comparison of Jameson's *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles* and Johnston Schoolcraft's letter to Clarke, compiled by author

Although *Summer on the Lakes* was published in 1844, Konkle dates Johnston Schoolcraft's letter to Clarke as being from circa 1835, so up

to three years before Jameson published her travel narrative (91). While it is not impossible that Jameson saw this letter, it seems unlikely. What is known for certain is that Jameson spoke at length about this issue with Johnston Schoolcraft, and Johnston Schoolcraft's letter to Clarke uncannily resembles Jameson's evaluation of Indigenous women's social position. The aspects of Jameson's highly praised argument that have been perceived as challenging to colonial heteropatriarchy may, then, owe a previously unrecognized and heavy intellectual debt to Johnston Schoolcraft. While both writers appear to generalize the social roles of Indigenous women across national and cultural distinctions, Johnston Schoolcraft's argument is reflective of her knowledge of women's roles in her Ojibwe community and perhaps of her knowledge of her mother's childhood home and her own experiences in the home of her uncle Waishkey.

Although these texts address Indigenous women in general terms, I do not wish this article to generalize Indigenous "women's traditional roles," which "vary widely" across Indigenous cultures (Huhndorf and Suzack 5). Choctaw scholar Devon A. Mihesuah notes the problem of attributing an exclusively "authoritative voice" to any individual knowledge-holder since "there isn't a single [such voice] among Native women, and no one feminist theory totalizes Native women's thought. Rather, there is a spectrum of multiheritage women . . . who possess a multitude of opinions on what it means to be a Native female" (1249). Despite this variance, as Shari Huhndorf (Yup'ik) and Cheryl Suzack (Anishinaabe) explain, Indigenous women have been united by their experiences of colonization (3), which "has reordered gender relations to subordinate women, regardless of their pre-contact status" in their distinct nations and cultures (5). In particular, "colonization has involved [Indigenous women's] removal from positions of power, the replacement of traditional gender roles with Western patriarchal practices, the exertion of colonial control over Indigenous communities through the management of women's bodies, and sexual violence" (1). Due to these shared experiences, Johnston Schoolcraft's letter may be read as grounded in her own subject position and community but offering a broad defence of Indigenous women and their familial and social organizations in response to Euro-Western stereotypes of Indigenous people that she viewed as contributing structurally to the colonization of Indigenous lands and communities.

A close-reading comparing Jameson's and Johnston Schoolcraft's texts demonstrates not only their similarities, but also the significant differences in their arguments, so that while Johnston Schoolcraft informed Jameson's opinion, her letter to Clarke undermines Jameson's reassertion of the drudge stereotype and the colonial hierarchies of credibility upon which it is scaffolded. For example, Jameson's comment that Indigenous women's social position is "relative[] to the state of the man and the state of society; and this cannot be said of all societies" (513) resonates with Johnston Schoolcraft's argument that the "position" of Indigenous women "compared with that of the man, is higher and freer than that of the white woman" (qtd. in Fuller 175). Both writers advocate for re-evaluating the racist impressions of earlier Euro-Western commentators by considering Indigenous and Euro-Western women contextually with regard to their nations' men and social organization, contending that Euro-Western women face graver inequalities. Yet Jameson frames this comparison within her own re-assertion of stadial theory by calling Indigenous women "drudges, slaves" (513), so that, as Wendy Roy notes, "while Jameson uses discussion of [I]ndigenous North American women to critique" gender relations in "her own society, she does not suggest that their culture is better than hers" (64).

Johnston Schoolcraft, however, humorously mocks "the educated white man" for flaunting his so-called "superior civilization" (qtd. in Fuller 176). This distinction between the texts results in Jameson propagating a colonial narrative of stadial progress that Johnston Schoolcraft refuses. Like the Euro-Western writers she critiques, Jameson argues that Indigenous women are "dependent" and less respected than Indigenous men in their domestic lives: "Where, then, the whole duty and labour of providing the means of subsistence, ennobled by danger and courage, fall upon the man, the woman naturally sinks in importance, and is a dependent drudge" (514). Beyond the inaccuracy that Indigenous men are solely responsible for the subsistence of their families, this description elides the labour and sociopolitical importance of Indigenous women in their communities. As Anderson points out, prior to colonization, "traditional [Indigenous] societies" were "sustained by strong kin relations in which women had significant authority" (83). These societies were often matriarchal, matrilineal, or "gynocratic, with the woman at the center" (Lajimodiere 105). Not only were women in matrilineal

communities "considered the head of the household because they were primarily responsible for the work involved in child rearing and in managing the home and home community" (Anderson 83), but "[i]n a number of Indigenous societies, it was older women who made decisions that set the direction for all of the people, which they did as clan mothers, through women's councils, and as head women of their own extended families" (84).

While Jameson's comparison offers a feminist critique of her own society, it applies a patriarchal lens to Indigenous women. Conversely, Johnston Schoolcraft invokes traditional gender complementarity in her letter (Konkle, "Recovering" 92). As Lajimodiere explains, in "[m]ost tribes" before colonization, "American Indian women . . . ha[d] religious, political, and economic power—not more than the men, but at least equal to them" (106). "Women's and men's roles may have been different, but neither was less important than the other" so that even though "men and women performed tasks specific to gender . . . no one task was inferior" (106). In some respects, Jameson's account may seem to correspond with Johnston Schoolcraft's. Jameson mocks Euro-Western commentators who claim that Indigenous "men do nothing but *hunt* all day" (513), noting that "this suggests to civilised readers the idea of a party of gentlemen at Melton" (513), when, in reality, their labour involves "killing toil" to ensure their families do not "*starve*" (514). Johnston Schoolcraft similarly wonders why people say Indigenous men do "nothing but hunt and amuse" themselves when their "labor [is] of the most fatiguing kind" and necessary for "the support of [the] family" (qtd. in Fuller 175). Both Jameson and Johnston Schoolcraft describe Indigenous wives removing their husbands' moccasins and preparing an evening meal (Jameson 514; Johnston Schoolcraft qtd. in Fuller 176). However, Jameson represents Indigenous women as engaged in inferior forms of labour and subservient to their husbands within a domestic space centred around Indigenous men: "When he is refreshed, the hunter caresses his wife and children, relates the events of his chase, smokes his pipe, and goes to sleep" (514).

By contrast, Johnston Schoolcraft does not belittle Indigenous women or their labour, proclaiming, "I have witnessed scenes of conjugal and parental love in the Indian's wigwam from which I have often, often thought the educated white man . . . might learn an useful lesson" (qtd. in Fuller 175–76). Subverting settler-colonial

heteropatriarchy and gender norms, Johnston Schoolcraft illustrates a balance in which the Indigenous mother's labour is also necessary for the family's subsistence and the Indigenous father engages in childcare and education within the home: "he will caress [his children] with all the tenderness of a woman" and describe his day "for the amusement of [his] wife, and for the instruction of [his] children" (qtd. in Fuller 176). Konkle calls this balance "a complementarity between men and women, without the hierarchy and subordination of Anglo-American patriarchy" ("Recovering" 92). While Jameson challenges the patriarchal logics of her own society, she imposes them upon Indigenous women so that her comparison may qualify earlier Euro-Western accounts but continues to propagate normative colonial hierarchies of credibility that harm Indigenous women and their families. When Johnston Schoolcraft represents Indigenous women as having greater equality in their domestic lives, she scorns the logic of stadial theory, implicitly suggesting that Indigenous women's better social position should mean that settlers stop trying to, as they claimed, "civilize" Indigenous people by colonizing the land.

In writings that speak to her role as a host for Euro-Western travellers and settlers, Johnston Schoolcraft undermines colonial hierarchies of credibility through a decolonial literary methodology that mobilizes as a critical framework her Ojibwe domestic experiences in the form of motherhood, language, education, cultural skills, and social understandings. She rejects claims of Indigenous disappearance and Indigenous women's drudgery, revealing in the process the prejudices and anxieties shaping settler efforts to colonize Indigenous people and their lands. Her writings suggest that Indigenous women's domestic spheres may be read as decolonizing spaces because the cultural knowledges and relationships they nurture have the power to decolonize the land and the relationships it sustains. This feminist framework reaches out from Johnston Schoolcraft's home, transgressing colonial borders with Indigenous sovereignty and transforming the Great Lakes interzone into "a heart-sweet scene," an affective geography that rewrites the relational dynamics between Indigenous people and settlers.

Notes

1. Following Robert Dale Parker, I use the term *Ojibwe*, "rather than Anishinaabe," because the former "is [Johnston] Schoolcraft's term" (xii).
2. I am indebted to Parker for locating these versions of her stories (see Parker 163–93).
3. Kelly Wisecup likewise contends that, while "Henry's archives have shaped interpretations of Johnston Schoolcraft's texts," his "writings are shaped by their proximity to [her] poems" (135).
4. Konkle adds that the retold "American versions of" these collected stories transformed them into "narrative[s] of . . . inevitable disappearance" so that "Indian stories had the same fate as Indian land" ("Recovering" 91).
5. Parker notes a lack of clarity regarding the origin and organization of Johnston Schoolcraft's writings within these archives, speculating, for instance, that "the manuscript book" of the Jane Johnston Schoolcraft Papers was possibly "sold at [the] auction [after Mary Howard Schoolcraft's death] and then somehow found its way to Illinois" (222–24).
6. For instance, Konkle notes that although Henry told Johnston Schoolcraft that there was no "money for [their] children to travel" home for a school holiday, he took "a tour of the European capitals" ("Recovering" 97). He therefore seems to have been "trying to keep the children from their mother" (97).
7. Greyser calls affective geographies places that are "both territorial and emotional" and "name a sense of intimacy across distance" (1, 2). She considers how the sentimentalism of diverse writers, including Indigenous people, "mapped affective geographies by describing interior emotions in externalizing, spatial terms" as well as "geophysical space in intimate, emotional terms" (2). Wisecup focuses Greyser's concept on the relational space between Indigenous people and settlers.
8. On Mackinac Island, Jameson admits, "I should doubt, from all I see and hear, that the Indian squaw is that absolute slave, drudge, and non-entity in the community, which she has been described" (397). However, on Manitoulin Island, she offers a more thorough assessment of her observations and instantly agrees that Indigenous women "*are* drudges, slaves" (513; see 512–20). My analysis focuses on this latter section because Jameson offers it as her ultimate judgment on the subject.
9. I learned about Johnston Schoolcraft's letter in Konkle's article "Recovering Jane Schoolcraft's Cultural Activism in the Nineteenth Century" (91–92).

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L. Camille van der Marel

Theory in Practice, or, CanLit Is So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is about You [1]

> I came to theory because I was hurting—the pain within me was so intense that I could not go on living. I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend—to grasp what was happening around and within me. Most importantly, I wanted to make the hurt go away. I saw in theory then a location for healing.
>
> — *bell hooks, "Theory as Liberatory Practice"*

Unangax̂ scholar Eve Tuck observes that most, maybe all, research is guided by underlying assumptions about how it will help or improve or heal *something* in the world; these assumptions constitute, in Tuck's words, a "theory of change" (413). For all their meaningful differences, anticolonial, queer, and feminist approaches to cultural scholarship are predicated on a shared theory of change: careful analysis *can* be analeptic. bell hooks' characterization of theorizing as "a place where I could imagine possible futures, a place where life could be lived differently" pinpoints this reparative drive (2). Studying Black womanhood helped hooks heal from her experiences of Black womanhood. Here, theory, "'lived' experience of critical thinking, of reflection and analysis" (2), proved consol(idat)ing: "I worked at explaining the hurt and making it go away" (2). The academic field of literary studies is, I suspect, underwritten by similarly healing experiences, ones facilitated by narratives, texts, poetry. Reading helped readers, so they pursue it. This foundational, reparative theory of change may also be why the scandals and institutional failures known as the "CanLit dumpster fire," "CanLit firestorm," or "CanLit in ruins" remain derailing for the field's Black, queer, and feminist scholars.[2]

I defended my PhD in 2018. Graduating during CanLit's latest dumpster fire was not celebratory: every report of inequity and abuse—including but not limited to the "Galloway Affair" and UBC Accountable debacles, *Write* magazine's call for a national "Appropriation Prize," revelations about redactions from Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*, and the racial profiling of Shelby McPhee at the 2019 Congress for the Social Sciences and Humanities—substantiated my doubts about the field, postsecondary education, and what it means for a cis white settler like me to "profess" literatures in Canada.[3] This lasting unease is not a symptom of imposter syndrome. It arises from an informed, deeply felt awareness that my body, experiences, and ways of knowing may be inimical to the ends—reparative justice, the abrogation of settler logics—I desire.

Teoria, the nearly-forty-year-old, PhD-candidate narrator of Dionne Brand's *Theory* (2018), is similarly troubled by their inability to translate their research's liberatory theories into lived practice. On beginning their doctoral studies, Teoria sees theorizing itself as a wilful act of anti-capitalist praxis, one that refuses their family's "consumerist ambitions" (100): "Sociology, Political Science, anything in the humanities," their father complains, "these [are] nowhere degrees" (82). Teoria's thesis, a study of "the social and familial systems that [drive] people toward self-betrayal and blind conformity" (83), appears even more essential after their brother Wendell abandons his dissertation on Machado de Assis to pursue an MBA.

While scholarship offers Teoria a means to dismantle their father's "pecuniary ambitions" and mother's "false consciousness" about gender (99, 192), Brand's narrator is not naive about university's liberatory potential. They arraign their supervisory committee—those "antiquated senators of the dying regime" (150)—and universities alike for "perpetuating class and class privilege" (151). Fully aware that pursuing a PhD in "a place for training the ruling classes so they could continue ruling" risks perpetuating academia's capitalist machinations (151), Teoria can justify their studies only insofar as they explode institutional norms: "My aim . . . was to write the bomb of a thesis that would blow up the buildings" (150–51).

Teoria's scholarship is fuelled by revolutionary desires. Teoria's lovers, however, deride their research as neither especially radical nor effective. Yara, an artist and activist, "was forever wanting me to do something about the world. I thought that I was doing something

about the world by writing my dissertation. Language and thought—the world—would change . . . the whole field of gender would be revolutionized. But Yara couldn't see this, or didn't agree" (88). Echoing Teoria's rebuke of their professors, Yara dismisses their studies as careerism disguised as radicalism: "I want to be out on the streets and you want to be thinking," she argues before they break up: "You want financial security" (89).[4]

Like Teoria, many in CanLit's smouldering present find their liberatory desires at odds with the institutions we work within, the institutions our work upholds. "Knowing better" was supposed to explode CanLit's heteropatriarchal and settler-colonial norms (Brand 163). If continuing to analyze, teach, and read CanLit means perpetuating its foundational violence, then the reparative desires that drew many of us (me) to literary studies are naive and misplaced. So, as Teoria asks on again realizing their complicity with the ideologies their thesis critiques, "What happens when we reproduce the backward ideas we abhor? When they spill from us like so much bilgy sediment?" (163). In *Theory*, Brand narrativizes a Black, queer feminist's attempts to wring revolutionary transformation from their scholarship. The novel confirms hooks' warning that "[t]heory is not inherently healing, liberatory, or revolutionary," especially not as institutionalized in Western academia; rather, "[i]t fulfills this function only when we ask that it do so and direct our theorizing towards this end" (2). If not healing, liberation, or repair, then what ends do responses to the CanLit dumpster fire theorize towards? What, returning to Tuck, is this field's guiding theory of change?

The arguments that follow begin as a paranoid reading of CanLit's paranoid readings, a study of hermeneutic suspicion's transformative limits innervated by Brand's *Theory*. In CanLit and Brand's metafiction alike, the hermeneutics of suspicion appear a potent means to force change by exposing complicity. That said, suspicious critique's gears slip in ways that minimize Black scholars' demystifications of higher education and lessen their research's traction. Paranoid reading is not a neutral approach to cultural analysis, but one which performs different work for those who are interpellated within the institutions they critique than those who are not.[5]

The hermeneutics of suspicion have and will continue to foster invaluable critiques of CanLit; when totalizing, though, their approach preserves heteronormative, misogynistic, and antiBlack logics within

the field's favoured critical methods. CanLit scholars and students need—and have—hermeneutic alternatives. This article relies on Tuck's "desire-based research" (416), Max Liboiron's infrastructural theories of change, Julietta Singh's "vulnerable readings" (22), and A. C. Facundo's "queer reparative" (7). Though not in explicit dialogue with one another, these other-than-post-critical theories value "narratives of intimacy, vulnerability, and longing" as reparative and thus transformative ways of knowing (Facundo 7).[6]

Notes From a Suspicious, Ashy Field

> a system built on theft, insecurity, manufactured scarcity, competition, malignant individualism is ontologically incompatible with collective knowledges that centre love, reciprocity, humility, care, change
>
> — *Zoe Todd [@ZoeSTodd], post on* X *[*Twitter*]*

It is, to paraphrase Erin Wunker, a complicated moment to be a hopeful anticolonial or queer or feminist scholar in CanLit (34). It is also a necessary moment to appraise the field's theories of change wherever we sight them. Such work is not synonymous with saving CanLit as an academic field, a cultural industry, or a proxy for the nation. Rather, approaches that enable anticolonial, queer, and feminist scholars to heal (from) CanLit's damage will realize other futures for writing in Canada. Threaded through the articles, monographs, conference papers, podcasts, tweets, and private conversations about the most recent "public fracture in CanLit's persona" is a common if latent theory of change (Sookfong Lee, "Open Letters"), though not one necessarily directed towards healing or repair. In her discourse-defining "CanLit Is a Raging Dumpster Fire," Alicia Elliott (Tuscarora) argues that Canadian publishing's barely checked racism and misogyny debunk notions of it or the larger nation as "[p]olite. Liberal. Progressive. Welcoming." *Refuse: CanLit in Ruins* (2018) similarly reads CanLit's neoteric self-styling and recidivist realities as symptoms of Canada's foundational violence: "In CanLit, there is no 'before' the trouble. CanLit as an industry and cultural formation is bound up with the history of Canada as a settler-colonial nation-state" (McGregor, Rak, and Wunker 12).[7] Neither Elliott nor many of the contributors to *Refuse*

are hopeful CanLit will change, but they suggest CanLit will only change *if* its internal contradictions are exposed, *if* scholars and public intellectuals lay bare the nation's false consciousness about itself, *if* (settler) Canadians learn to distrust national veneers.

The theory of change I trace here yokes cultural criticism's transformative power to "the hermeneutics of suspicion," Paul Ricoeur's term for the system-exposing, symptom-interpreting, norm-interrogating analyses of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud (356). Theories of change are disciplinary, informing "what we see as the start or end of a project, who is our audience, who is our 'us,' how we think things are known, and how others can or need to be convinced" (Tuck 413). A faulty theory of change, in turn, primes scholars to "damagingly misrecognize whether and where real conceptual work is getting done, and precisely what that work might be" (Sedgwick 136), a guiding concern in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is about You." Addressing hermeneutic suspicion's prepotency in mid-nineties queer studies, Sedgwick observes: "In a world where no one need be delusional to find evidence of systemic oppression, to theorize out of anything *but* a paranoid critical stance has come to seem naive, pious, or complaisant" (125–26). Intently aware that enmity lies below cultural surfaces, paranoid readers both hope and doubt their knowledge will pre-empt its next manifestation (130–31).

Like mid-nineties queer cultural studies, dumpster fire-era critiques of CanLit largely adhere to a suspicious theory of change: in both fields, the critical methods Sedgwick dubbed "paranoid reading" appear not only "less a diagnosis than a prescription" for upending inequitable orthodoxies and pre-empting their violence but *de rigueur* to the point of invisibility (125). Consequently, introductory English classes, as Rita Felski famously asserts, induct students into this one hermeneutic:

> the animating spirit of our inquiry is the conviction that appearances deceive and that texts do not willingly surrender their secrets. Instead of being emblazoned in the words on the page, meaning lies beneath or to the side of these words, encrypted in what the literary work cannot or will not say, in its eloquent stuttering and recalcitrant silences. ("After Suspicion" 28)

Felski's description applies to many CanLit classes I have taken and taught: even when abeyant, the hermeneutics of suspicion can help (certain) students see how CanLit's silences preserve colonial power, how its stuttering discourses of inclusion flag multiculturalism's limits. Perceiving gaps between CanLit's image and reality, understanding these gaps' history—that "CanLit is in trouble, and it is the trouble" (McGregor, Rak, and Wunker 13)—contextualizes recent scandals as predictable outgrowths of Canada's heteropatriarchal and settler-colonial culture rather than aberrant glitches of a gracious, genial one. Moreover, CanLit's repeating crises give a paranoid readerly position even more appeal: "catastrophes," Facundo explains from a psychoanalytic perspective, "provoke a desire for omniscience . . . [and] one way to cope with implacable catastrophe is to gain omniscience over it: to read it thoroughly and repeatedly in order to gain, at the very least, interpretive mastery" (1). Many working in and around CanLit share a masterful desire to intercept, to protect, to know before the same shit happens again, and to certainly not be surprised when it does. The more CanLit exploits, harms, and manipulates, the more it stokes (my) critical paranoia.

But what if the hermeneutics of suspicion reiterate rather than repair CanLit's damage? What if they offer those studying Canadian literature a faulty theory of change? As far as Teoria is concerned, scholarship is meaningful only insofar as it sets off "an explosion, however subatomic, in the networks of power that obviate a life truly lived" (Brand 211). The "extraordinary stress" Brand's narrator places "on the efficacy of knowledge per se—knowledge in the form of exposure" to actuate change marks Teoria as an avowedly paranoid reader (Sedgwick 138). Hermeneutic suspicion can also short circuit critique, as Elliott models, when exposure does not catalyze change: "How is CanLit continually making the same mistakes? . . . [H]ow do the writers, editors, publishers, and agents that make up CanLit live through those mistakes, hear them pointed out, do nothing to address them, then still somehow manage to tell themselves that CanLit is diverse and progressive?" In CanLit, as in *Theory*, neither inequity nor self-contradiction are repaired through exposure. Instead, exposure's "failure" becomes an individualized crisis for the paranoid reader, mistaken as a matter for self-interrogation and purification rather than evidence of hermeneutic suspicion's limits as a theory of change.

Teoria is not, to be clear, an allegory for CanLit writ large. Reading responses to CanLit's repeated self-immolations alongside *Theory*, though, helps demonstrate why the hermeneutics of suspicion "may have made it less rather than more possible" to upend CanLit's damaging logics (Sedgwick 124). By treating this "distinctively modern style of interpretation" (Felski, "Critique") as *one* approach to—and not a requisite of—transformative scholarship, this article asserts that paranoid reading draws power from "social and historical contexts" that are themselves "regularly submerged" (Tuck 415). Of particular importance is hermeneutic suspicion's promise that the power to effect change flows from intellectual mastery, that "if one exposes the mechanisms of oppression, then omniscient knowledge about how the world works [will] become available for possession" (Facundo 9). Possessive, masterful desires resonate differently in settler contexts, as does suspicious critique's tendency to favour disembodied comprehension over situated learning, anticipation over surprise, and distance over intimacy (5). Hermeneutic suspicion, in other words, is an inherently local and regionally inflected approach to analysis. When used to affirm Western humanism's Whiggish faith in individual refinement, detachment, and self-mastery as antidotes to infrastructural inequality, paranoid readings—those CanLit scholars perform, those we expect from students—discount the embodied interdependencies that sustain anticolonial, feminist, and queer thought.

Complicity-Centred Reading[8]

> The mourning of omniscience is where intimacy begins.
> — *A. C. Facundo,* Oscillations of Literary Theory

Theory's opening page-and-a-half-long footnote both parodies academic form and introduces its narrator's vitally unreliable voice:

> Better to stop now and think it all over, make an assessment, rather than watch my insufferable colleagues, with only half my intelligence, get further in life than me. I've finally got the space and the time to collect my thoughts. Anyone walking into my apartment can't deny

> my efforts. Admittedly, to the uninitiated it may look like a mess—but it isn't. I know where every primary reference, every footnote, every chapter, every comma is. I used to invite people over but I don't anymore. There'll be time enough for that after I'm done with my dissertation. Which will be soon. (1)

Through third-person narration and dramatic irony, satirical campus novels can present readers with an elevated view of post-secondary institutions' contradictions; narratological dissociation lets readers see what bookish characters cannot. By contrast, Teoria's first-person narration—fully incisive and self-doubting, masterful and messy—offers no such reassuring distance. Instead, through its unreliable narrator, *Theory* dares readers to answer the novel's driving question for themselves: Why *hasn't* Teoria finished their dissertation?

Unreliability makes Teoria easier to dismiss as held back by hubris, unwilling to work with their committee, and lost in a poorly defined project. This interpretation blames the scholar for failing to meet academia's reasonable expectations. Alternatively, Teoria's struggles can be read as a logical consequence of higher education's structural antinomies: graduate programs demand radical thought then undercut radical thinkers through lacklustre supervision, rigid degree requirements, and a false economy of job scarcity. This interpretation addresses neoliberal universities' well-documented failings, but not *Theory*'s specificities: Other members of Teoria's cohort graduate, so why not them?

Teoria, of course, has a theory of their own: *Theory* is this narrator's attempt to "take stock of [their] own bullshit" and explain why their thesis remains incomplete after ten years of work (2), resulting in a scholarly analysis of their last three romantic relationships. Each implodes. Each, Teoria laments, drew them away from their research; but "now free of all encumbrances," Brand's narrator "mean[s] to resolve all the emotional aspects of [their] life that either get in the way or weigh [them] down" (180). This self-assessment exemplifies paranoid reading's polarizing logic: by discounting relationships as "a complete distraction" from the work of theorizing (57), Teoria parses their life into "intellectual" and "quotidian" poles, reinforcing common perceptions about praxis whereby liberatory, norm-busting thought is imagined as emanating from academia and radiating outwards. "If

anything," Sara Ahmed counters, "the reverse would be more the case" (*Living* 93), noting how her own feminist, queer, anticolonial theories originate in lived experiences she then translates into academic discourse.

Unlike Ahmed, Teoria blames their thesis' delays on their own other-than-critical desire for love. In psychoanalytic terms, this paranoid self-critique—having indulged in such "encumbrances" proves they were not scholarly *enough*—is a defensive act of psychic splitting: mourning these relationships would require Teoria "to let go of omniscience, to tolerate the painful position of not knowing and to pause with a form of thinking unable to possess itself" (Facundo 131) while psychic splitting sets them "on a path toward mastering part objects by consuming them possessively" (131). Teoria's possessive desire is not for their ex-lovers, but for their scholarship's integrity. This polarizing psychic split protects Teoria after each relationship calls their research into doubt. Selah, "the beauty" (19), exposes Teoria's objectification and exoticization of women's bodies (19–20, 51); Yara, a community activist and playwright, dismisses Teoria's love as fundamentally possessive, more heteropatriarchal than queer or liberatory (105–06; 112–13); Odalys, an occult spiritualist, proves Teoria's own theory of change, their faith in critique's ability to right the world, is more religious than empiric (136). In each relationship, Teoria finds themself complicit with the same ideologies their thesis works to overturn. *Theory,* then, is neither a character study of an individual scholar's misgivings nor a diffuse critique of the neoliberal university. Instead, Teoria's inability to theorize their way out of complicity illustrates how the hermeneutics of suspicion, when totalizing, effectively demobilize Black, queer, and feminist thought by recasting intimacy, interdependence, and complexity as complicity.

Complicity-centred readings aim to move individuals from ignorance (if you're surprised, you're not paying attention) towards knowing skepticism (disappointed, not surprised). They are simultaneously epistemophilic (knowledge can be metamorphic) and affective (subjects only change when that knowledge makes them sufficiently uncomfortable). And nothing, this sub-genre of paranoid reading wagers, is *as* uncomfortable as realizing one's complicities. Reflecting on their own complicities, Teoria concludes there must be some false consciousness they've yet to interrogate within themselves: "there was something . . . I had to learn . . . a layer of dishonesty in me

that I wanted to cleanse" (83). This internalization exemplifies paranoid reading's demand for self-mastery: if a paranoid exposure fails to manifest in change, the problem lies with the paranoid reader. Knowledge becomes an affective-cum-behavioural lever: realizing your complicity means you know enough to do better. As a theory of change, such readings place enormous pressure on individual awareness as change-making.

There's a major problem with these critical mechanics. As Michif settler-scholar Max Liboiron observes, newfound awareness does not inevitably cascade into societal transformation. Through its tendency to blame stasis on individuals' lack of awareness, Western academia significantly discounts the infrastructures that prevent individuals—even the fully self-aware and committed to change—from acting in accordance with their awareness: "most environmental and other society-wide problems are not due to individual intent and behavior to begin with," Liboiron proposes, "but rather the social, economic, political, and other systems that make some decisions and behaviors more likely or possible than others." If critique driven by infrastructural theories of change addresses the material and ideological structures that limit awareness' effectual force (Liboiron), then research grounded in complicity-centred theories of change alternatively blames individual knowledge—or lack thereof—for preventing desired transformations.[9] Canadian literary studies' paranoid readings are one such awareness-centred infrastructure.

No Graduate Program Is Neutral: Hermeneutic Suspicion's AntiBlackness

> Despite knowing otherwise, we are often disciplined into thinking through and along lines that reinscribe our own annihilation . . . We must become undisciplined. The work we do requires new modes and methods of research and teaching . . . a kind of blackened knowledge, an unscientific method.
>
> — *Christina Sharpe*, In the Wake

For all their scorn and sweeping generalizations, Teoria's desire to free themselves and those they love from colonial, patriarchal, and capitalist ideology makes them a genuinely sympathetic character. Through this narrator, *Theory* contextualizes skeptical hermeneutics' appeal to Black,

queer, feminist scholars, those intent on dismantling white supremacist and heteropatriarchal institutions. Brand's novel also takes up Christina Sharpe's call to disenchant current scholarly methods by asking what they do *to* and *for* Black academics. In Canadian cultural studies, complicity-centred readings centre settler subjects in two ways: First, they imagine settlers as the unseeing, complicit subjects whose discomfort-driven transformations are necessary to drive societal transformation. Second, they assume subjects come into critical awareness exclusively via study rather than lived experience. Complicity-centred scholarship may help settler subjects change via the discomfort of new awareness. It is less clear, following Sharpe, what suspicious methods do *for* those whose discomforts arise from inequality rather than newfound awareness, who recognize national institutions' contradictions without studying them in postsecondary settings, and whose individual transformations are not themselves prerequisite for correcting the Canadian nation's injustices.

Paranoid reading's inefficacy is, this essay wagers, contextual. My guiding concern is not that paranoid readings cannot "work": as Ahmed's theorizations of the feminist killjoy demonstrate, individuals *can* and *do* change through uncomfortable realizations of their own complicity (*Living* 132).[10] Complicity-centred reading's recourse to the change-making power of discomfort raises significant questions about these hermeneutics' mechanics: How does individual discomfort translate into institutional change? Whose discomfort is granted transformative power?

Teoria experiences profound discomfort every time they realize their complicities afresh: "the pain of my personal betrayal of my ideals . . . was excruciating" (163), they reflect, trashing whole drafts of their thesis with each such realization in the hope that the next iteration can be purified of prior thinking. Convinced their research is not complete and will not "work" until they have expunged their own false consciousness, Teoria's self-interrogations become ever more paranoid: "it must mean there is another system . . . a system that remains untouched . . . [that] must therefore be the root of our unhappiness" (176). Through its narrator, *Theory* dramatizes hermeneutic suspicion's aversion to messy complexities and its driving desire for purity. Both demobilize radical thought.

The novel is clear that it is academia's norms and ideals—not Teoria's complicity—that defuse Black, queer, feminist knowledge's

explosive force. Teoria attempts to make the university classroom a site where undergraduates have discomforting, transformative realizations about their relative positioning in an unequal society. This student-ratings-averse approach costs Teoria future TA-ships: "Well, fine. I have forfeited teaching gigs for my pedagogy" (187). Teoria's supervisor, Bertolt Auer, proves unable to guide and unwilling to defend their anti-canonical research (154–55). Teoria knows he and other detractors reject their scholarship because it does not confirm existing norms or conform to established citational practices: "I am describing a world that they don't recognize," Teoria observes, "a world I am forced to live in and they aren't . . . a world that is constructed through their unseeing" (213–14).

"Unseeing" is not the same as lacking awareness but is built into awareness-centred scholarly methods—paranoid readings included—that rebuff Black knowledge in defence of academia's norms: "for Black academics to produce legible work in the academy often means adhering to research methods that are 'drafted into the service of a larger destructive force,' thereby doing violence to our own capabilities to read, think, and imagine otherwise" (Sharpe 13, quoting Patricia J. Saunders). Hermeneutic suspicion's totalizing tendency, its "paranoid imperative" (Facundo 7), unsees Black scholarship as "not theoretical enough" (hooks 4), particularly when that research is community-focused or foregrounds personal experience (Antwi 319; Henry and Kobayashi 134–35). Hermeneutic suspicion's stress on "new" awareness is not so intent on busting infrastructural norms, then, as it is on a personal project of self-reinvention.

Systemic change, here, originates with already systemically empowered individuals. An otherwise interpellated settler-scholar offers a paranoid reading of an institution they benefit from: *new* knowledge makes them freshly uncomfortable with(in) that institution. Phenomenological experiences of discomfort change how they position themselves relative to the object of critique; suspicion situates them at a fresh remove from the interpolating institution. Using (new) knowledge as a lever and discomfort a fulcrum, the not-quite-so-interpellated scholar ostensibly creates systemic change. *This* is how a scholarship guided by a complicity-centred theory of change understands systemic transformation, one distanced-but-still-incorporated subject at a time. *This* is how incorporated scholars come to see themselves as a stick in institutional spokes, a wrench in

systemic gears and not the wheels or the gears themselves.

If, in psychoanalytic terms, hermeneutic suspicion allows interpolated subjects to defensively split the self from compromising institutions, then this same hermeneutic ironically draws peripheralized subjects into compromising institutions. In a personal essay addressing the Black Canadian Studies Association (BCSA)'s withdrawal from the 2021 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, rosalind hampton, the BCSA's then co-president, described how academic practices "contradict and are detrimental to our [Black scholars'] political aims," but "within which we are also all, to some degree, implicated." Calling for institutional change, hampton elaborates, "risks exposing the tensions and conflicts between the positions and politics we claim, research and theorize, and what we are *actually* willing to do." Like Teoria's "bilgy sediment," insinuations of complicity build up around Black, queer, feminist scholars working to "bring a different university into existence," engulfing them within the object of critique. Lines of incorporation shift when such scholars challenge institutions from within. These same scholars find themselves held up as evidence of institutional change they do not themselves experience (Antwi 306; Walcott 402). In effect, academic institutions insulate themselves from Black scholars' discomfort and critiques alike by demanding and then defusing their suspicious readings of the university itself. If complicity-centred readings depend on individual discomfort to provoke change and Black discomfort is no impediment to antiBlack institutions, then racism modulates paranoid reading's catalytic power.[11]

Paranoid Reading's Masterful Impulse

> stories are belittled—storytelling is belittled—as opposed to studying literature. Studying literature is finding the metaphor, and the hermeneutics, and the post-colonial this and that. If you read those essays, those dudes who write like that, you sort of think, "What a waste of a good education."
>
> — *Lee Maracle in conversation with Aubrey Hanson,* Literatures, Communities, and Learning: Conversations with Indigenous Writers

In *Theory*, paranoid reading neither extricates Teoria from academia's compromising complicities nor corrects those complicities through exposure. For all their acute criticisms of the contemporary university,

though, Teoria does not question the hermeneutics of suspicion. The complicity-centred readings that have similarly failed to irradicate CanLit's heteropatriarchal, colonial, anti-Black infrastructures also remain ubiquitous. Why? Addressing paranoid reading's (non)performativity, Sedgwick observes that

> [s]ome exposés, some demystifications, some bearings of witness do have great effectual force . . . Many that are just as true and convincing have none at all, however, and as long as that is so, we must admit that the efficacy and directionality of such acts reside somewhere else than in their relation to knowledge per se. (141)

Paranoid reading can, as the foregoing section has argued, distance the (otherwise interpolated) critic from their object of critique. One way hermeneutic suspicion still "works" for Teoria and CanLit scholars alike is by promising mastery's reassurances.

Hermeneutic skepticism, like any way of knowing, has a relational logic that guides how practitioners see themselves, their objects of study, and the historically situated communities in which they work and live. Skeptical readings, Facundo describes, aspire to the distance, mastery, and foreknowledge of third-person omniscience (2), an antirelational self-positioning whose appeal only grows amid crises (Sedgwick 125; Felski, "Critique"; Pfister 615). Mastery, here, is a negative freedom—freedom *from* complicity.[12] Scholars guided by a paranoid theory of change maintain their sense of mastery amid crisis only insofar as they avoid complicity.

By framing individual refinement, detachment, and mastery as prerequisites for critique, the hermeneutics of suspicion "delineate and delimit the world into something separable, disentangled, and homogenous" (Shotwell 15).[13] Teoria's masterful drive to purify the self leads them to expunge the personal and empirical, everything they dismiss as "quotidian" (Brand 128). One example of this self-effacement is that readers never learn this narrator's given name; it is Odalys who dubs them *Teoria*, which translates to "theory," but also to "spectator," as Tavleen Purewal notes, when traced to "its Ancient Greek roots." Masterful spectatorship comes at the expense of intimacy. "One has no friends in academia," Teoria thinks of their study group, whose meetups are an intellectual knife fight rather than a source of mutual edification: "One has colleagues. One has assassins"

(67). By *Theory*'s conclusion, Teoria's distanced, masterful positioning emerges as "a form of self-maiming . . . that involves the denial of . . . dependency on other bodies" (Singh 10). "All my life," Teoria reflects twice, "I've sat at an angle, observing the back and forth of other people's lives" (6, 222). Though they initially laud this "vantage point" for giving them "a view of the tumult of people's lives . . . *without the involvement*" (6, emphasis mine), Teoria's masterful self-positioning, "this geometry" of "finding just the right distance from actions and conversations" (6), proves alienating: "I dare say I sit at this angle toward my own life" (222). By premising mastery on detachment, complicity-centred readings discourage the relational intimacies necessary for repair.

While hermeneutic suspicion tends to discredit historically and socially situated subjects as unradical, uncompelling, and uncritical, hooks alternatively contends it is precisely these compromising, embodied, complex experiences that fuse feminist, queer, and Black theorizing *as* praxis: "theory emerges from the concrete, from my efforts to make sense of everyday life experiences, from my efforts to critically intervene in my life and the lives of others. This to me is what makes feminist transformation possible" (8). Complicity-centred analyses prime academics to claim distanced objectivity and individual refinement as the basis of their mastery; in Canadian contexts, such claims reiterate rather than refuse settler colonialism's anti-relational (il)logics.

Tuck traces the social sciences' damage-centred theory of change to litigation discourse (413); this paper tracks cultural studies' complicity-centred readings to the historical materialist, psychoanalytic, and poststructuralist theories Ricoeur dubbed the "school of suspicion" (356).[14] In these disciplines, authority is premised on scholars' distance, individual refinement, and non-complicity. In "On the Concept of History," for example, Walter Benjamin advises historical materialists to study "cultural treasures" with "cautious detachment" (391–92). His paranoid assessment, "[t]here is no document of culture which is not at the same time a document of barbarism" (392), warns scholars that their objects of study (presumably the high art of conquering empires) are inseparable from histories of profound violence (Pfister 611–12). Loving such objects perpetuates their violence, compromising the scholar's ethical and intellectual authority: "the historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from . . . [this

barbarism] as far as possible" (392). Here, cultural violence is contagious; love and admiration are its transmission vectors. In brushing "history against the grain" (392), the suspicious scholar refuses their barbaric cultural inheritances; to do otherwise would perpetuate violence within critique itself.

Contra "On the Concept of History," *Theory* demonstrates that the hermeneutics of suspicion do not inoculate scholars from their complicities: "cautious detachment" is neither laudable nor does it enable Black, queer, or feminist scholarship. Rather, some bodies of scholarship—and some scholarly bodies—benefit more from hermeneutic suspicion's distancing effects than others. Discussing the messiness of working to change academic institutions from within, Ahmed challenges the paranoid idea that complicity is inherently discrediting: "When we have to think strategically, we also have to accept our complicity: we forgo any illusions of purity; we give up the safety of exteriority" (*Living* 94). Unlike hermeneutic suspicion's depersonalizing distance, to "give up the safety of exteriority" means accepting "we are not exterior to the problem under investigation, we too are the problem under investigation" (94). Rather than requiring that academics resolve their entanglements before they can change institutions from within, Ahmed proposes starting "with our own complicity" in order to reject institutional norms that make complicity "its own reproductive logic" (263).[15]

I see a vital tension here: scholars can both refuse to further unjust systems though their unseeing, as *Theory* describes it, *and* they can refuse academic institutions' desire to disavow their complicity; that is, scholars can refuse to refuse complicity. Refusing to refuse complicity means giving up on intellectual mastery, or "knowing better," as a viable starting point for critical inquiry. This double refusal requires we find "ways of inhabiting our own discomforting politics differently—of living alternatively within our contradictions rather than seeking to escape them" (Singh 157).[16] Refusing to refuse complicity also means refusing to theorize change via the misleadingly absolutist terms of reproduction or rejection: "Assimilation and transgression are not choices that are available to individuals," Ahmed reasons, "but are effects of how subjects can and cannot inhabit social norms and ideals" ("Queer Feelings" 153).[17]

Like Benjamin, though, Teoria adheres to the paranoid belief that distanced observation is integral to disassembling cultural violence via

critique. Situating their PhD in the department of interdisciplinary studies gives Brand's narrator a sense of purifying distance from other, compromised disciplines. Although they admit to flirting with literary studies in their undergrad and find consolation in poetry after each breakup, literature, Teoria asserts, is fundamentally self-serving and commercial, certainly not a valid object of study (73). For the paranoid reader, enjoying a book, taking comfort in poetry, and admitting to the pleasure of reading are potentially contaminating and certainly un-masterful. I imagine Brand claiming a certain authorial distance from her narrator here or when Teoria dismisses poetry as "the conduit through which anachronistic and fossilized conceptions of the world . . . are transmitted" (163–64). These paranoid assessments are not inherently wrong: literature can be commercial and self-serving and anachronistic. The problem with Teoria's hermeneutic firewall is that "[p]aranoia knows some things well [but] others poorly" (Sedgwick 130). What paranoia knows poorly includes desire, complexity, and love.

"Only Errors to Make": Desire-Centred Readings

> I've always known the university cannot love me, but now I feel it, and I'm sheepish to admit how much this has rocked me. I am not surprised but I am enraged, as much at myself as anyone: I should have known better. I thought I did. But the answer can't be despair. Instead, we have to love each other, to extend care and grace where none has existed before.
>
> — *Brenna Clarke Gray, "2020: The End is the Beginning, and Yet You Go On"*

Under hermeneutic suspicion's polarizing logic, Teoria cannot see themself as a situated, entangled, dependent, embodied, complex subject *and* think of their scholarship as legitimate. Complicity becomes paralytic: without "forms to follow," Teoria laments there are "only errors to make" (101). In response, Odalys, the spiritualist, charges Teoria with lacking "an anchor . . . a thing that you love . . . I am talking about a love without limits, without reservations, without a face or a body" (158). To evoke the vocabulary of love while discussing CanLit's crises may seem "so sappy, aestheticizing, defensive, anti-intellectual, or reactionary that . . . few critics are willing to describe their acquaintance with such motives" (Sedgwick 150). Regardless,

reparative, desire-based, and vulnerable hermeneutics—those that consider love's role in sparking change—offer a rejoinder to CanLit's damaging aporias.

Teoria's belief that they will change academia by exposing its internal contradictions is a distinctly paranoid reading, but their underlying *desire* for change instantiates hermeneutic suspicion's reparative performativity: even the most "self-avowedly paranoid critical projects," Sedgwick argues, are driven by "powerful reparative practices" (128–29), by the desire for new relationalities not governed by ruling logics. Paranoid readings of CanLit are grounded in their own reparative desires: if we expose CanLit's settler misogyny and white supremacy, they will burn off. If we name the violence, describe its operations, pin it to the page with enough clarity, it will stop. If I can explain why paranoid readings are not working to effect change, maybe I can effect change. Reparative and paranoid readings are not oppositional, then, but interlocking parts of a transformative whole.

In the ashes of CanLit's latest dumpster fires, though, paranoid methods are overwhelming reparative practices. In *Refuse*, McGregor, Rak, and Wunker propose that "something new can come from something damaged," so "[i]f CanLit as an institution is in ruins, maybe that's a good thing" (11). Brokenness allows for cycle-breaking possibilities, but, they ask, "[h]ow do we stay with it, and make new kin?" (13). Kinship is a crucial problem given that, as Lucia Lorenzi attests, CanLit's predations go unchallenged when scholars and writers are conditioned "to worry about the health and well-being of 'the community' over and above their own. *Don't cause a fuss. Don't disturb the peace. It's for the greater good*" (81). In CanLit, intimacy has proven a site of harm. In a climate where community and interdependence are threatening, *Refuse*'s editors caution against the easy "positivism of hope" (143), encouraging readers to "resist the desire to push past critique into optimism" (144).

Desire, however, is an alternative to paralytic paranoia or amnesic hope. Tuck proposes a "desire-based" theory of change wherein "understanding complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination of lived lives" interrupts the individuating "binary of reproduction versus resistance" (416, 419). Singh advocates for a related shift towards "*vital ambivalence*—a practice of representation that emphasizes, politicizes, and embraces the subject's contradictions and slippages" (158). These reparative alternatives mourn individual

refinement, detachment, and mastery as illusory in order to reclaim intimacy. Paranoid, suspicious, damage-centred analyses—those that shore up mastery and offer distance—are no antidote for settler-academia's masterful, individualistic infrastructures: "through an avowal of complicity," though, "we might begin to revise, rewrite, and elaborate ourselves by untangling and demystifying the narratives that have crafted us to date" (Singh 109).

Transitioning through paranoid hermeneutics towards intimate, desire-based ones requires approaching "complicity and compromise as a starting point for action" rather than critique's anthesis (Shotwell 4). This is a hard sell. Scholars and public intellectuals cannot claim their complicities without sacrificing the optics of intellectual mastery or empirical distance. Such vulnerability is especially risky for those whom academia prefers precarious. In *Theory*, Black, queer students who reject institutional norms are (de)disciplined. After ten years of work, Teoria disenrols from their PhD, unable to afford tuition: "though my ethics remain intact," they note wryly, "my livelihood becomes precarious" (196). The novel's conclusion seems a demoralizing confirmation of Teoria's father's assessments: "Capital was all he could see being produced by learning. I'd never admit it to him, but he is correct. This is the true purpose of the academy . . . to carry out and extend the pedagogy of capital" (174). Teoria's critique—that radical Black scholarship does not result in meaningful change; that the careful study of Black art, social life, literature, fails to produce effects in or outside the university—confirms their paranoid theory of change. It also necessitates that they leave the university: Teoria cannot write pure, masterful, uncompromised critique within this institution. This does not mean Teoria's thesis isn't complete: as Brand explains in an interview with Canisia Lubrin, "The form of the dissertation crosses into the form of the novel. Gradually, the thesis that the narrator tries to attend to walks into the novel; the thesis is performed in the novel." *Theory* is the completed thesis. Its vulnerable, contradictory, personal reflections are also the antithesis of the masterful dissertation form as well as a repudiation of the hermeneutics of suspicion as a theory of change.

A broader turn towards reparative approaches is not only possible but under way across liberatory scholarship and public discourse alike, restructuring what constitutes knowledge in the process. By refusing

historical criticism's masterful, distancing practices, Saidiya Hartman's *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* reads gaps in the damage-centred archives of the Great Migration to show, in her words, "the beauty of black ordinary, the beauty that resides in and animates the determination to live free, the beauty that propels the experiments in living otherwise . . . Beauty is not a luxury; rather it is a way of creating possibility in the space of enclosure" (33). Jen Sookfong Lee's "What *Anne of Green Gables* Taught Me about Grief" acknowledges the cultural industry of selling Lucy Maud Montgomery's fiction as well as the sedative Canadian ideals routed through her work. She also asserts that these nationalist and capitalist deployments do not diminish the comfort that reading Montgomery's fiction provided in moments of crisis: "my books, and my Anne books in particular, were the constants in my life." Both Hartman and Sookfong Lee demonstrate how reparative reading can "move us 'beyond' mastery, not in the sense of exceeding it but in the sense of *surviving it* in order to envision being otherwise in and for the world" (Singh 23). Their work also reclaims readers' complex relationships with texts, authors, and archives as vital, not compromising.

Teoria does not have an *Anne of Green Gables*. Neither, it seems, does the field of Canadian literature studies. Or, more honestly, while we each have texts and communities and vulnerable interdependencies that sustain us, there are few ways to honour these reparative intimacies *and* hold on to a complicity-centred theory of change. If scholars of Canadian literature only teach and publish and celebrate paranoid readings, only present complicity-centred arguments as fuelling transformation, the resulting academic discourse will affirm the legitimate reasons we have to be skeptical of CanLit *and* discount the messy kinships, loves, and pleasures that fuel transformative change. Amid CanLit's repeated self-immolations, research grounded in a complicity-centred theory of change offers mastery and distance from harm; it also theorizes away from collective repair by foreclosing the complex intimacies necessary to mourn and heal. Academics anchored to a complicity-centred theory of change will also struggle to recognize theorizing *as* praxis. The resulting research obscures how authors, scholars, and readers sustain themselves despite CanLit's antirelational infrastructures.

Notes

1. While writing this article, I moved from Edmonton to Halifax, began a LTA at Dalhousie University that spanned the COVID-19 pandemic, had a brilliant daughter, accepted an assistant professorship at MacEwan University, and lost my mother. I could not have completed this research without the community that sustained me during these years. Thank you to Orly Lael Netzer, Glynnis Morgan, Terri Tomsky, Asha Jeffers, Alice Brittan, Jason Haslam, Heather Jessup, Christina Luckyj, Bart Vautour, Erin Wunker, Kit Dobson, David Chariandy, Laura Moss, and Liam Young for your guidance and encouragement. I am also deeply grateful for the generous feedback Aubrey Hanson and Heather Milne offered on this paper's early drafts, for the reparative insights of my peer reviewers, and for the acuity of amanda wan and *Canadian Literature*'s editors as they shepherded this work through to publication. Thank you all.
2. For more on these designations, see Elliott; Moss and McCormack (7–9); and McGregor, Rak, and Wunker (especially 10–13), respectively.
3. On these events see, in addition to the sources at note 1, Wakeham; Reder and Shield; and hampton.
4. For hooks, such thinking on the part of activists is an unwelcome mirror of white feminism's "narcissistic self-indulgent practice that most seeks to create a gap between theory and practice so as to perpetuate class elitism" (4–5).
5. *Theory* invites this distinction. Other members of Teoria's cohort are interpellated into the university in ways Teoria is not; their refusal asserts that just because a scholar is *in* an institution does not mean they are *of* that institution. See Stephano Harney and Fred Moten's characterization of the undercommons' work to steal back from the university (28), as well as Rinaldo Walcott's discussion of EDIA's dependence on compensatory individualism (402).
6. This phrasing, "other-than-postcritical approaches," aims to avoid reinforcing a critique-versus-post-critique binary that, as Jay Rajiva argues, obscures Black thought's paracritical tradition (126). Similarly paracritical logics inform the Indigenous scholarship cited here.
7. *Refuse*'s chapters are organized into three broad categories: those that refuse, as in reject, CanLit's inequitable status quo; those that emphasize the refuse, or garbage, that accumulates in this fundamentally nationalistic field; and those interested in re/fusing or reimagining the field from within its ruinous state. This article's logic originates in the second, garbage-y refusal of CanLit's status quo—i.e., hermeneutic suspicion as a theory of change—and in this way hopes to re/fuse the field into something that helps, heals, and repairs.
8. I model this key phrase, "complicity-centred reading," on Tuck's "damage-centred research" (409), the social sciences' empirical cousin to cultural studies' paranoid readings. Damage-centred research, Tuck explains, assumes reparations will follow scholarly proof of harm; the resulting studies document Indigenous and urban communities' "pain and loss . . . in order to obtain particular political or material gains" while simultaneously pathologizing those communities (413), letting them "only speak from that space in the margin that is a sign of

deprivation, a wound, an unfulfilled longing" (hooks qtd. in Tuck 413). Yet damage-centred research remains institutionally fecund, seeding projects, programs, and pedagogies "designed to document failure or deficit rather than provide opportunities to redress existing inequities" (414). Cultural studies' complicity-centred readings have similar sequalae.

9. Awareness-centred Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility (EDIA) frameworks simultaneously argue for and void Black knowledge: Canadian institutions, freshly aware of their antiBlackness, promise to change by incorporating more Black scholars. By attributing institutional failures to change to an absence or deficiency of Black thought, such arguments for incorporation make the perhaps unintended admission that current Black scholars find their work de-fused by the same institutions they work within.

10. By contrast, institutional EDIA gestures intent on mitigating discomfort, as Ahmed (*On Being Included* 146) and Walcott (393) contend, are more concerned with changing perceptions of the university as an antiBlack institution than changing post-secondary education's antiBlackness.

11. At the risk of generalization, this argument seems as true for and across sexual and gendered identities: queer subjects' discomfort is no impediment for anti-queer institutions; women's discomfort is no impediment for misogynistic ones.

12. Ahmed observes a similar tendency in queer theory, whereby queerness is theorized as freedom *from* heteronormativity. The resulting research fetishizes mobility and fluidity as queer while dismissing attachment and stasis as essentially non-queer and normative (Ahmed, "Queer Feelings" 151–52).

13. Elliott is critical of this same disentangling desire in Canadians' responses to the nation's ongoing violence.

14. The damage-centred drive Tuck identifies in the social sciences' research surfaces in arts and humanities programs too. Vivek Shraya's *Trauma Clown* project visualizes how Canadian scholarship and arts funding promotes creative work about the suffering of marginalized artists, not to help repair, but to allow non-marginalized audiences to achieve catharsis: "it's hard not to notice the ways interest and institutional support (in the form of art contracts, funding, awards, invitations) have increased as I've shared more of my traumatic experiences" (Shraya, "How Did?").

15. Discussions of Canadian academia's antiBlack, antiIndigenous, and misogynistic violence that focus on individual "bad actors" dissuade scholars from reckoning with our individual entanglements within complicit institutions. (I'm thinking here about coverage of Shelby McPhee's profiling at the 2019 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences.)

16. Kai Cheng Thom similarly challenges social justice circles' "valorization of critique" and appeals to mastery for bolstering "rigid thinking . . . while preventing us from developing strategies for reconciliation, necessary compromise, and necessary action" (13).

17. Ahmed's broader argument concerns how queer life does not inherently "suspend the attachments that are crucial to the reproduction of heteronormativity"; this lack of suspension, she asserts, does not "diminish

'queerness,' but intensifies the work that it can do" (152). In *Theory*, though, Black scholars need to first secure inhabitance in antiBlack institutions, a distinct process from queer subjects' inhabitance of the institutions of familial life.

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Amy LeBlanc

Fulmination

When the cicadas went to sleep,
I was nine and afraid of widow maker spiders,
even though I had never seen one up close:
only in books with crumbs buried in their spines.

My skin was unmarked except for birthmarks
and I watched as my mother stood at the edge
of the yard in a storm. She remained—
alpine, snow-capped
until she felt a lightning
strike traverse her skin through
the shoulder and nestle inside her body.

I didn't see contact—
I saw a shiver.

A twitch of the left leg, skin stretching
over earth tones and the thinnest layers
of ice. A crack in the shape of the left anterior
artery flourishing like film.

Where the lightning struck her,
I developed a mark on my shoulder—
I became polished metal,
a conductor of electricity,
a living mirror who could reminisce
about that spectacular strike.

| *Amy LeBlanc is a PhD student in English at the University of Calgary.*

Susan Glickman

Hineni

A giant eye, itself a swirling galaxy, studying a slide
to locate the single vector of infection,
a tremulous shepherd counting sheep obscured by snow,
a mother running frantic through the playground
in quest of her lost child—

"Where are you?" each calls, silently or aloud,
hoping for "Here I am!" in response—

but why would God need to ask? I used to wonder,
imagining an obdurate patriarch peering
from the sky, penetrating all places at once,
hearing my every thought and
judging my every deed.

178 times in the Torah the question is posed.
More uncertainty there
than is ever acknowledged; the creator
having lost track of his creatures
and doubting their devotion.

What if Abraham kept shtum, or Moses
clamped his jaw shut? What if they refused to be chosen
and detoured into ordinary life?
Sadie and Abe growing old together
as their flocks flourish and their grandkids
tumble at their feet. Moses
a prince of Egypt, his tongue unscathed by fire,
his eyes outlined in kohl.

| *Susan Glickman has written poetry, essays, novels, and a literary history.*

Roy Wang

Errand Drive

I idle on Queen West, waiting to rescue
my mother-in-law from the hospital. Brown
milk from the Second Cup has dribbled
into the grey rubber cup-holder,
another film that will need wiping up
after I finally get to scouring the bleaching,
sticky dust off the dashboard.

While waiting I examine
the divorce papers served
last weekend at our annual
pig roast, counter action
for lack of action
and too much action
on foreign soil

I take her out to lunch at that Thai place
near Bloor and Sherbourne to get us both
feeling human again
after 6 days of dressing gowns, plastic cutlery,
and overheard prognoses.
The rice and curry are what we expect—
comfortable, competent. The green
mango salad however needs more zest.

Dropping her at her basement
apartment on Manning, I volunteer to nip
out to the grocer to restock her pantry. She asks
for little—canned ham, chicken
legs, and some condensed milk.
I tell her I'll get some other
things, fruits and vegetables at the least.

No retractions, back in the cockpit
of my beige Taurus
I set my lawyers to kill
knowing we both know mutual
destruction is the end
of a kiss that makes you shudder

I drop off cauliflower, eggs, and apples,
along with the meat and cans.
She hugs me tightly, pressing her greasy face
to my chin. She's already picked up
that herring smell again
but I cling to her tightly, whispers of "good
son" tumbling down my rounded
back, unable to dilute guilt,
grip crumbling to quiver, her face lit
up: so loved, almost understood.

| *Roy (he/she/they) is a queer, non-binary, polyamourous, Chinese Canadian poet.*

Hanne Pearce

An Album of Sorrows

We are not proud of them
like we are of birthdays,
anniversaries, graduations.
These snapshots of the living
in between celebrations.

Lacklustre days,
raw blisters, scars, and unhealed gashes.
Restless nights hollow with worry,
frozen tears, snagging on lashes.

Lies folded in neatly with too much truth.
Subtle denial, blatant blame.
Perfectly beautiful, unavoidable pain.

We do not post these
on our walls or feeds.
We do not frame them
and put them in our offices
next to awards or degrees.

But whatever would make us
more worth our metal,
than these?

Do we not all have one?
An album of sorrows,
that we can see when we
close our eyes?

See here is where I fell,
There, I miscalculated,
slipped to stumble,
Here is the night I was wrong,
Here is the moment
my body began to crumble.

We are so good at sharing
indulgence and joy,
bokeh and bouquets.
We have cropped out worry,
sorrow, and misgiving.
The shitty gritty truth,
that is the trauma of living.

See here is where I got up,
Here, I recalculated, jumped and landed.
There is where I stood up
and kept on, empty-handed.

| *Hanne Pearce is a librarian, digital literacy educator, photographer, and writer.*

Bibiana Tomasic

I am the woman
who laid anesthetized
while the dentist raped me.
One of the women.
I could have been Calisto or Cassandra
Leda or Io, Persephone or Philomela
but I was some kind of Ana,
from some century, some country, some race,
with no feature to my slacken face—
the I in me a she, immobilized, rendered irrelevant,
and he, the usual shape-shifter,
no Sopdu, Lord of the East,
protector of the mouth of the (almost) deceased.

Women like me, she, they
are born with the decree etched
in (he)art, gene, scroll:
the world is your fathers'
and you must learn the shifting
of his rules, his authority on flesh.
Be on guard in darkened streets,
in sunny rooms before a mid-day meal,
and child, you must remove your soul
from your body and bear the weight of his.

When we wake we speak, write, tweet #metoo,
we gather, shout:

men, this is your nightmare, too,
shake yourself and dismantle
the weighted blanket of history and myth:
Zeus, Apollo, Dionysus,
the soldiers of Rome,
the generals of Srebernica,
the Weinsteins and Cosbys,
fathers, uncles, brothers,
male doctors and dentists,
teachers and farmers,
young and old men, clergy-coy-men,
circle the globe in step with stealth,
in a rhythm that mimics heart.

People like us, you, he she they,
people start!, erase their edict
so everyone can sleep.

| *Bibiana writes poems, short stories, novels, and plays. bibianatomasic@icloud.com.*

Kyeren Regehr

Grandmother Grove

Cortes Island, traditional land of the Klahoose, the Tla'amin, and Homalco People

Without a thought I remove my shoes
as if entering a stranger's home, and disappear

beneath the bell-sleeved shadows of fir and spruce.
Spun by the trees for hundreds of years,

this trampolined floor of moss and needle sinks beneath
each footstep, springs back as I walk. When time

winds down and vanishes, doorways hang in the heat-haze
at the edge of visibility—catch the flame

of a nonhuman eye, then gone again. And for a moment
I'm visiting the forests of Sheffield with my grandmother,

eons of ash and oak, mushrooms laddering trunks,
ostrich ferns and tiny lichen goblets for faery wine,

the shade of her voice. I step through a veil
of sunlight between two bowed hawthorns

back onto the island—a moss-lined knoll
shadows the bay, purple starfish jewel the shore.

The knees of huge cedars carve nooks
in the hummock, and although I feel welcome,

could curl among root and web and sleep with ease,
this is not home, and I will never be home.

| *Kyeren Regehr has two award-nominated/-winning books of poetry.*

Heather Milne and Aubrey Hanson

Feminist Critique Here and Now

Introduction

This readers' forum comes together around the continued role of feminist theory and feminist analysis in literary studies in these lands claimed as Canada. It is a pleasure for us to be thinking together on this topic with this stellar group of feminist scholars.

In curating this issue, we wanted to take the pulse of feminist critique in current scholarship, in keeping with the focus of this special issue as a whole. As a result, we reached out to these scholars—and several others, whom we also thank for considering our request—with an invitation to reflect on this matter. In soliciting these forum pieces, we wanted to leave the style and structure fairly open. We were interested in diverse pieces, whether more academic or more personal, more literary studies–oriented or more open in approach. We simply asked one question and invited prospective contributors to write a short response each: How does feminism resonate in your work, here and now? The resulting collection is enlivening, moving, provocative; it reminds us of who we want to be as feminist scholars.

We tried to survey people in different parts of the country, at different stages of their careers, and in different areas of study within the broader field of CanLit. We were also interested in how academics enact feminism as praxis and lived experience, not just as a critical lens to apply to texts.

The pieces we received are diverse and speak to the depth and breadth of the field. But in spite of their diversity, we see a number of themes resonating through these pieces: feminist affects; feminism as praxis; the university as a patriarchal institution; the in/visibility and ubiquity of feminist work; feminist reading practices; grounded voice

as/and theory, vulnerability, embodiment. We organized the forum pieces in a way that we hope emphasizes these thematic resonances.

What does this pulse we have taken tell us about where feminist critique is at? This might not be a question we can answer, but we are okay with resisting the impulse to synthesize these responses too neatly. Rather, we ask, how do these pieces story outwards the complexities and contingencies of feminist critique in this moment and in this place?

We hope that the following conversation is as important to you as it is to us.

Aubrey Jean Hanson (PhD) is a member of the Métis Nation of Alberta and an Associate Professor at the University of Calgary's Werklund School of Education. Aubrey works in the areas of curriculum studies and Indigenous education. She is the author of Literatures, Communities, and Learning: Conversations with Indigenous Writers *(Wilfred Laurier UP, 2020).*

Heather Milne is a Professor of English at the University of Winnipeg. She works in the areas of poetics, feminist theory, queer theory, and museum studies. She is the author of Poetry Matters: Neoliberalism, Affect, and the Posthuman in Twenty-First Century North American Feminist Poetics *(U of Iowa P) and editor of* Social Poesis: The Poetry of Rachel Zolf *(Wilfred Laurier UP 2018) and* Prismatic Publics: Innovative Canadian Women's Poetry and Poetics *(Coach House Books, 2009). Her co-edited collection of essays,* Museum Queeries: Two-Spirit, Indigiqueer, and LGBTTQ* Interventions into Museums and Curation *(co-edited with Angela Failler, Sabrina Mark, and Michelle McGeough), is forthcoming with Jageillonian UP in 2024.*

Asha Jeffers

Daughter Lessons

I was the kid who told my peers I was a feminist in the playground in elementary school. My parents were dedicated to raising their children with Afrocentric and feminist values, so there have been times I've fully taken for granted how self-evident certain feminist ideals are. Of course, my feminist consciousness has grown and changed as I have; I've thankfully outgrown my childhood disdain for many "feminine" things.

Still, for most of my academic development, feminism was an implicit underpinning rather than an overt engagement. Then, in 2019, I started a dual appointment in English and gender and women's studies. This job made me articulate more directly and explicitly how feminism factors into my writing, my pedagogy, and my service to communities, academic and otherwise. Being forced to tease out what I take for granted has been powerful, especially as I work to teach my students the value of speaking what often goes unspoken. Indeed, for me, speaking what goes unspoken is a fundamental step in feminist consciousness-raising and writing because it is only through articulating our experiences and assumptions that we realize which of those we actually stand by and which we have been unconsciously carrying around like ticks. Last year, a Mi'kmaw student of mine compared reading Sara Ahmed's *feministkilljoys* blog to being in a sweat lodge, and that comment filled me with joy because it is that experience—of finding a new key that helps you to interpret and live in the world—that I am always trying to create in both my writing and teaching. Like many spiritual experiences, it is the combination of the tangible and the intangible, the intellectual and the emotional, the embodied experience of wisdom settling into you that, for me, marks a feminist life.

I'm in the throes of writing a book about rebellious Black immigrant daughters in US fiction and, as a result, I've been spending a lot more time thinking about rebellion than I, a remarkably unrebellious daughter, have in the past. At the risk of offering a free preview, one thing that is becoming clearer to me is that there are many forms of rebellion, some of which are self-destructive and some which are generative. Those rebellions rooted in a simple reversal—"you tell me not to do it, so I do it"—are often the first rebellions, but the truly revelatory and revolutionary moment in most of the protagonists' lives comes through a later rebellion, one rooted in a clearer and more nuanced view of what is being rebelled against and, just as importantly, knowing where your allegiance is going when you revoke it from one place. It is so much easier, after all, to know what you do not want than to know what you do. For me, a generative relationship to feminism as a rebellion against white supremacist heteropatriarchy and capitalism requires that often difficult-to-achieve clarity and nuance, that foundation in speaking the unspoken even when it complicates things, even when it makes knowing the "right" thing to do harder. If we might read all feminists as rebellious progeny

of a series of systems that were built without their best interests at heart, perhaps the lessons from the works I study apply to us all.

A central concept for my current work is the idea of *against*, a term that indicates both intimacy—*I hold you against my body*—and rejection—*I am against war*. The daughters I write about often relate to their families and their societies in a state of against-ness that embodies both meanings as they are buffeted by political, social, and economic forces that shape family and social dynamics, as well as gendered expectations both within the home and outside of it. The duality of *against* is something that has always been present in feminism, especially when we look at Black women's feminist writing, where there are meaningful reflections on how to navigate Black love and intimacy in the face of white supremacy while also confronting misogyny and homophobia in Black communities. We know deeply that need to hold something or someone close while simultaneously needing space and distance, and, importantly, writers like bell hooks give us the language to articulate and assert this knowledge. Time and again, I see how being given the tools to articulate experience, especially these kinds of psychologically complex aspects of life, empowers my students in ways that constantly reinforce the value of this work.

For me, as an academic worker, the concept of *against* is also useful for helping me to understand my relationship to the university. I am both intimately a part of it as well as engaged in critiquing how it works. Recognizing this push and pull is an integral part of surviving and thriving in the oft contradictory spaces that make up academia, especially for women of colour academics whose work is rooted in structural critique of power relations. For both myself and my students, I need to dwell in this in-between space. One characteristic I do share with the daughters I write about is an ability to make a home in the spaces between, to come to see the layered nature of my identity and experience as a source of power and knowledge as opposed to a flaw. The value of experience is, of course, one of the greatest and most misunderstood gifts feminism has given the world.

Here and now, feminism has become more important to my scholarly and pedagogical work, and to me as both a scholar and a teacher, than it has ever been. It resonates with my interest in experience, in my insistence on nuance, in my quest for articulation. It informs my methodology and my pedagogy. It is urgent, integral, and generative.

Dr. Asha Jeffers is an Assistant Professor of English and Gender and Women's Studies at Dalhousie.

Lily Cho

Feminist Practice Everywhere and Almost Nowhere

When I search my recent book for the word *feminism*, it appears only once. In the acknowledgements, I thank my fellow contributors to the feminist blog, *Hook & Eye*, that I have been co-writing and co-editing during most of the period in which I wrote the book. Riffing on the blog's tagline, I acknowledge that "fast feminism helped me to write slowly and thoughtfully" (xxiii). For me, even though *feminism* as a word only appears once, it is everywhere in that book as a key theoretical commitment, as a mode of intervention in the archive that was at the core of the book, and as a lived practice that allowed me to write and finish the book at all. I cannot imagine having been able to write that book, or write anything at all, without feminism as an anchor for work that I want to do.

Why, then, is feminism seemingly so invisible in the actual text of my work?

Before I can begin to answer this question—one that I asked myself as I stared at the single reference to feminism in a work of mine that I thought was infused with feminism—I want to pause and think about the place of this single reference. The reference to feminism lives in the part of the book where I recognize the enormous community of people who make my writing possible. It is the place where I tell my readers a little about how the book actually came into existence. It is where I name, albeit in a muted and truncated way, the challenges I encountered in the decade that I spent researching and writing the book. It is where I share the journey of the book and name the people who were with me from the moment when the ideas for the book were just something I talked about to the moment when I knew that the book would actually be a book.

I confess that I always read the acknowledgements sections of academic books. I especially like reading this section of the book when I do not know the author at all. In my ignoble moments, this reading is the closest I come to experiencing guilty pleasure when engaging with academic work. It is small glimpse into the world behind the book. Mostly, I love reading the acknowledgements because they remind their readers that books come out of communities. They do not emerge *sui generis* from the minds of single authors. They come out of conversations and debates. They come out of the generosity of fellow thinkers sharing their thoughts and, sometimes, even their labour. They come out of the hospitality of friends and family who made space for the book to live, even when it often took up space that it did not have the right to claim. And by *space*, I actually mean time. Writing a book takes some physical space, yes; but more than anything, it takes so much time. Years and years of time that are carved out of everything from long, glorious stretches, such as sabbaticals or fellowships, to the stolen moments when the baby is napping or in the strange, odd minutes between meetings and marking.

When I read my own acknowledgements, I am reminded again that the communities out of which the book emerged were deeply and profoundly feminist communities. My *Hook & Eye* pals are not the only feminists who make my work possible. They are also my friends. They are also the archivists and librarians. They are also the support staff in the offices where I do my non-writing work: teaching and serving in administration. And always, always, there is my daughter.

All of this is to say that acknowledging the role of feminism in my work in the space of the acknowledgements is itself a way of telling myself and my readers that it matters more than I knew how to say in the text of the book itself. I have only written two books and, both times, the acknowledgements were the hardest parts to write. The labour of recognizing the labour of others is no small thing.

Still, I am left with the starkness of this single reference. If feminism is everywhere in my work, why is it seemingly almost nowhere in the text itself? This ubiquity coupled with invisibility highlights precisely why this special issue of *Canadian Literature* is so important. Having lived and breathed the gains of second-wave feminism, and having cut my teeth as a new academic in the midst of the third wave, I took for granted that everybody I worked with, that

every institution I worked in, was working towards feminism. That it was just part of the air we breathed.

How wrong I was. I had a mistakenly capacious understanding of who was breathing alongside me—and of the air itself. The gains of the many waves of feminism continue to be eroded at every turn. Even as I write this, the rights of North American women to decide how and if to bear children are profoundly jeopardized. Misogyny is so much deeper than I could really have grasped.

I see now that it is a mistake for me not to name feminism at every turn of my work. It is a mistake to think that the feminism that anchors and animates all my thinking would simply be so obvious as not to require explicit recognition. There is no literary and cultural analysis I conduct that is not also always already a feminist literary and cultural analysis. That is not to say that decolonizing and anti-racist practices are not also always already a part of the work. And that is also to say that queer theory transforms my work. But the thing is, *race* and *racism* can be found thirty-two times in my book. *Queer* appears twice. That makes me wince too.

Perhaps there is no correlation between textual references to a concept and the transformative role of that concept. But the textual scholar in me thinks that there is something more complicated unfolding here. I think it has to do with the role of these concepts as a practice rather than a theory.

In my work, feminist practices risk invisibility precisely because they are so ubiquitous and because they are practices. They demand a kind of doing that repeats, over and over. To write a book is to want to rewrite it almost as soon as one is supposedly finished with the writing. I would like to write this one again now, write *feminism* all over the text. It is always already there.

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Lily Cho is Professor of English, and Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (International) at Western University. Her book, Mass Capture: Chinese Head Tax and the Making of Non-citizens *(McGill-Queen's UP 2021), was awarded the 2023 Book Prize for Outstanding Achievement in the Multidisciplinary Category by the Association for Asian American Studies.*

Linda M. Morra

Gender and the Conveyor Belt of Citizenship

I have often had cause throughout my academic career to consider how my peers and I are approached in ways that clearly highlight our gender. I reflect on how I have adopted feminist theories in my research, classrooms, and work, only to be confronted by situations that remind me how urgent it is that universities still teach and incorporate its various tenets and how often we are yet compelled to live in contradiction of them. The literature I teach, specifically, provides me with complicated, albeit useful, templates for how to navigate with greater care the contradictions and demands of gender—in my life as an academic, as a colleague and a friend, and as a citizen of Canada, Turtle Island, and the world.

If we study the evolution of gender and sexuality as represented in literature in Canada, it becomes apparent that gender and sexuality are also sites of contestation on a national scale, whereby those on the conveyer belt of citizenship sometimes find ways to step off, change the process, or bring it to a halt. It is logical, therefore, that recent civic debates about how identities are represented in public spaces inform and engage with state policies. From definitions of what constitutes feminism, to what counts as masculine, to how transgender, Two-Spirit, or gender-nonconforming persons refuse discrete binary structures—these are just a few of the many discussions that inform political structures and decisions, determining policy outcomes that affect academic and other workplaces and, eventually, literature itself. The relationship is, however, mutually constitutive, since literature also has an impact on the contours of gender and sexuality. Those manifestations are shaped by negotiations with or refusals of determined markers of identity, that is, resistance to social systems that authorize and arrange a limited number of gender possibilities. The production of gender and sexuality may at times run counter to the very models or templates to which the state holds fast. Ultimately, gender and sexuality, even as they are at times expressed through

literature, may also therefore come to serve as tools of empire and nation-state.

If gender and sexuality are seen as such, we must also consider Canada's past status as a colony of Britain. Gender and sexuality were borrowed from and modelled after British categories of identity as a way of highlighting English Canada's imperial connections and denouncing attachment to the US or, for that matter, to racialized or gender-nonbinary identities. Such a sense of subjectivity was tied to rhetorical appeals to decency and civility and popular notions about race and class—as it also helped to secure a national identity that was yet unstable because of its new context as a colony.

As an instructor of Indigenous and Canadian literature/studies and of gender theory, I am mindful of this history—and I consider how feminism is implicated with and has had repercussions for all genders and sexualities. We cannot see feminism as an isolated area of study, precisely because of such repercussions. One example to consider in view of contemporary scholarly currents of gender and sexuality revolves around Indigenous men and masculinities. These topics have increasingly come under critical scrutiny, beginning in the 1970s, when masculinity was conceptualized as a social construct, rendered visible for its hold on power, rather than understood as a manifestation of biological facticity. Indigenous men and masculinities have thus come to the fore in critical inquiry in recent decades.

Most critics focus on the dearth of scholarship related to the unique features of Indigenous masculinities. In *Indigenous Men and Masculinities: Legacies, Identities, and Regeneration*, for example, editors Robert Alexander Innes and Kim Anderson argue that feminist and masculinity studies have often been treated as opposites. They argue that there has been "little activism or political will to address Indigenous men's issues, and as a result there are very few policies or social programs designed for Indigenous men" (3). They urge scholars to assume a wider view. As roles for women and femininities have expanded and gained traction over the last several decades, scholarship must explore men and masculinities and, in particular, consider how "Indigenous men are more often viewed as victimizers, not as victims," a function of a "hegemonic masculinity that is perpetuated through white supremacist patriarchy" (9). As the goalposts continue to change for women, feminism, and femininity, in

other words, these shifts must have implications for the study of men and masculinities, especially Indigenous ones.

One writer who has worked productively against singular and violent notions of manhood and their repercussions for women is the Dene writer Richard Van Camp. Van Camp is from the Tłı̨chǫ Dene Nation from Fort Smith, in the Northwest Territories, which is also the setting for his short story collection *The Moon of Letting Go*. One of his stories from *The Moon of Letting Go*, "Show Me Yours," offers a clear example of how Van Camp explores vulnerability as essential to practising a sustainable form of masculinity—and this vulnerability's significant repercussions for women and feminism. At the outset of "Show Me Yours," the narrator recounts how two characters that search for and bully him are startled to find a necklace with his baby picture hanging from it—one that replaces the image of a saint, an implicit reference to the legacies of the Catholic Residential School system. The discovery brings them to a halt—the token of vulnerability not only confounds them, but also disrupts the violence of the encounter. They release the narrator and enjoin him contemptuously to "[g]o home" because he's "not a man anymore" (4)—they believe that *wearing his baby picture* has undone his manhood. The narrator, incidentally also named Richard, has indeed experienced a change. His response to his attackers in that moment—"I'm trying to be!"—communicates his desire to be different from the person they once recognized, one that challenges and undermines his bullies (4).

By the story's end, Shawna, a woman Richard has loved for some time, visits him later in his life; his earlier practice of masculinity had impeded his connection with her. The story culminates in the flourishing of their romantic heterosexual relationship, where, as Richard relates, Shawna takes "her beautiful baby Cree picture and [holds] it up and I put mine facing hers and we kiss[]" (7). Here, the practice of being vulnerable also serves as a prototype for all manner of relationships and bonds featured throughout the rest of the short story cycle. Richard the narrator and Richard Van Camp the author, in other words, "show us theirs" in this story, demonstrating that vulnerability takes courage, that vulnerability produces real intimacy—and that vulnerability may be offered as a way of recalibrating our understanding of gender as a whole.

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Hannah McGregor

For Shame

A year ago, I logged onto an online conference panel to see a dear friend give a talk about shame. Her argument, as she'd laid it out to me when I asked about her paper, was about the role shame was playing in the so-called CanLit culture wars. She wanted to distinguish between the experience of *being* shamed—a kind of emotional violence intended to silence—and the experience of *feeling* shame, an emotional reaction to having done something we maybe don't feel great about. She argued that those in positions of power often struggle to recognize the difference, or—as she recently clarified in our group chat[1]—to see the *utility* of shame.

Imagine my surprise when the first paper in this panel turned out to be about my very own work. About *Refuse*, specifically: about how it pathologized Canadian literature, about the violence of shaming people (in this case, "people" being an allegory for a national literature, I suppose). I bring this up not because the paper itself was particularly noteworthy; it certainly wasn't the first presentation on the evils of my own scholarship that I've had sprung on me at a conference (and I'm sure it won't be the last!). But ever since then, I've been thinking about shame and about the role that shame may play in feminist critique as praxis,[2] both within and beyond the study of Canadian literature.

I am, indeed, ashamed of Canada. This country is founded on profound violence: extractive resource mining, Residential Schools, antiBlack and antiAsian immigration policies, genocide, and eugenics.

These are, as the saying goes, features rather than bugs: they are integral to what Canada means, a constant reminder that a just orientation towards the nation-state is not to redeem but to destroy it. We should be fighting for the abolition of Canada and for the abolition of institutions and cultural industries that perpetuate it, CanLit included. But we're all feminists here, so I probably don't need to convince you that the nation-state is bad news. No, I want to talk about shame.

You see, I'm not really a Canadianist anymore, these days, but I am definitely a feminist, and the question of feminist critique is at the heart of my work. More than the content of this critique, I'm interested in its shapes, its effects and affects: Where does feminist critique take place, who participates in it, and how does it make us feel? If it's true that feminist critique has a tendency to "ruin" things—to kill joys, as it were—then what are we supposed to do with the bad feelings that result? I've been particularly thinking about these questions in light of a podcast I used to make about *Harry Potter*.[3] Yes, the same *Harry Potter* written by an unrepentantly outspoken TERF who is actively using her enormous cultural and economic capital to strip trans people of their rights and spread propaganda that endangers the lives of a community I love deeply. My co-host Marcelle Kosman and I grappled regularly with our feelings of shame as we asked alongside our listeners: Should we still be reading and discussing this book series? What do we do with the shame we feel for ever having loved these books, for loving them still, despite knowing what we now know about the author? How do we find space for the vital work of feminist critique without sliding to extremes, either demanding an impossible moral purity from the culture we love or pretending that there is nothing politically at stake in how we choose our objects of study?

Making this podcast has convinced me that shame, far from being damaging or cruel, is in fact a deeply productive affect, one that is useful for thinking with and through. In fact, shame can be a particularly feminist feeling. Feeling ashamed provides me with ethical information—a gut check, of sorts—that serves me in navigating the complexity of cultural production and the work of feminist critique. Shame has helped us to divest of all activities that financially supported the series' author, to lift up the voices of trans and gender non-conforming readers and critics, to always put our readings in

conversation with the real-world consequences of the author's actions. Shame, I believe, makes us better scholars and teachers and feminists—and, in this sense, it can be a useful counterbalance to the work of critique, which slides so easily into a positioning of the critical self as outside the problem. Critique goes hand in hand with quitting, I think, which is why the most stringent critiques of academia are often articulated by those who have left. But shame? That's for those of us who are still in the thick of it. Shame, in fact, is very good at reminding us that we *are* in the thick of it, not standing on the outside looking in; shame reminds us of where we stand in relation to power and nags at us until we *do something* about it.

It's fine to keep working on and through objects of study that make us feel ashamed, but it's *fine* with an asterisk. *Fine* like we've been saying we're fine for the past three-and-a-half years, almost always meaning: not fine, not okay at all, dreadful really, but this is the world we live in, we're up against it, we can't get outside of it, so we'll keep moving through as long as we're able. *Fine* as in: I'm dragging what I can from the smoking wreckage of the world, do you want to help? *Fine* as in: let's not forget that things could be otherwise, let's not stop feeling our way, collectively, through shame and rage and grief, towards something else.

Notes

1. The group chat is one of my primary sites of feminist meaning-making, a discursive space that is liminally situated between the privacy of my own mind and the publicness of a social media feed or conference presentation. In the group chat, ideas might be tested and teased out as part of a collaborative feminist praxis.
2. My understanding of praxis is relatively straightforward: it is the intersection of theory and practice, the point where the two meet. I am interested in feminist critique as praxis rather than theory, which is to say, I am interested in feminist critique that *does something*.
3. You can listen, if you like. The podcast is called *Witch, Please* and I think it is very good. I'm making a new podcast now called *Material Girls*, which is even better.

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Sophie Moulaison

(Re)membering the City: On Daphne Marlatt's Liquidities

Published in 2013, *Liquidities: Vancouver Poems Then and Now* is Daphne Marlatt's most recent development in her long-standing interest in examining Vancouver's urban landscape through verse. *Liquidities* includes revisions of selected poems from her 1972 collection *Vancouver Poems* alongside fourteen new pieces that trace Vancouver's "incessant deconstruction and reconstruction" over the past few decades (xii). Written in sprawling, paratactical verses driven forward by a strong political impetus, *Liquidities* is a process of remembering and re-membering the city and the text, as well as the personal and public histories that inform both. In what follows, I address the critique of neoliberalism that lies at the heart of *Liquidities*. I suggest that Marlatt's account of the city's changing landscape under late-stage capitalism provides an important lens through which we may consider contemporary feminism's own relationship with—and possible resistance to—neoliberalism. To this end, *Liquidities* suggests the significance of memory in imagining an urban and feminist politics beyond neoliberalism.

The "liquidities" of the collection's title references the multiple fluid movements that pass through Vancouver's landscape and Marlatt's

own writing. As a term, *liquidities* refers first to the fluid sprawl of urban development as it lapses into catastrophic excess, flowing outwards until it struggles to sustain itself: "*building bigger* cruise *ships* bigger and / biggest" (59). It also designates the poet's formal innovations, the running associations that "merg[e] images in an ongoing flow" (xi). Moreover, *liquidities* suggests the "incessant rain of global warming" that broods over Vancouver's cityspace (xii): "it's warming up / so grab a / rainhat" (69).

Liquidities also designates the liquid assets, the uneven flow of capital, and the influx of precarious labour that shape Vancouver's economic inequities. Spaces of global capitalism such as Vancouver have, since the mid-1980s, been governed by neoliberal policies that neglect redistribution in favour of laissez-faire "trickle-down" strategies. Neoliberal policies of privatization, financialization, and austerity have led to immense concentrations of wealth in most of the world's cities, all against the backdrop of what the United Nations has identified as an exploding "planet of slums" (qtd. in Harvey 4). *Liquidities* thus advances a linguistically innovative critique of the devastation wrought by decades of unchecked urbanization and tightening neoliberalism in Vancouver. The city is presented as possessed by a cannibalistic consumerism, "swallow[ing] men" (22), feasting on a "banquet / of flesh" (25), and "drink[ing]" and "eat[ing]" its people (62). Marlatt also addresses the uneven texture of urban development under neoliberalism in poems such as "raining buckets," which includes a reference to a billboard erected by the Vancouver-based public art collective Digital Natives to raise awareness about the housing crisis facing the city's Indigenous population: "*If you lived under this bridge / you'd be home by now*" (60).

The title *Liquidities* also designates the lapses between the porous boundaries of past and present that inform the collection's littoral temporality. Marlatt's poetics move swiftly across personal and public memory to unearth stories of subaltern suffering swallowed by the city's expanse. In an essay titled "Salvaging: The Subversion of Mainstream Culture in Contemporary Feminist Writing," Marlatt writes about the possibilities of recovering something meaningful from that which has been deemed worthless by dominant systems of valorization: "What interests me as a feminist writer is the concept . . . of retrieving value from what has been written off. Finding something valuable in trash" (Marlatt qtd. in Wiens 267). "Retrieving value from

what has been written off" is a process central to *Liquidities*, as Marlatt turns her attention to sites of urban abjection such as the "Limed / library steps" (14), the "pigeon / shit" that "stains Cosmopolitan Inn" (59), and the "rotting pier" that form Vancouver's landscape (67). Her poetry also examines alternative temporalities that lie outside of the concerns of the city's "official" history. Poems such as "approach" attend to Vancouver's past socialist movements, such as the Habitat Forum, noting the emancipatory potential and "hope for community" found therein (59).

Liquidities thus emphasizes the radical potential of care against capital, community against commodity, and memory against neoliberal hegemony. Neoliberalism does its best to erase the ongoing histories of oppression and the sites of abjection on which our cities are founded. To perpetuate itself, neoliberalism upholds forgetting as its primary modality of thought, suspending alternative temporalities in favour of a "'naturalized' and eternized social structure, that is . . . conceived and considered as immutable, without any possible alternative" (Traverso 57). As urban spaces like Vancouver absorb their memories of suffering into shimmering new cities, we must, like Marlatt, always be attentive to the memories that slip to the margins of our spaces. By revisiting and reimagining past texts, geographies, and memories, we not only resist the impulse to forget but also uncover new political potentialities. As Dawn Thompson writes, when memory "takes on a political impetus, [it] also becomes a memory of the future; it is no longer a record or story of the past, but a map for social change" (5).

Contemporary feminist activism and critique, I would like to suggest, face a challenge similar to that facing Marlatt's Vancouver. The fate of feminism, like that of the city, is often swayed by the logic of late-stage capitalism. As Nancy Fraser writes, for instance, second-wave feminism "dovetailed all too neatly with a rising neoliberalism that wanted nothing more than to repress all memory of social egalitarianism" (5). Neoliberal feminism, like the neoliberal city, also privileges forgetting: a sense of amnesia threatens at times to occlude its "emancipatory promise" as the importance of collective action and economic critique have fallen too often by the wayside (14). As feminist critics, then, we must consider what Fraser, quoting Hester Eisenstein, calls feminism's "dangerous liaison" with neoliberalism with the sensibility of Marlatt's urban poetics (3).

Feminist critique in the here and now must, like *Liquidities*, be attuned to the contingent crises of racial inequality, climate change, and neoliberalism that threaten our communities today. From *Liquidities*, we may also learn to revalorize the process of revision and excavate memories of feminism's revolutionary spirit in the hopes of imagining our futures anew.

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Tanis MacDonald

Sticky Wills and Other Feminist Footprints

In Deborah Levy's *Real Estate*, the third part of her "living autobiography," Levy writes about an incident at a party where an older male writer blocks her way to ask if she doesn't find her literary success "vulgar" and "a total bore" (251). Levy notes that this man's education "had taught him to regard his own thoughts as monumental" and "he viewed every female writer as a sitting tenant on his land" (258). When I joined my department as a junior faculty member, the first event I attended was a graduate student meet-and-

greet. I had landed a tenure-track position in a terrible job market, moved across the country, bought a house, and my father had died a year earlier. So, with all of that, maybe I was more vulnerable than I should have been. At the event, a senior professor raised his glass to me then leaned in close to say, "Just so you know, you are never going to teach poetry or creative writing in this department. Those are *my* courses." Then he leaned back and shouted: "Cheers!" This cheesy performance was baffling. Contemporary poetry was my academic specialty, and if I was never going to teach it, why had I been hired? Why was I a "sitting tenant" on this scholarly patch?

Between the sharpness of the shock and the ridiculousness of the boast, I felt dulled. In the following years, I heard this man call more than one female writer a "bitch" in front of students. I eventually taught the courses he had been hoarding, and still do, but not until he retired, when I was called upon to revitalize courses that had been taught so disdainfully ("bitch!") that students no longer wanted to enrol in them. The strategy of openly mocking female authors, and with them, the students who admired those authors, resembled a scorched-earth policy so strongly that I could taste the ash. And that ash tasted like a lot of work for me.

When I presented this anecdote as part of a presentation, three colleagues from different institutions approached me afterwards to say this early-career bullying had happened to them. So, I don't think this is a special story. But I'm with Levy, who notes that it's such a common story that it shouldn't remain a secret. With chagrin, I note that feminist work in our institutions has this kind of story as its bedrock: infuriating you'll-never-believe-this-is-still-an-issue stories, and as I consider the damage that the overturn of *Roe v. Wade* will do in the country south of us, I, too, as in Ali Solomon's recent *New Yorker* cartoon, want for my birthday that "the activism of my youth . . . not be all for nothing."

In her 2014 book *Willful Subjects*, Sara Ahmed notes that willful subjects—those who want change—often come up against willful objects "that will not allow willful subjects to carry out their will" (42). It's popular to think of the neoliberal university as a willful object, as our institutions are heavily invested in keeping feminists and other resistors stupefied by feeding on our pain and exploiting our emotional labour. I don't want to minimize the impact of this on living bodies, but I'm encouraged by the way Ahmed unpacks willfulness as

the personal and social practice of intimate unreasonableness in the face of unhappiness and bullying:

> Willfulness is used to explain errors of will—unreasonable or perverted will—as faults of character. Willfulness can thus be understood . . . as an attribution to a subject of will's error. Willfulness and unhappiness seem to meet at this point, a stray point. This intimacy of willfulness and unhappiness remains to be thought. And to think that intimacy is to queer the will. (4)

I love thinking of craving feminist change at this volatile crossroads as productively queered. Ahmed's intimate unreasonableness dovetails with the dynamics of envy and scorn, as Susan Fiske examines in her study of status, *Envy Up, Scorn Down*. Fiske looks at how meritocracies are self-perpetuating and self-congratulatory via the toxicity of compulsive comparison, and she notes: "scorn is an aggressive wish to banish the scorned other," in which wish the "scornful power-holders are not only selfish but willfully clueless" (16–17). The scorners ignore and sneer at what they fear: change, difference, a world in which their thoughts are not monumental by default. But feminists stick to what causes us discomfort, as Ahmed notes in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*: the "sticky sign" is "an effect of a history of articulation, which allows the sign to accumulate value" (92), though she also warns that "to adhere is not always to cohere" (98). Levy, too, warns that women will sometimes carry forward the work of scornful men, but that it is "filthy work" (255).

I can't forget the students' faces when my scornful colleague called feminist writers "bitches": bemused at his mild cursing, surprised at his volatility, and nervous at the possibility of retribution, just as he wanted them to be. Those expressions stick to me, despite the time that has passed. There's a fog of war surrounding our feminist scholarship as research practice, as pedagogy, and as day-to-day emotional labour, a fog that serves the institution's willful cluelessness and refusal to read these actions as a feminist history. Those signs of our articulation, queered and sticky and earthy, make an archive: "desire lines, faint marks on the earth, as traces of where you or others have been. A willfulness archive is premised on hope: the hope that those who wander away from the paths they are supposed to follow

leave their footprints behind" (Ahmed, *Willful Subjects* 21). I am one sticky bitch with big feet, all in for a feminist willfulness archive.

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Erin Wunker

Reading Feminisms: Notes on Some of the Texts That Shape Me

To understand the relevance of feminist theory and criticism in my life required me to look back on how and when I first encountered feminism. As I thought about how to respond to this generous call issued by the editors, I found myself thinking about younger versions of myself. There I was, lost, naive, and always with a book. Feminism, for me, has emerged from many places, but first and most arrestingly, it came in textual form. Here are some of my key memories of encountering feminisms in text.

Sometime around the middle of the 1990s I find a copy of *Sassy* magazine in the public library in Henderson, North Carolina. I had been dropped off at the library while the rest of the family went to the YMCA—I am off the hook this once because I had just gotten my period for the first time and no one could face teaching me how to manage a tampon, nor could I face learning how. And so, here I am,

alone, mildly ashamed of my body, acutely aware of my limited skills with both my body and the library I will be in for the next two hours. The library is in a low, one-storey brick building with small tables and a few computers at one end, narrow metal rows of books, and a limp magazine rack at the other. After a few half-hearted mopes through the stacks, I drift over to the rack and spot it almost immediately. The cover has two girls wearing weird bright outfits and the strangest shoes I've ever seen. Inside there is an article on Tracy Chapman. A small piece about Bikini Kill. A how-to for girls who want to learn to skateboard. A DIY guide for making a pair of jeans into a skirt. In short, a lifeboat for an awkward kid (me) who was feeling out of place in every way possible. I devour every page twice and have to stop myself from slipping the magazine into my bag to take home and keep in my room.

1998. I am sitting in a literature class in the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. It is hot in the classroom, but you can't open the windows because the building was constructed in the 1960s to be riot-proof. We are reading Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. We are reading Gayl Jones' *Corregidora*. We are reading Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*. This class is one of two required courses on African American literature I need to graduate with a degree in literature. The professor is Dr. Mae Henderson. She is the smartest person I have ever encountered. She moves between terms that are new to me (hello, *bildungsroman*) and contexts that are unfamiliar and make the books we're reading rich with history and present-tense vitality. I am keenly aware I am out of my depth. I sit directly in the middle of the class and take furious notes. I am overwhelmed by the sentences in these books. How can you do that to a sentence, I wonder, over and again. I am dislocated by the ululations that refuse conclusion in Jones' novel. I am catapulted into other realms by Morrison's grammatical innovation. I am taught through the whole term in a mode I would now call intersectional feminism but at the time was simply a constant and world-altering reminder to look at contexts from many angles in order to read the book and think about what it took each writer to write it.

2001. I am probably going to get a C in this political science class on feminist politics. I keep looking to give the right answer, but the professor keeps writing "ask better questions" on my assignments. This course is an elective. I don't need it for my literature degree, but I am fascinated. Partly by all the people in the class—they seem so sure,

so articulate, so ready to debate. The professor wears skirt suits and stockings and I can see her leg hair through the stockings. I find this both shocking and thrilling, and I think, possibly for the first time, about not shaving my legs. Partly, I am fascinated by the readings. Some are locked boxes I turn over and over. Irigaray. Frye. Wittig. Wittig I think I almost understand when she writes about being outside of straight imagination. Some are poetry. Gloría Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* is almost sacred. I circle it the way one might circle a venerated object or a rare flower—reverential, awestruck, a bit covetous. Some texts are so vital I carry them around in my bag just to have them near. Patricia Hill Collins' *Black Feminist Thought* teaches me about intersectionality and in so doing forever shifts my relationship with the world.

2005. The tension in the classroom is so electric I can almost taste the metallic energy. I'm in graduate school in a year-long feminist theory course and things have been taking a turn for a while. The professor, white, queer, cis, has made a misstep and some of my classmates are shaken to their core. She has said, this professor, that she is glad we are through the difficulty of French feminist theory and into the relative ease of bell hooks. I can't quite put my finger on why, but some of the class is filled with anger and hurt. Later, or rather, through the process of finishing the class with my classmates, I will know that my lack of clarity about the "why" are bound up in white privilege. I will carry the recognition of my own unearned privileges for the rest of my life. I will also carry the recognition of my belated recognition. I carry. Present tense. Future tense.

2009–2022. Again, the tension in the classroom is electric, only this time I am the professor. The classroom is multiple classrooms. The tensions are many. The time a student yelled at me in front of the class for giving queer theorists more space on a syllabus than Heidegger. The time I cry in front of the class because I cannot picture a world in which a president of a country says, unabashed, that he grabs women by the pussy, and yet here we are, living in it. The days we mark Theresa Spence's hunger strike together. The days we encounter rape culture yet again in the multiple and shape-shifting forms of what we call, following Tarana Burke, Me Too. *Me too*, we say in the classroom. *Me too*. Then there are the days when we pivot. We become small squares in one another's living spaces, and private/public selves collapse. I talk about holding space in new ways. Class conversation

takes a different shape, moving over mute buttons and screens blacked out for all sorts of reasons I will never know, and yet bear witness to differently, for a time. In these squares wars are waged on our bodies, communities, children. On our climates. And yet each day we begin, or I try to invite us to begin, by naming something tangible and lofted and good. A poem. A colour. A future. Another chance in the classroom, together.

What is the relevance of feminist theory in my life? I realize, in the course of this invitation, that it is the foundation of my capacity to stand up in front of a classroom of students and ask us to think together. It is the spine that holds up conversation. The compass that guides us to more intersections, more generosity, more precision in our relatings. Though I have experienced and try to live feminism in all facets of my life, I realize it is the classrooms and texts—actual words on a page written by feminists of all sorts of lived experiences—that have fundamentally shaped my sense of justice and of the possibility of community. What is the relevance? The same as oxygen. Vital. Vivifying. Precious. Shared.[1]

Notes

1. I could have written this about feminist friendships. Another time. It needs to be said here that two of my dear friends read this and offered vital commentary. Thanks to Hannah McGregor and Heather Jessup. I also thank Lily Cho and Linda Morra, my feminist colleagues first, and, now, beloved friends. Gratitude to Heather Milne and Aubrey Hanson, feminist beacons and—what a gift—friends.

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Go Down Singing

Mark Dickinson
Canadian Primal: Poets, Places, and the Music of Meaning. McGill-Queen's UP $34.95

Reviewed by Katharine Bubel (Trinity Western University)

"Sometimes an especially tuned text, arriving in the mail, will point the way," writes Edward F. Mooney in "When Philosophy Becomes Lyric," his tribute to the peripatetic philosopher Henry Bugbee that nods in the notes to Jan Zwicky's "path-breaking" work (204, 222). Indeed, arriving in the mail, Mark Dickinson's *Canadian Primal* is one such "especially tuned text." In the dark wood of current conditions, it presents Zwicky and her four fellow "thinking and singing" ecopoets—Robert Bringhurst, Dennis Lee, Tim Lilburn, and Don McKay—calmly pointing a way. Reading *Canadian Primal* while teaching Dante's *Inferno*, a work with which Bringhurst too is currently occupied (133), it strikes me that these poets are in accord with the mythos of the *Commedia*: the way up is the way down.

Dickinson's title signals one of the shaping influences on that mythos, George Grant's essay "In Defence of North America," which enucleates the "primal encounter" with the land and First Nations by English-speaking Protestant settlers. Grant describes the meeting as marred by "uncontemplative," "unflinching" practicality and conquest (25), and as ultimately engendering the "technical reason [that] has become so universal . . . it has closed down on openness and awe, questioning and listening" (24). Dickinson points out, though, that Grant sees a small door to transcendence: "Any intimations of authentic deprival are precious, because they are the ways through which intimations of good, unthinkable in the public terms, may yet appear to us" (Grant 141).

As *Canadian Primal* reveals, these five poets locate their intimations of deprival on the edge of ruin, collapsing world structures, and, most dreadfully, ecological catastrophe. But the way down can also be a coming home. As Lilburn observes elsewhere, "Disaster is often the precursor of great contemplative ages—strain in the Roman Empire and doctrinal stress" (239), for example, gave birth to the gnomic wisdom of the desert fathers: "If a man settles in a certain place and does not bring forth the fruit of that place, the place itself casts him out, as one who has not borne its fruit" (Merton 88).

Telling their stories of fruitful settling, as well as his own, Dickinson gracefully intertwines biography, literary explication, and contemplations of emplaced cultural awakenings and shiftings. The book defies the "non-evaluative" analytical detachment that Grant detested in the scholarship of the modern university (124). Instead, to borrow again from Mooney, Dickinson's lyrical "tales that open up as song" resonate with the remarkable Canadian ecopoets it regards (218). The five presences interpenetrate the whole and the parts of *Canadian Primal*, while individual chapters delineate inscapes to be discovered one at a time in their fascinating particularity: Lee, "Polyphonic Soul"; McKay, "Shapeshifter"; Bringhurst, "Renaissance Man"; Zwicky,

"Lyric Philosopher"; Lilburn, "The Conversationalist." We listen in on "the larger conversation" (as Lilburn names it) that informs the poets' "shared shape of thought" (Lilburn qtd. in Dickinson 216). While acknowledging our historical descent and what Grant calls the "deprival" attendant to our colonial disorientations, Dickinson observes in the poets a unique "recovery of a mode of musical thinking open to ancestors, nonhuman beings, natural processes, and the genius of specific places" (xiv). He proposes both Canadian cultural and global relevance for their offering of "the rarest of gifts: a cure for the sense of rootlessness and the inability to perceive meaning in the world around us that drives so much of our predatory behaviour as a modern civilization" (xiv).

It is cold at the bottom of Inferno—so cold, the poet-pilgrim Dante reports, "my every sense had left its dwelling in my face, just as a callus has no feeling" (*Inferno* 33.100–03; trans. Allen Mandelbaum). The numbing air is agitated by the futile flapping wings of Dis, the fallen Lucifer, ancient epitome of *corruptio optimi pessima*. Frozen in the lake, his movement is restricted in stasis, three maws masticating the arch-traitors who, according to the law of *contrapasso*, are the ever-consumed, as Dis is the ever-consuming. Likewise, near the end of Robin Wall Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass*, to which Dickinson alludes in his "Personal Coda," we encounter a cannibalistic, consuming creature: "The Windigo is the legendary monster of our Anishinaabe people, the villain of a tale told on freezing nights in the north woods . . . a being in the shape of an outsized man" with a heart made of ice (304).

Erotic hunger turned into devouring, disordered desire: this is Dante's Dis, the Anishinaabe Windigo, the technocrat akin to Milton's Satan with a "mind not to be changed by place or time." As Kimmerer observes, "Creation stories offer a glimpse into the worldview of a people, of how they understand themselves, their place in the world, and the ideals to which they aspire. Likewise, the collective fears and deepest values of a people are also seen in the visage of the monsters they create" (305). Approving Nick Mount's remark that Lee's *Civil Elegies* is a candidate for a Canadian "founding epic" (qtd. in Dickinson 27), Dickinson swiftly notes that it is "not a creation story, but identifies what will happen to a civilization that does not have one" borne out of "a meaningful dialogue with its surroundings" (27). Such honesty "clears a space for something new to emerge, the intimations of which reverberate," not only in Lee's poetry, but in the works of his fellow thinking-singers too.

The pith of *Canadian Primal*, especially in its coda, is an *ordo amoris* rooted in the humility of relinquishment and waiting, of openness to reciprocity with the land. We observe at times bitter dissatisfaction in the conditions of our current knowing and dwelling, but in the downward turn, there is *ecstasis*: the roots go out. Their movement can be heard in the final pages of Dickinson's book, which are given over to the poets themselves. Lee: "You must go deeper." McKay: "The question concerning hereness . . . remains a live issue." Bringhurst: "Am I my planet's keeper?" Zwicky: "Earth with its arms wide open." Lilburn: "Being in the thrall of beauty is probably the most efficient means of transformation." And they, with such singing words, may so dispose a heart to longing for this journey.

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The Art of Weaving

Harold Rhenisch

Landings: Poems from Iceland. Burton House Books $20.00

Reviewed by Kelly Shepherd (Northern Alberta Institute of Technology)

The more time I spend with Harold Rhenisch's new book, the more I notice. There are layers within layers, and seemingly endless threads, but I can only point out a few of them here.

For one thing, *Landings: Poems from Iceland* is visually interesting. The poems are all in couplets and the entire text is in italics. Both are a little distracting at first—do the italics suggest speech? Song? Whispering? Wind?—but the couplets make sense when you read the poems aloud. The pattern is reminiscent of *Two Minds*, Rhenisch's dazzling 2015 collection of ghazals. While the poems in *Landings* are not ghazals (although some of them seem to flirt with that form), their short stanzas encourage a repetitive, chant-like rhythm.

If you've read Rhenisch, you know that his poetry is elemental, earthy, and carefully assembled from the oldest linguistic materials: stone, wood, water. He has undertaken a lifelong study of language, both scholarly and embodied, and he brings that to bear on his writing here. A useful reference, and a literary work in its own right, Rhenisch's ecological etymology blog *The Green Earth Dictionary* collects and compiles those words in English "that come from a time in which earth knowledge was strong among English speakers and was truly a common, indigenous language in no way separate from a living earth."

In the introduction to *Landings*, the poet reminds the reader of these etymological links and their essential connections to the earth: "Old Norse . . . has scarcely changed here in eleven centuries. English, once virtually identical to Icelandic, has kept many of these roots" (i). Grown from these roots, Rhenisch suggests, these poems are spoken in the earth's tongue—in the primeval language of English. These are big ideas, and outside the scope of a book review; however, I hope to give the reader a glimpse by delving into some of this book's imagery.

Images, and image clusters, unify poems and link them to one another like patterns in a knitted sweater or knots in a fishing net. There are several sets of images

that could be discussed here, but I'll focus on what I think is the book's most central: textile imagery. The table of contents is entitled "The Threads," and the poems are arranged into five sections: "Loom," "Warp," "Weft," "Cloth," and "Shawl." Furthermore, there are numerous poems about the various textile arts which turn wool into clothing for the Icelandic people, who share their windy hillsides and damp coastlines with their sheep. (The importance of sheep here cannot be overstated: according to the introduction, the sheep in Iceland outnumber human residents ten to one.) These images start with the most basic unit of the textile arts: a single thread. In "The Line," the book's first poem, "*A thread begins with wind / in grass stalks shedding rain*" (3). In the second poem, the speaker proclaims:

> *I knit this line into a lamb*
> *grazing hills*
>
> *of black stone and purl*
> *a man who*
>
> *casts a net into autumn storm.* (4)

The thread, the line, is also a line of poetry. And the speaker is knitting the poem, *purling* into existence the figure who is himself using a net: another configuration of lines or cords. Speech, especially poetry, is made up of these lines, which are created from the elements of the earth.

"*Each word is a net*," according to another poem, "*woven with the click of tongue on tooth*" (67). This knitting, weaving process also includes the speech act that will remind the reader of the etymology, the earth-based roots, of English from which Rhenisch is drawing. This is musical poetry intended for the tongue and the ear. And according to the poem "Findings," we ourselves are the products of this weaving: "*carrying the earth within us, / we baskets woven by hand*" (28). We are the weavers and the knitters; we are also baskets, vessels who come into being through the processes of weaving and knitting. "The Art of Weaving," one of the book's longer poems, also exemplifies this image cluster:

> *There are the arts of making*
> *the world out of a string,*
>
> *tying it off and cutting it.*
> *Sheep are its greatest artists.* (8)

The world is made of string (or thread, or line), and the sheep—who are the source of almost everything in this geopoetic cosmology—seem to be portrayed as the Fates (or the Norns, their Norse incarnation). They shape the course of human destiny. This is not so far-fetched when you consider that sheep are the source of the essential woollen garments, the threads and cloths, that literally kept Iceland's early human residents alive.

Several more poems describe the mythical yet practical arts of weaving, sewing, darning, and knitting. And the knotting of nets, one knot at a time, "*one spell for each fish of the sea*" (10). "*I wear a sweater a woman knitted here / out of the ways of sheep*," says the speaker of another poem, "*Such winding is the manner // of people who live within words, / bound by spells they cast*" (66). This magical textile imagery is

prominent throughout the book, but it is just one image cluster among many. A longer essay could be written about the recurring images of stone, ocean, or breath. And the etymological project alone would require many more pages to explore. (I recommend looking up some of these recurring words and images, like *thread* and *line*, in Rhenisch's *Green Earth Dictionary*.)

Rhenisch is a prolific writer, and it's difficult to compare his many and diverse books. But if you're new to his work, this is a great place to begin. *Landings* is a mystical and ecological collection, full of truths and transformations. It is a "word hoard that binds human relationships with Earth, Sky and Sea" (i). In these poems, people and places, words and worlds, are woven together. As readers, we just have to follow the threads.

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Encountering Stowe and More

Cheryl Thompson
Uncle: Race, Nostalgia, and the Politics of Loyalty. Coach House Books $22.95

Reviewed by Jennifer Harris (University of Waterloo)

Most of us have, in some form or another, encountered Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 antislavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life among the Lowly*. It is ubiquitous in literary studies, a bestselling publishing phenomenon disseminated far and wide, translated and staged in various forms and contexts. Even if we have not read it, it is impossible not to know it or have an opinion about it. It is a novel that one approaches with a set of expectations or even prejudices, depending on how we have encountered it. As Cheryl Thompson points out in *Uncle: Race, Nostalgia, and the Politics of Loyalty*, one of the most recognizable iterations of the novel today is in the use of the eponymous character's name as a slur hurled at Black men for behaving in ways that are deemed inauthentically Black, or—worse yet—evidencing supposedly traitorous behaviour towards the race. Being called an Uncle Tom is being subject to an assault on one's racial loyalties and authenticity.

This is the genesis of *Uncle*. Describing her own adult reading of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Thompson writes, "I needed to connect the dots between the martyr in the novel and the epithet hurled at Black Conservatives today" (9). *Uncle* is her attempt to map that connection through the figure's "tumultuous journey from literary character to minstrel caricature, advertising icon, film, and television stereotype, and, eventually, to his final incarnation as a colloquial insult firmly embedded within Western culture" (14). But underlying the investigation—or perhaps emerging from it—is another consideration, the desire to "look deeper and ask difficult questions about how we choose to relate to white society and its institutions" (144). That second consideration does not stem from Stowe's novel itself, but from the way the character of Uncle Tom has been reinterpreted and deployed by white culture

and its institutions. He is, in this instance, less the radical Christian figure explored in Jane Tompkins' seminal *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860*, and more the secular martyr who services white ideology.

Thompson is not the first to take on a history of this imagery. There is a proliferation of academic works exploring Uncle Tom and related figures, including Thomas F. Gossett's *Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture* (1985), Maurice M. Manring's *Slave in a Box: The Strange Career of Aunt Jemima* (1998), Micki McElya's *Clinging to Mammy: The Faithful Slave in Twentieth-Century America* (2007), and Adena Spingarn's *Uncle Tom: From Martyr to Traitor* (2018), all of which Thompson has consulted. But her work differs in both scope and audience. In charting the evolution of Uncle Tom, Thompson stages a more expansive reading, bringing in a variety of iterations that evoke the figure more broadly. Her work becomes a miniature overview of crucial movements and events in African American history and culture from Emancipation to Black Lives Matter. It is an accessible overview that might work best for those who possess some familiarity with the history that allows them to appreciate the connections and cultural references. In twenty-four short chapters averaging ten or so pages, Thompson takes on everything: minstrelsy, lynching, redlining, *Amos 'n' Andy*, The House Un-American Activities Committee, soul food, the Moynihan Report, *Good Times*, Eddie Murphy, Clarence Thomas, the murder of George Floyd, and more.

These chapters are akin to snapshots, introducing key cultural threads and episodes as Thompson traces her subject over almost two hundred years. For non-specialists, *Uncle* will serve as a crucial and comprehensive introduction to the evolution of Black representation in white popular culture and advertising. Specialists might note the ambitious scope occasionally leads to simplifications and a few odd moments—it seems a stretch to say "the horrors of slavery had been long forgotten" not even three decades after the close of the Civil War (42). At times the complexity of African American responses to both Stowe's novel and the figure of Uncle Tom is collapsed. Notably absent are the voices of Black men and women before 1920 who had a great deal to say about their moment and the expectations from within white society that African Americans perform gratitude and "know their place." We see a few flashes of this activism, such as the acknowledgement that sleeping-car porters were "agents of political mobilization," the challenges leading to *Plessy v. Ferguson* (76), and the protests of *Song and the South* (107–08). Indeed, as the book moves forward, we hear more about Black activism, coinciding with the rise of the Civil Rights Movement. But, as Thompson makes clear, her book is not meant to be exhaustive, and any "omissions are not oversights" (14). Rather, it is the bigger picture she aims to convey. Moreover, more in-depth excavations of various elements would not have enhanced the stylistic choices or argument of the book, and may have, in fact, detracted from them. It is a balance.

Part of the way Thompson achieves that balance is through her deployment of contemporary artistic production. She repeatedly introduces contemporary playwrights and African American visual artists who respond to the legacy of Uncle Tom and related images. Describing various cultural productions, Thompson highlights the role of the African American artist in drawing attention to what is often taken for granted. They also provide an opportunity to consider a more explicit critique of the operations of whiteness.

Ultimately Thompson has produced, in *Uncle*, the kind of book that will inspire readers to tease out connections of their own, to seek out references, and to search for the cultural texts she introduces. From there, as they encounter new and old cultural forms, they may begin to add to her archive, enriching their understanding of the argument, perhaps nuancing it differently, perhaps not. In the process, they will inevitably rely on those dots she wants to connect.

Our Permanent Revolution

Gail Scott
Permanent Revolution. Book*hug Press $23.00

Reviewed by Karl Jirgens (University of Windsor)

Gail Scott's essay collection *Permanent Revolution* traces literary experimentation in her texts and those by other authors while challenging the authority of conventional narrative voices. These essays—divided into two sections, "The Smell of Fish" and "Spaces Like Stairs"—track Scott's development as a writer, while sharing insights on global literary developments.

It's rare to find an author swinging so comfortably between theory and literary expression. Scott's essays, labelled "non-fiction," embody fictive techniques including disjunctive narration and intertextuality, juxtaposed with multiple atemporal and aspatial perspectives within a polyphonic ventriloquy, a cacophonic carnival of resonating (sister-fiction/theorist) voices. Scott reduces gaps between speaker and addressee while extolling egalitarian pluralism, gender-fluid perspectives, pan-nationality, and voices of women from non-Western cultures.

Scott's style embraces what de Saussure called *parole* (common speech patterns). She explores how French and English communication patterns differ while focusing on writing styles that respond to leftist, feminist, intersectional, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and lesbian ethoi. Scott censures colonialism, champions marginality, and resists fixity while treating language as an open site in which to investigate context, porosity, and volatility while dismantling conventional borders separating literary genres including memoir, fiction, nonfiction, theory, and autobiography. A key narratological question Scott poses in her essay "The Porous Text" is "Who has the right to speak?" (76).

Scott's essays address progressive literary form. I approached reviewing this collection humbly and consulted the author, who encouraged me to proceed because I was in a good position to comment on how this book traces her evolving stylistics. As I write this, *Permanent Revolution* has been long-listed (in the top ten) for the Grand Prix du Livre de la Ville de Montréal.

If revolt remains a constant in the arts, then why is culture still distanced from feminist/artistic expression? Astute readers may notice that *Permanent Revolution* is the title of a work by the anti-Stalinist political activist Leon Trotsky. Scott's essays ask readers to throw off literary-conceptual restrictions that bind us. Two unpaginated front pages titled "Praise for *Permanent Revolution*" offer views by several sister-authors/essayists/theorists. Anne Boyer states that Scott "evokes feminism as an ongoing experimental practice." Bhanu Kapil notes that the book falls "in the gap

between what a novel could have been and what is possible now, and that's a kind of grammar." I agree with Kapil. Another name for this alternative literary form is "autotheory," which according to Lauren Fournier's book on this topic is a hybrid of autobiography and theory. One might call Scott's stylistic approach autotheory, or a variation of New Narrative, or fiction/theory. Some sister-practitioners discussed in *Permanent Revolution* include Kathy Acker, Audre Lorde, Carla Harryman, Anaïs Nin, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, France Théoret, Louky Bersianik, Nicole Brossard, Hélène Cixous, Monique Wittig, and Marguerite Duras. At key points, Scott incorporates discussions of Indigenous authors such as Liz Howard, Jordan Abel, Billy-Ray Belcourt, and Joshua Whitehead. Kapil, an innovative poet, offers insights on Scott's writing and how it challenges dominant aesthetics and theory by combining subjective and autobiographical perspectives. If this book offers a new *grammar*, as Kapil fittingly suggests, then it is a grammar that moves well beyond Jacques Derrida's masculinist tome *Of Grammatology* by contesting dominant, conventional grammars or theoretical frameworks and by incorporating autobiographical materials while debating socio-political topics. Rachel Zolf observes that this collection charts Scott's writerly formation at "the nexus of Québécoise feminist fiction/theory and San Francisco's queer New Narrative bodily spillage" (*Permanent*). *Permanent Revolution* exposes the body politic while investigating narratology, gender, and queer aesthetics. Kate Zambreno calls this approach as "being in conversation with the écriture feminine of friends" (*Permanent*). These essays offer a refreshing, much-needed, and urgent statement about the necessity of moving past conventional socio-literary constructs and thinking patterns. Scott integrates poetics, theory, and language while reimagining New Narrative's representations of subjective experience without pretended objectivity. Scott's *engagé* essays surf the fluid waves of narratology and gesture to uncharted literary territories.

In her foreword, Zoe Whittall states that she loves a novel in which form and language are privileged above plot or "what happens." Whittall notes that Scott's essays consider the "history of the New Narrative movement, its current iterations," influences, evolutions, and recent practitioners, all within a fresh expressive form, while offering salient historical perspectives on innovative literary stylistics. Scott's preface clarifies several key points. She explains that this collection traces her own prose experiments while relating writing to ongoing social upheaval, and that these essays are in conversation with "English-language-experimental prose across the continent" (40), particularly queer New Narrative. Scott explains that the collection includes a foreshortened recreation of *Spaces Like Stairs* (1989), a personal account of writing in the feminist movement during the 1980s in Québec. Questions of gender minorities and gender distributions are viewed through a Marxist lens that recognizes a permanent state of emergency involving how we as a species reshape storytelling or narration. Later, in "The Sutured Subject," Scott references Mina Loy's feminist manifesto which calls for formal revision and "absolute demolition" (63). Scott confesses that she may not agree with that manifesto entirely, but concurs with a call for fundamental change in systems and institutions. Scott acknowledges that this collection emerged during the dire conditions of a global pandemic, a climate calamity, and the oppression and murder of Black and Indigenous people: "Rage accumulates" (6).

One of the essays that I admire is "The Attack of Difficult ~~Women~~ Prose." I'll focus on it, while commenting on several others. This essay's title asks why "~~Women~~" are

under (cultural) erasure. The sluggish rotation of culture's wheels is one reason why any artistic or literary revolution must be permanent. "The Attack of Difficult ~~Women~~ Prose" begins with a short summation of challenges faced by writers seeking profiles and promoting books. Historically, such challenges have proven especially difficult for women writers and even more difficult for writers investigating innovative prose forms that do not privilege plot, but instead pursue structural innovations. Scott investigates such *difficult* writing by considering what she calls the alchemy between art and estrangement, particularly during times of left and right political populism. In her analysis, Scott alludes to Derrida's comments on Karl Marx while eschewing materialist values. She recounts a personal experience in which her novel *My Paris*, which features few active verbs and is written largely in present-participle phrases, was defined by a critic in a prestigious Canadian literary journal as "lesbian aesthetics" (25).

Controversies over aesthetics have arisen for centuries. Virginia Woolf's initial forays into "stream of consciousness" writing were initially met with derision. James Joyce's development of that style was censored and censured, but later embraced as an exemplar of literary innovation. Scott's *rage* justifiably arises over the aforementioned sluggishness. Her frustration ascends in response to literary critics who too often fail to recognize the merits of innovative literary stylistics. Scott notes that when unadventurous critics are confronted with alternative literary forms, they turn to labels such as *feminist*, *lesbian*, *left-wing*, *experimental*, or *Anglo-Québécoise* (25). She observes that it is as if such critics have never read Beckett.

Scott's reference to Harryman's book of essays, *Adorno's Noise*, is accompanied by allusions to Nin, Elizabeth Taylor, and Alice B. Toklas. Scott takes *cou-rage*—French etymology, "*heart anger*" (25)—by acknowledging that at least *some* writers and critics *are* aware of the merits of revolutionary stylistic innovations. Arguably, since Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno maintained that society and culture formed a historical totality and contended that the pursuit of freedom in society and culture was inseparable from the pursuit of social enlightenment, Scott's essays aim to enlighten us; likewise those of Harryman. In *Adorno's Noise*, Harryman explores gender and works by Nin, Acker, Sun Ra, Robert Smithson, Kenzaburo Oe, Elizabeth Grosz, and Jocelyn Saidenberg. Critic Robert Halpern says in an endorsement of Harryman's book *Adorno's Noise* that her multivocal style "reinvents the essay as form, but it doesn't stop short of reinventing thinking" (1). With reference to Harryman, Scott considers intersections between abstraction and narration in literary forms, including prose-poetry. Scott pursues Nin's gesture of opening a window as an act of liberation coupled with a sensual bodily impulse and suggests that some of Nin's published letters serve to explain women to men in a nonemasculating and reasonable way. Perhaps Henry Miller's letters to Nin are insufficient for such explanation, regardless of the writers' torrid affair. Perhaps more could be said about Nin's passionate affair with Miller's wife, June. Scott's essay asks whether Nin will ever become a "full participant in public discourse" (26). Interestingly, the *Guardian* has reported that Nin has become an Internet sensation, noting that aphorisms such as "We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are" are quoted globally. Humans have a tendency to project anxieties and desires onto others and so we create *monsters*. A reference to *monsters* arises in Nin's autobiographical novel, *Seduction of the Minotaur*, which features protagonist Lillian's self-psychoanalysis. The setting is taken from Nin's diary account of her first trip to Acapulco in 1947. The title alludes to a

minotaur in the labyrinth of the unconscious and the challenge of overcoming that monster by developing one's insightfulness.

Related to insight is Scott's deployment of language. In "The Sutured Subject," Scott discusses literary sutures. Alain Badiou explains that while Jacques Lacan frequently deployed the notion of the suture, it was first discussed by Jacques-Alain Miller in his essay "Suture (Elements of the Logic of the Signifier)," which was delivered as an intervention at Lacan's seminar on "Crucial Problems for Psychoanalysis" (1965) and published in *Cahiers pour l'Analyse* in 1966 (Badiou 24). But in her essay, Scott moves beyond neo-Freudian perspectives by stating that literary sutures juxtapose "memory/body/gesture onto languages of the street" (61).

Coincidentally, Scott (61) and Badiou (25) agree that global capitalist political systems strive to make it difficult to challenge regimes of knowledge/power. I think of Foucault when arguing that similar regimes of power shape the literary world. To return to Nin and the socio-political importance of insight, essay collections such as *Permanent Revolution* and *Adorno's Noise* provide the impetus to turn our cultural wheels. In Scott's essay, the literary suture connects the subject and signifying structures with the author's mind and body. Put simply, *how* you say something reveals much about *what* you say. Think of cinematic techniques: splicing, juxtaposition, montage, voice, perspective, and distance. For Scott, the *subject* takes on at least two meanings: 1) the subject of any story and 2) the author as subject (including their unconscious mind). Nin's autobiographical fiction serves as a precursor to what some call *auto-theory*, others call *fiction/theory*, and still others call developments arising from *New Narrative*; all represent subjective experience honestly, using innovative stylistics while incorporating bodily reactions.

Regarding her self-definition, Scott raises questions about gender, race, class, and social constructions of so-called *whiteness*. I think of my father, who was almost murdered on his job site even though he was a white male. But, as it turns out, he was the wrong *type* of white male: a Latvian refugee-foreigner, outside of accepted norms. Intergenerational PTSD partly defines my subject position, as does my service as editor of *Rampike* magazine, which published many of those referenced in Scott's essays, including Acker, Brossard, Derrida, Margaret Christakos, Charles Bernstein, Michel Tremblay, Philippe Sollers, Claude Beausoleil, Meredith Quartermain, and Sylvère Lotringer, among others—as well as Scott herself.

Reading Scott's essays, I also think of Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* (1986) and how she identified a *lost continent* of female literary tradition, neglected by male critics, now rising like Atlantis from the sea. I think of oppressed social groups around the globe in need of urgent help. Many face death daily. If some readers grow weary hearing about oppression, then it's important to remember that *living with* oppression is far more difficult. Nin's notion of *insightfulness* provides a key to coping with our *monsters* of polity.

In "The Attack of Difficult ~~Women~~ Prose," Scott's comments on gender allude to male scopophilia, or the *gaze*, in contrast to feminine sensual bodily contact. Scott then turns to Beckett and Juliet Stevenson (who acted in Beckett's plays) while alluding to thinkers such as Viktor Shklovsky, Derrida, Marx, and Eileen Myles regarding gender spectrums, ageism, and inequities involving the Nobel Prize for literature. Scott reports that Stevenson said that she couldn't relate to Beckett's writing because it emphasized structure and stylistics over subject matter, but she came to

admire it once she acted in his productions (28). With Beckett in the background, Scott comments on *adventurous prose*, which diminishes differences between author, narrator, and character, while considering literary defamiliarization, which she states seems inappropriate during a global pandemic because reality is already defamiliarized. Such considerations lead Scott to ask, in "The Sutured Subject," whether a novel is an act of *ventriloquism* (60). In "The Attack of Difficult ~~Women~~ Prose," Scott challenges the values of conventional literary critics while extolling Duras and Bernstein, who both renounce an overall "lack of cultural commitment" when critics evaluate prose narratives or "writing" (29).

Scott laments lost times when "writers wore upstart intellectual performance as a badge of honour" (29). She commends the virtues of speaking up, and relishes Margaret Atwood's comment that a particular CBC interviewer might be better off reading Harlequin romances. This essay closes with comments on Shklovsky's formalist novel *Zoo* and Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, both of which address surveillance and control anxieties in different ways. Scott references Rod Smith's views on political exhaustion and a resulting complacency. The essay concludes with an allusion to Dostoevsky and a question about whether authors are no longer arbitrators between language and thinking in the face of powerful and oppressive socio-economic forces (30–31). In closing, Scott acknowledges youth who appear to be aware that open individual expression is less important than balancing independence with interdependence. The essay finishes with an unanswered question about what is meant by "balance of power in the Polis" (31). For me, that question recalls that we are part of an interconnected world. Scott's closing reference to youth reminds me of open-minded literary movements such as Solarpunk. Perhaps appropriately, *Permanent Revolution* leaves questions about formal literary innovation open.

I would say more, but I've reached my word limit. So I leave readers to discover the important values of *Permanent Revolution*, and I conclude with Christakos' afterword. Christakos provides a valuable time frame for this book's essays, which serve as catalyst and document of *writing-as-change*. Christakos states that the essays serve as aesthetic experiments, with two primary *lobes* (148). The first involves a union of Scott's recent and revised essays from the past twenty years under the title "The Smell of Fish." The second lobe includes selections from Scott's essays on feminist writing in *Spaces Like Stairs*, revised here under the same title. It seems to me that Christakos' word *lobes* gestures to both brain function and earlobes or listening functions.

In *Permanent Revolution*, Scott candidly addresses radical poetics, literary form, and social change while representing the queer and the political, as well as the necessity of a permanent revolutionary stance that embraces fluidity of identity, gender, and innovative narrative. I encourage readers to purchase *Permanent Revolution*, which is handsomely produced by Book*hug. It is a remarkable collection of valuable, groundbreaking essays.

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Cris de Coeur

Louise Dupré; Donald Winkler, trans.
The Haunted Hand. Guernica Editions $20.00

Darrell Epp
Mechanical Monkeys. Mosaic Press $21.95

Douglas LePan; John Barton, ed.
The Essential Douglas LePan. Porcupine's Quill $14.95

Reviewed by Neil Querengesser (Concordia University of Edmonton)

The three volumes reviewed here are written by poets of different generations, poets born respectively in 1949, 1972, and 1914. They are also stylistically and thematically distinctive. What they have in common, however, is an authenticity born of an uncompromising encounter through both the head and the heart with the world and its manifold challenges. These are poets who can appreciate and celebrate life's better moments yet also cry alongside the crying.

Although I have not read *The Haunted Hand* in its original, Governor General's Award-winning French version, I have no reservations about the English translation by another GG winner. This book is characterized by intense, often overpowering emotions, as the aging narrator tries to come to terms with her guilt and helplessness in response to humanity's unending barbarities, as well as fears of her potential complicity in such evil—hence the title's allusion to the physicality of her own writing. It comprises three sections, all written in the second person (but sometimes significantly straining toward the first), each prefaced by an epigraph and separated into equal parts short-lined verse and prose poems. The first section recounts the narrator's (*your*) guilt-ridden dilemma of euthanizing her cat. She knows it is necessary to do so, but compares herself hyperbolically nevertheless to rapists and murderers. These are soul-searching passages that ripple outward from the individual to the collective, folding back on themselves with the section's concluding words: "Now you glimpse the day when you will confess it. When you will be strong enough to write *I*" (36). The succeeding sections build on the themes introduced in the first, as the narrator tries to process many disturbing thoughts, including sights of roadkill animals; horrifying social media messages of Indigenous girls raped and hanged; and remembrances of twenty-two poets and novelists dead by suicide or apparent suicide. She struggles with trying to be affirmative in the face of such grief—"You want to write *yes*, like Marie, like Molly, like all those who before you answered to love, even deprived of grace you want to write yes" (60)—eventually looping back to the first section's conclusion: "One day you stopped writing *I*, you forget why" (99). The entire volume traces this struggle for the affirmation of the first person; if the poet has been addressing herself and scouring her own soul throughout, she is nevertheless both

implicating and holding out hope for the reader as well in this shared tortured search for redemption.

The poems in *Mechanical Monkeys* also cry out against the absurdities and injustices of the world, but more with a sense of too many thoughts and not enough time to express them all. Darrell Epp has a deft way of managing his lexical hyperactivity by locking it down in single-page poems of normally twenty-four lines or fewer. The energy in these poems is relentless; the first line in each accelerates from zero to sixty within a dozen words and doesn't let up until the finish, the brilliantly juxtaposed images whizzing by, often grabbing hold for good. Like Charlie Chaplin, who in his twentieth-century movies "is still and always / with baseless optimism striving / against modernity's hammer" (78), Epp battles in his poems the many dehumanizing forces of the twenty-first century, from the industries of his home city, Hamilton, that pollute Lake Ontario, to military drones that slaughter the innocent with the guilty. And like a Chaplin movie, many of these poems are infused with humour, sometimes wry and sometimes slapstick, but always in response to the manifold societal, political, and economic injustices against which he struggles. Despite the accounts of personal troubles, tragedies, and global atrocities that populate the poems, the verse resonates with a sense that we can be better than "mechanical monkeys / living on credit and voting survivors off the / island" (82)—that there is still a place, as the final poem suggests, for prayer, if not for ecstasy.

The Essential Douglas LePan, consisting of thirty-three representative poems, is John Barton's gracious tribute to this much-anthologized twentieth-century man of letters, who died in 1998. Douglas LePan, one of Canada's leading modernists, whose previous literary publications span almost fifty years, also had distinguished careers in the military, the diplomatic and public services, and academia. In his seventies he publicly came out as gay, which not only overtly shaped the subject matter of his later works but also enabled supplementary rereadings of his earlier ones. The present collection is well balanced with selections from each of his six poetic publications, featuring such standards as "A Country without a Mythology," "The Net and the Sword," and "The Green Man," as well as a passage from the verse drama *Macalister, or Dying in the Dark* (1995) and two previously uncollected poems. LePan's verse is characterized by a carefully measured dignity, stately but accessible syntax, and a profound attention to the shaping qualities of the elements of life on the development of human character, particularly the beauties of nature, the attractions of love, and the horrors of war. The poems especially demonstrate a keen sensitivity to the nuances of suffering without ever becoming maudlin. One of the best of these, "Elegy in the Romagna," grows out of LePan's own experiences as a gunner during the Italian campaign in the Second World War, where, in the midst of so much death and destruction, the poet hopes

> From our unravelled tissues,
> To spin an intellectual thread, no more
> Mercurial nor more pure than this so precious crew,
> That mounting, mounting, breaking, respun, as thin
> As starlight, perhaps at last might clasp the upper air
> And there restore relation and identity. (37)

Whether or not this hope is always achieved, the twin virtues of compassion and courage manifested in much of LePan's work serve to make the attempt worthwhile.

A Most Disturbing Book

Nancy Dyson and Dan Rubenstein
St. Michael's Residential School: Lament and Legacy. Ronsdale Press $21.95

Reviewed by Corinne Bigot (University of Toulouse Jean Jaurès)

St. Michael's Residential School: Lament and Legacy (2021) is one of the most disturbing and puzzling books I have read in a long time. I am still unable to decide whether this account of the four months the authors spent as care workers at the Alert Bay Student Residence in 1970 is a self-complacent, self-indulgent, and badly written book or a subtle demonstration of the dehumanizing process and trauma the Residential School system induced, including in staff.

The book is divided into two parts, "Nancy's story"—twenty-seven chapters—and "Dan's story"—the last two chapters. Rubenstein's chapters explain the context behind the book—the shockwaves of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report that rippled across Canada in 2015. Rubenstein felt compelled to add their voices and testimonies as former staff in a residence in Alert Bay, BC. By 1970, what was St. Michael's Residential School was no longer a school but a residence where Indigenous children from Alert Bay (with a few exceptions) slept and were fed. The staff looked after the children in the morning and evening, before and after school. Rubenstein looked after the younger boys, and Dyson, teenage girls. Rubenstein's voice and chapters sound genuine as he reflects on the gap between his twenty-two-year-old self and his present wisdom, acknowledging his lack of experience and lack of any concrete action or previous attempt at denouncing the system.

However, the first twenty-seven chapters are, as the title of the section suggests, Dyson's story, not testimony about St. Michael's. This section describes their lives outside, not in, the residence: Dyson writes about the food they ate, the drinks they had, the time they spent on Sointula, her affection for her dog, the anti-American feelings they encountered, the anti-Semitic prejudices Dan encountered, and the passes the administrator, Mr. Roberts, made at her. In spite of the many details and the dialogue she conjures, style is not Dyson's forte. Nor is suspense—from the moment the cook Greg was introduced, I knew he would attack Dan with a knife because he hated Jews.

I can understand that Dyson would not want to speak for the children, but her account of their life in the residence is sketchy, distant, and lifeless. For instance, the fact that the children were not fed properly is only briefly mentioned. The scene in which she describes how four new kids were deloused and their hair cut is similarly sketchy—and we never know what happened to these children, who are never heard from again. Excerpts from the TRC report are included, supposedly "to verify that what [they] witnessed at St. Michael's occurred in residential schools across Canada" (20), but I felt as if the authors had leafed through the TRC report and tried to conjure up scenes to illustrate it—the arrival scene, food, the absence of medical care, physical abuse, the contempt for Indigenous culture. Since apparently there had been no sexual

abuse during their time at St. Michael's, they invoke someone who worked at another school where it happened. Check.

The staff *is* described, and Roberts' defence of the system is exposed, as are the actions and ideologies of the two villains, the worker called Edgar who takes the children to his office to strap them, and the matron, who, like Edgar, openly voices her contempt for the children. Most strikingly, Dyson's narrative reveals her lack of empathy for the children. By contrast, her evocation of the female worker who arrived next is much more lively and credible than her mentions of the children. Most of the time they are referred to as "the children" or "a group of little boys," and only three boys and three girls are mentioned by name. And only two names are mentioned on the dedication page, as if all the other children had remained nameless. Nancy's emotional distance and her lack of emotion are disturbing compared to her affection for her dog. The scenes in which she briefly considers adopting the little boy they invited to their home for Christmas, but decides against it because he would be too challenging, are chilling. Although the couple were puzzled by the fact that most of the children were from Alert Bay and could have stayed with their families, it seems that as soon as the couple left, they were able to turn the page and forget the place, having appeased their consciences by (eventually) quitting.

Then, thinking of Lisa Jackson's short film *Savage* (2009) and the way she shoots the scenes in which the hands of the staff undress, bathe, and dress the girl, I came to wonder whether all of this was not meant to convey the dehumanizing effect of the school and the system in general. Neither the children nor the couple seem to touch and be touched by the other. Should one see their emotional distance, the lack of empathy, the fact that they forgot about the children, as evidence of the dehumanizing impact the system engendered, and their amnesia as trauma? Yet why did Dyson spend so much time on their personal lives, drinks, dinners, and the dog? Why did she insist that Rubenstein's skin was dark enough for him to pass as "Indian"? Dyson is better at evoking the political context—for instance, the account of Jean Chrétien's visit, which illustrates the Trudeau government's efforts to present the White Paper. There, Dyson and Rubenstein come across as intellectuals who were interested in Canada's political context and policies in the 1970s.

Skirting Gender in Early Drama

Kym Bird

Blowing Up the Skirt of History: Recovered and Reanimated Plays by Early Canadian Women Dramatists, 1876–1920. McGill-Queen's UP $42.95

Reviewed by Kailin Wright (St. Francis Xavier University)

Kym Bird's *Blowing Up the Skirt of History* is a dynamic and compelling anthology of "recovered and reanimated plays" by Canadian women from 1876 to 1920. In recovering first-wave feminist plays, it collects some of the earliest English plays from different regions in Canada. With verve and humour, Bird uses public theory and feminism to analyze the plays' constrained performance of nationalism and racial

privilege. The anthology aims to offend dominant histories of Canadian drama that skirt (pun intended) the issue of gender and the role of female playwrights.

Blowing Up the Skirt of History offers a substantial introduction and a collection of ten plays—each with its own introduction—that includes Sarah Anne Curzon's *Laura Secord: The Heroine of 1812* (1887), a collective creation (adapted by Bird) of *A Mock Parliament* (1893, 1896), Kate Simpson Hayes' *Slumberland Shadows: A Christmas Drama for Wee Ones* (1898), Clara Rothwell Anderson's *The Joggsville Convention* (*For All Women*) (1910), Sister Mary Agnes' *The Red Cross Helpers: A Patriotic Play* (1918), Louise Carter-Broun's *The Soldiers* (1915), Edith Lelean Groves' *The Wooing of Miss Canada* (1917), Blanche Irbé Bremner's *My Soul-Mate: A Musical Comedy* (1918), Mary Kinley Ingraham's *Acadia: A Play in Five Acts* (1920), and Madge Macbeth's *A Demonstration in Scientific Salesmanship* (1918). Each play's introduction—by contributors Zaynab Ali, Laurel Green, Tanja Harrison, Melanie Williamson, and Bird herself—offers a socio-political context for the play and biographical information on the playwright. There is, however, some inconsistency in the content, research depth, and style of the introductions. At times, the reader wonders why a specific play was selected from the author's oeuvre. The publication or performance date of each play would also be a helpful addition to the table of contents. Ultimately, however, *Blowing Up the Skirt of History* challenges the gatekeeping of "good drama" that has previously excluded women's work.

Bird celebrates the playwrights' feminist fight for women's rights while acknowledging the limitations of their activism. As Bird eloquently explains, the plays "are sometimes unconscious and certainly uncritical of the connections they make between their activism, racial privilege, nation building, and a fidelity to empire" (5). Racism, eugenics, religion, and imperialism form a backdrop to Bird's discussion of first-wave feminist plays. Bird's introduction and the shorter play introductions examine how these plays present the white Christian wife and maternal figure as a model Canadian citizen.

Bird argues that middle-class women harnessed their domestic role in the private sphere as a place from which to argue for education, voting rights, and professions that would enable them to better carry out their wifely and maternal duties. *The Mock Parliament*, for instance, asserts that a woman's right to vote would enable her to guide her children into their adult lives (24). *The Joggsville Convention* dramatizes a middle ground between women's rights and women's domestic confinement that is characterized by maternity and a Christian sense of duty. As Bird says, "Women's activism often cut two ways: it expanded their purview to validate and rationalize their public role, but it also sustained their private sphere domain of the intimate and domestic" (25). This relationship between the public and private drives Bird's analysis and ties the collected plays together.

The critical introduction uses the public and private sphere to explain the plays' feminist arguments and interconnect the issues of gender, race, and imperialism. Because the public and counterpublic are key to Bird's historicization of and scholarship on these plays, further theorization of these concepts in terms of how they are understood today (through Jürgen Habermas and Michael Warner), and were understood in 1876–1920, would help explain why the (counter)public is the central through line for understanding imperialism, feminism, and racism in these first-wave feminist plays. The idea of counterpublics, for instance, is mentioned before Warner's

definition is fully explained in relation to the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century playwrights. References to counterpublics in the short introductions to individual plays would also benefit from a definition because some readers may only use a section of the anthology.

The introduction explains that the anthology does not create a countercanon of women's writing and then offers a substantive list of what is left out, including "plays by Indigenous, French, African-Canadian, Chinese, Japanese, and Icelandic women" (8). Bird's introduction raises the issue of who gets collected in anthologies and who is left out and why. Notably, middle- and upper-class white women wrote plays and had access to the time and tools to create drama. Still, the anthology threatens to reproduce the exclusion of women of colour. The introduction, for instance, mentions Pauline Johnson's performance at Rideau Hall in 1894; a deeper analysis of her performance of "a murdered chief and his bereft daughter after the Europeans steal their land" would help nuance the discussion of race and a feminist counterpublic in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (34). The anthology includes two appendices: "Bibliography of Playwrights Included in This Edition" and an "Abbreviated List of Popular Amateur Theatre in the 1920s." An additional bibliography of women and works that are not collected in the anthology and that were excluded from white, imperialist feminist work during first-wave feminism would help integrate more diverse voices, artists, and works. Such an appendix could also open up the parameters of the anthology by including reviews, alternative forms of activism, oral storytelling, or non-documented work.

Overall, this anthology recovers early Canadian plays by women and makes a fitting companion to Bird's monograph, which has a similarly provocative and sartorial title: *Redressing the Past: The Politics of Early English-Canadian Women's Drama, 1880–1920* (2004). The anthology collects some of the earliest plays written by white, British-identified women in Canada. I can envision using it in an undergraduate or graduate course on early Canadian drama or on first-wave feminist drama. Bird's energetic writing style will certainly appeal to undergraduate students and help make early Canadian theatre more accessible. *Blowing Up the Skirt of History* is an important work for anyone interested in early Canadian drama and feminist literature.

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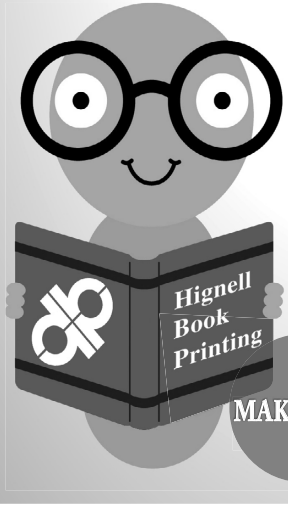

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