Canadian Literature / Littérature *canadienne*

A Quarterly of Criticism and Review

Number 227, Winter 2015, Asian Canadian Critique Beyond the Nation
Published by The University of British Columbia, Vancouver
Editor: Laura Moss
Associate Editors: Stephen Collis (Poetry), Kathryn Grafton (CanLit Guides), Nicholas Bradley (Reviews)
Assistant Editor: Tiffany Johnstone (Reviews)

Past Editors: George Woodcock (1959-1977), W. H. New (1977-1995), Eva-Marie Kröller (1995-2003), Laurie Ricou (2003-2007), Margery Fee (2007-2015)

Editorial Board
Alison Calder *University of Manitoba*
Carrie Dawson *Dalhousie University*
Cecily Devereux *University of Alberta*
Kit Dobson *Mount Royal University*
Janice Fiamengo *University of Ottawa*
Helen Gilbert *University of London*
Faye Hammill *University of Strathclyde*
Lucie Hotte *University of Ottawa*
Smaro Kamboureli *University of Toronto*
Ric Knowles *University of Guelph*
Christopher Lee *University of British Columbia*
Linda Morra *Bishop's University*
Lianne Moyes *Université de Montréal*
Maureen Moynagh *St. Francis Xavier University*
Reingard Nischik *University of Konstanz*
Vanja Polić *University of Zagreb*
Ian Rae *King's University College*
Julie Rak *University of Alberta*
Roxanne Rimstead *Université de Sherbrooke*
Gillian Roberts *University of Nottingham*
Sherry Simon *Concordia University*
Cynthia Sugars *University of Ottawa*
Neil ten Kortenaar *University of Toronto*
Marie Vautier *University of Victoria*
Gillian Whitlock *University of Queensland*
Mark Williams *Victoria University, New Zealand*
Lorraine York *McMaster University*

Editorial

Guest Editors: Christopher Lee and Christine Kim
Asian Canadian Critique Beyond the Nation — *6*

Articles

Timothy Yu
Waiting for Asian Canada: Fred Wah's Transnational Aesthetics — *17*

Donald Goellnicht
Paul Wong and Refugee Citizenship — *38*

Malissa Phung
Asian-Indigenous Relationalities: Literary Gestures of Respect and Gratitude — *56*

Articles, *continued*

Jenny Heijun Wills
Competing Nationalisms in *Ru* and *La Trilogie coréenne*: Francophone Asian Québécois Literatures *75*

Guy Beauregard
On Not Knowing: *A Tale for the Time Being* and the Politics of Imagining Lives After March 11 *96*

Helen Hok-Sze Leung
Asia/Canada Reframed: Perspectives from a Transpacific Film Location *114*

Poems

Kim Fu 15
Jim Johnstone 37
Corals Zheng 55
Julie Anne Joosten 73, 74
Nathaniel G. Moore 94
John Reibetanz 113

Books in Review

Forthcoming book reviews are available at canlit.ca/reviews

Authors Reviewed

Jordan Abel 148
André Alexis 151
Thomas Allen 153
Oana Avasilichioaei 138
Elizabeth Bachinsky 144
Jennifer Blair 153
Sandy Marie Bonny 155
Emmanuel Bouchard 157
Michel Marc Bouchard 142
Stephen R. Bown 158
Valerie Burton 160
Louis Carmain 135
Donna Coates 161
Michael Crummey 175
Rachel Cusk 163
Iyko Day 133
Sarah de Leeuw 138
Martine Delvaux 165
Charles Demers 165
Vanaja Dhruvarajan 143
Beth Graham 142
Jean Guthrie 160
Tomson Highway 166
Pauline Holdstock 151
Aislinn Hunter 169
Ghalib Islam 163
Ikram Jama 143
Peruvemba S. Jaya 143
Vici Johnstone 160
Daniel Karasik 161
Christine Kim 133
Yumi Kotani 143
André Langevin 170
Jack Lohman 153
Rashmi Luther 143
Monia Mazigh 143
Charlotte Mendel 155
Cindy Mochizuki 138
Sachiko Murakami 140
Ruth Ozeki 137
Arleen Paré 175
Jean-François Payette 171
Roger Payette 171
Al Pittman 175
Janusz Przychodzen 171
Rachel Qitsualik-Tinsley 158
Sean Qitsualik-Tinsley 158
Matt Rader 173
Scott Randall 173

Armand Garnet Ruffo 166
Robyn Sarah 175
Craig Savel 177
Bren Simmers 140
Alexandre Soublière 178
Lucya Spencer 143
Margaret Sweatman 169
Maria Tippett 179
Rhea Tregebov 179
Jennifer Tremblay 157
Aaron Tucker 140
Élise Turcotte 181
Alexis von Konigslow 155
Rita Wong 138
Tim Wynne-Jones 137
David Yee 142
Paul Yee 135

Reviewers
Guy Beauregard 137
Liza Bolen 157
François-Emmanuël Boucher 170
Natalee Caple 144
Kit Dobson 138
David Eso 173
Alicia Fahey 153
Alana Fletcher 160
Louis-Serge Gill 171
Daniel Laforest 181
Dorothy F. Lane 155
Maude Lapierre 165
Evelyne Ledoux-Beaugrand 178
Stephanie L. Lu 135
Sarah MacKenzie 161
Krzysztof Majer 179
Niall McArdle 163
Robin McGrath 158
Catherine Owen 175
Olivia Pellegrino 169
Laura Ritland 140
Shelley Scott 142
Dani Spinosa 177
Christina Turner 148
Hilary Turner 151
Eleanor Ty 133
Sylvie Vranckx 166
Ziyan Yang 143

Opinions and Notes

Nicholas Bradley
Truths and Consequences 182

Forum

Asian Canadian Critique

Christopher Lee and Christine Kim
Introduction 189

Smaro Kamboureli
Inside/out the Field: The Asian Canlit Imaginary 189

Robert Diaz
On Queer / Asian / Canadian Critique 191

Y-Dang Troeung
Alice Munro Country and Refugee Havens 193

Masumi Izumi
Resituating Displaced/Replaced Subjects in and of Japanese Canadian History *194*

Lisa Yoneyama
Possibilities of Asian/Canadian Transnationality *196*

Iyko Day
Transnationalism Within *198*

Canadian Literature, a peer-reviewed journal, welcomes original, unpublished submissions of articles, interviews, and other commentaries relating to writers and writing in Canada and of previously unpublished poems by Canadian writers. The journal does not publish fiction.

Articles—6,000-7,000 words (including Notes and Works Cited), double-spaced, and in 12-point font size—should be submitted online through the Open Journal Systems (OJS). Please go to canlit.ca/submit to register and submit. Submissions must be in Rich Text Format (.rtf) or Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx). Submissions should include a brief biographical note (50-100 words) and an abstract (150 words). Articles should follow MLA guidelines for bibliographic format.

Littérature canadienne est une revue avec comité de lecture. Elle publie des articles, des entrevues et des commentaires originaux sur les écrivains et l'écriture au Canada, ainsi que de la poésie canadienne pour publication initiale. La revue ne publie pas de fiction.

Les articles—6000-7000 mots (notes et références bibliographiques comprises), à double interligne, taille de la police 12—peuvent être soumis en ligne sur canlit.ca/submit, où vous serez automatiquement redirigé vers notre nouvelle plateforme OJS (Open Journal Systems). Les soumissions doivent être en format de texte enrichi (.rtf) ou Microsoft Word (.doc ou .docx) et doivent comprendre une brève note biographique (50-100 mots) et un résumé (150 mots). Les articles doivent respecter le style de citation MLA.

***Canadian Literature* online (canlit.ca):**

Archives (canlit.ca/issues)
Issues #1 to 199 are freely available online as are all editorials and pre-print book reviews, including unpublished upcoming reviews, from issue #200 onwards.

CanLit Guides (canlitguides.ca)
A modular learning resource that introduces students to reading and writing at a university level.

Open Journal Systems (canlit.ca/submit)
Submit articles, poetry, and book reviews online.

Copyright © 2016 The University of British Columbia

Subject to the exception noted below, reproduction of the journal, or any part thereof, in any form, or transmission in any manner is strictly prohibited. Reproduction is only permitted for the purposes of research or private study in a manner that is consistent with the principle of fair dealing as stated in the Copyright Act (Canada).

GST R108161779

Publication of *Canadian Literature* is assisted by The University of British Columbia, the Faculty of Arts (UBC), and SSHRC.

Canadian Literature is indexed in *Canadian Periodical Index*, *Canadian Magazine Index*, *Humanities International Complete*, and the MLA *International Bibliography*, among numerous others. The journal is indexed and abstracted by EBSCO, PROQUEST, and ABES. Full text of articles and reviews from 1997 onwards is available from PROQUEST, GALE, and EBSCO Publishing. The journal is available in microfilm from University Microfilm International.

Publications Mail Agreement
NO. 40592543
Registration NO. 08647

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO
Canadian Literature
The University of British Columbia
ANSO Building, Room 8
6303 NW Marine Drive
Vancouver, BC
Canada V6T 1Z1

TELEPHONE: (604) 822-2780
EMAIL: Can.Lit@ubc.ca
canlit.ca
canlit.ca/submit

2015 SUBSCRIPTION
CANADA (GST INCLUDED): INDIVIDUAL $60; INSTITUTION $231
OUTSIDE CANADA (SHIPPING INCLUDED): INDIVIDUAL $90 USD; INSTITUTION $261 USD

ISSN 0008-4360

Managing Editor: Donna Chin
Donna.Chin@ubc.ca
Production Staff: Mary Chen, Christy Fong, Josephine Lee, Brendan McCormack, Beth Veitch
Design: George Vaitkunas
Illustrations: George Kuthan
Printing: Hignell Printing Limited
Typefaces: Minion and Univers
Paper: recycled and acid-free

We acknowledge that we are on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓-speaking Musqueam people.

Editorial

Asian Canadian Critique Beyond the Nation

Christopher Lee and Christine Kim

As we write this editorial, we have before us four special issues of *Canadian Literature* that have been dedicated to Asian Canadian literature. In the 1990s, special issues were published on "South Asian Connections" (#132 [1992]) and "East Asian-Canadian Connections" (#140 [1994]). In editorials published in both issues, then-editor W. H. New grappled with the object posited by their very topics. On the one hand, writing by or about South and East Asian Canadians had yielded a significant but (at least at that time) neglected body of work. On the other hand, New is acutely aware that these very categories may be misleading, incomplete, or even complicit in histories of racism. Writing about Asian characters in Canadian fiction, he says, "human sympathy can sometimes still function as a barrier, expressing solidarity at one remove; sometimes it is an act that conceptualizes itself as generosity rather than as a tacit declaration of identity—because fundamentally it assumes that the norms of the cultural 'inside' will never change" ("Inside Gold Mountain" 6). In outlining these concerns, New highlights the limits of liberal acceptance and national belonging, partial solutions that respond to racism while leaving structural exclusions intact. In this way, he reflects the dissatisfaction that many writers and critics have felt with respect to promises of multiculturalism.

Issue 163 (1999), on "Asian Canadian Writing" and guest-edited by Glenn Deer, emerged in a moment of crisis: the arrival of Fujianese migrants on the shores of British Columbia in 1999, which led to racialized backlash in public discourse. Deer juxtaposes the arrival of these migrants with the story of his father, who came to Canada in 1921, and that of Adrienne Clarkson,

whose family came to Canada as refugees and who eventually rose to the office of Governor General. Questioning the discourses that make "Chinese" migrants legible in Canadian society, Deer draws parallels with the United States in order "to move beyond the constraints of racial categories and into the ongoing assertions of identity in borrowed or invented voices that we might call our own" (15). Asian American and Asian Canadian experiences and scholarship are positioned alongside each other, acting alternately as models and points of comparison in a continental conversation about migration, inclusion, and cultural representation. Finally, issue 199 (2008), on "Asian Canadian Studies" and guest-edited by Guy Beauregard, assesses the range and complexity of Asian Canadian intellectual projects that have emerged despite a lack of institutional space and support. Beauregard not only explicates the unequal terrain on which knowledge is produced, but also urges readers to seize the "present moment as an opportunity to critically address and transform social and institutional conditions that are not of our choosing" (13). In doing so, he underscores the need to transform institutional frameworks in Canada to accommodate the social and political goals of Asian Canadian studies.

Even though we have purposely confined this brief genealogy to the pages of *Canadian Literature*, insofar as the (Canadian) nation functioned as the conceptual horizon in all four special issues—even as they explicate the limits of liberal multiculturalism, anxieties around borders and migration, or the difficulties of navigating institutional structures—they reflect how the field of Asian Canadian studies has largely unfolded within nation-based (and often nationalist) frameworks even though it has sought to critically expose the racist foundations of the Canadian nation-state.[1] Historical events such as the Head Tax imposed on all Chinese arrivals (1885-1923), Chinese exclusion (1923-1947), the Komagata Maru incident (1914), and Japanese Canadian internment (1942-1949) have come to stand in for a long history of racial injustices by demonstrating a persistent unwillingness to include Asians in Canadian society and extend to them the social and political rights enjoyed by European settlers. However, even this claim risks erasing histories of settler colonialism, under which Asian migrants were slotted into a racial hierarchy that placed them in between privileged European settlers and violently dispossessed Indigenous peoples. Given this background, Asian Canadian studies is in a unique position to dismantle, rather than reinforce, national epistemologies. Nevertheless, the histories cited here have been conventionally framed in relation to the Canadian nation-state. In part,

this characterization reflects ongoing attempts to appropriate them for, and resolve them into, liberal nation-building projects such as multiculturalism. However, critical approaches that solely emphasize Canadian specificity or exceptionalism, focus on anglophone and francophone texts to the exclusion of other languages, or privilege narratives of citizenship and national belonging reveal a more subtle and unacknowledged tendency to privilege *Canada* as the object of inquiry.

Extending *Canadian Literature*'s commitment to Asian Canadian studies, this special issue interrogates how national epistemes have become sedimented in the field itself, often in barely discernible ways. It is this self-reflexivity that we hope distinguishes Asian Canadian *critique* from the many cultural, activist, political, and institutional projects that have coalesced around this term. How would Asian Canadian critique look if we focused instead on transnational flows of labour, capital, and cultures, as well as on the logics of empire and processes of settler colonialisms? Historically, Asian Canadian communities were produced through migrations that took place in the shadow of British, American, and other empires. More recently, Asian Canadians have appeared as labourers, merchants, refugees, undocumented migrants, international students, and so on. These "racial forms" have repeatedly placed the Asian Canadian subject at the intersections of capital, empire, and nation.[2]

To imagine Asian Canadian critique beyond the nation may suggest that the national horizon has been abandoned or overcome, thereby echoing emphatic claims about the decline or eclipse of the nation-state under various forms of globalization. Such statements inevitably elicit counterclaims about its inescapability, arguments that range from resigned acceptance to passionate investments in the nation-state as a vehicle for social progress. However insightful, these debates can seem predictable and unresolvable; our goal, by contrast, is to return to the discursive logic embedded in the very notion of "beyond." In her essay "The Politics of the Beyond: 43 Theses on Autoethnography and Complicity," Smaro Kamboureli explores how "the critical act is nearly always complicit with its object of criticism" (31). To put it another way, any critical project involves an inherent folding in on its own terms, which makes moving beyond any object or paradigm misguided at best, misleading at worst. Kamboureli writes:

> *Beyond* is a double signifier, a trope that at once signals an impasse that we must overcome, a stalemate we have to resolve, and a desire, a willingness, to move away from such deadlocks. Beyond, then, signifies process, but its directionality, though indeterminate, activates a progressivist logic. There may be no specific

telos inscribed in the *beyond*, but, as soon as we become engaged in its troping, we run the risk of adopting the fallacy of emancipation, a progress away from what lies before it. (47)

Two points follow from this: the first is that "*Beyond* is haunted by the spectre of complicity"—and this haunting interrupts any sense of "forward looking" progress (48). The second is that if we suspend this teleological impulse, then thinking beyond an object invites reflection on "the means we can employ to explore knowledge and ways of knowing" (32). Beyond, in other words, starts to give way to "beside." Thus while the very act of naming the nation in the way that we have is already an act of complicity, the invitation to think beyond it might allow multiple lines of thought to proliferate, slowly and subtly decentering the nation as our primary critical paradigm and context.

It is in this spirit that we return to the histories mentioned earlier in order to consider parallel approaches that do not centre the Canadian nation. When former Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologized for the Chinese Head Tax in the House of Commons in 2006, he noted that the "failure to truly acknowledge these historical injustices has prevented many in the community from seeing themselves as fully Canadian," while then-NDP leader Jack Layton declared that it was an opportunity to "show the world that Canada is indeed a fair, generous and just nation" ("Chinese Canadians" n. pag.). This kind of rhetoric from elected leaders is hardly unexpected, but these examples reflect a nationalist approach that obscures how exclusion was part of a transpacific system of Chinese labour regulation. The full(er) story of exclusion is not just about the contradiction between racist attitudes and the need for cheap labour in Canada, but also, in the words of historian Kornel Chang, about "multiple and overlapping histories of frontier expansion, the globalization of capital and empire, and the territorializing process of state formation in Canada and the United States" (19).[3] Because Canadian restrictions on Chinese immigration took the form of a head tax (a policy that was affected by Canada's deference to Britain in foreign affairs), middlemen brought migrants to the US by first landing them in Victoria, paying the head tax, and then smuggling them across the border. Angered by these "illegal" circumventions, white labour activists staged expulsion campaigns on both sides of the border starting in the mid-1880s. Even as the number of Chinese labourers declined, the shortage was partially filled by Japanese migrants. Beyond North America, the story of exclusion encompasses the imposition of unequal treaties on China by Western powers

and Japan, and the emergence of a transnational labour system that powered capitalist economies around the world.

Other well-known events in Asian Canadian history can be reframed along similar lines. As Renisa Mawani notes, the man responsible for chartering the *Komagata Maru,* Gurdit Singh, was an anti-colonial activist who believed that, as British subjects, he and the other passengers had every right to travel freely throughout the Empire ("Law and Migration" 263). His challenge to barriers faced by South Asian migrants, including the notorious "continuous journey" provision, resulted in a two-month standoff, with the ship stranded off the Port of Vancouver and its passengers unable to land. As scholars such as Radhika Mongia and Ali Kazimi have shown, these rules were the result of complicated negotiations between Canadian and British authorities, for whom impediments to migration were antithetical to the ideology of empire. Recent work by Mawani has traced what happened after the *Komagata Maru* was forced to leave Canadian waters and return to India, where it sparked riots and inflamed local anti-colonial movements. The story of the *Komagata Maru*, then, was also about the transpacific circulation of movements against imperialism: as Mawani notes, one argument made by supporters of the *Komagata Maru* was that British Indians had sufficiently benefitted from British rule that they could be considered more mature and civilized than Indigenous peoples in the colonies ("Specters" 398).

In a related manner, re-situating Japanese Canadian internment as a global phenomenon of incarceration and repatriation brings the relationship between settler colonialism and migration into sharper focus. For example, Japanese Australians and their families were interned during World War II followed by the repatriation of nearly all former internees. By March 1946, of the 3,268 Japanese that had been interned during the war, over 3,000 individuals had been deported to Japan and only 162 were permitted to remain in Australia (Nicholls 78). By comparison, Canada incarcerated approximately 23,000 Japanese Canadians and deported over 4,000 to Japan (Miki, *Redress* 2, 105).[4] But because many Japanese men in Australia had married Indigenous women, the devastating consequences of these events extended far beyond the Japanese community. Asian Australian critic Jacqueline Lo has shown how wartime incarceration and deportation intersected with policies of assimilation directed against mixed-race Aboriginal children (now known as the Stolen Generations). From a different perspective, Iyko Day links Japanese internment to deep-seated

investments in whiteness in places such as Canada, the US, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, investments that take place "against the backdrop of Indigenous dispossession and the 'problem' of Asian migration that settler colonial expansion could be justified through ideologies of liberal democracy" (7). For Day, a transnational framework highlights how internment worked to dispossess people of their land and transform them into coerced labour through forced resettlement. These strategies reveal how settler colonialism is "a formation that is transnational but distinctively national, similar but definitely not the same, repetitive but without a predictable rhythm, structural but highly susceptible to change, everywhere but hard to isolate" (17). Writing about the postwar "afterlife" of incarceration, Karen Inouye's recent study of the transnational after effects of Japanese internment in North America emphasizes the transformative capacity of these memories and the forms of political agency it generated on both sides of the border. By tracing how activists and intellectuals exchanged ideas and strategies across national divides, Inouye demonstrates how their respective engagements with politics can be understood through a transnational lens.

We hope that this brief overview demonstrates how reframing some of the most foundational events in Asian Canadian history can open up questions and lines of thought that do not take the Canadian nation as their primary context. Informed by similar concerns, the essays in this special issue take up literary and cultural texts in order to decentre Asian Canadian critique's relationship to the nation. By engaging with, for example, Asian Canadian poetry as a node in transnational literary flows that link China, Japan, and the US (Yu) or Vancouver as a location for "Asian" films such as *The Interview*, *Finding Mr. Right,* or *Everything Will Be* (Leung), Canada is reframed through its relation to transnational movements rather than understood in isolation. We should add, however, that these examples cannot and do not displace the centrality of the nation in and of themselves: the term "Asian Canadian" has long invoked a nation-centered framework in which Canada gets supplemented and enriched by references to other locations. Ironically, an Asian Canadian critique that strives to go beyond the nation can make us more aware of how the nation-state dominates the field at different levels.

In proposing that Asian Canadian critique be revamped into a methodology for critically engaging transnational flows, we hope that our approach will align it closer to global movements for decolonization and

justice. In *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization*, Taiwan-based scholar Kuan-Hsing Chen outlines a method of what he calls inter- or multiple-referencing. Seeking to dismantle a colonial hierarchy of knowledge that treats the West as the privileged ground of comparison, often through invocations of "theory," Chen suggests "using Asia as an imaginary anchoring point" in order to

> allow societies in Asia to become one another's reference points, so that the understanding of the self can be transformed, and subjectivity rebuilt. Pushing the project one step further, it becomes possible to imagine that historical experiences and practices in Asia can be developed as an alternative horizon, perspective, or method for posing a different set of questions of world history. (xv)

Multiple referencing is central to an "internationalist localism" that for Chen

> acknowledges the existence of the nation-state as a product of history but analytically keeps a critical distance from it. The operating site is local, but at the same time internationalist localism actively transgresses nation-states' boundaries. It looks for new political possibilities emerging out of the practices and experiences accumulated during encounters between local history and colonial history—that is, the new forms and energies produced by the mixing brought about by modernization. (223)

Chen's methodology emerges from his location in Asia and constitutes a response to the dominance of Euro-America in global knowledge production. Asian Canadian critique cannot, of course, claim a clear sense of separation from the West: its entanglements with the Canadian nation-state, as we have shown, are too deep to dismiss or ignore. What we take from Chen's project is the provocative suggestion that it is only through a dynamic, multi-pronged program of shifting comparisons that intellectual work can begin to move out of the shadow of the nation-state and its Eurocentric histories. Unlike the earlier special issues of *Canadian Literature* discussed above, our interest lies not only in recognizing racial injustices committed in Canada, but also in viewing them in relation to global inequities. By putting Asian Canadian critique in dialogue with Asian cultural studies, for example, we seek to recognize how the Asian Canadian is connected to and enmeshed in multiple transnational networks that do not exist solely through, and in conversation with, Euro-Canada. Such an approach shares with Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih's notion of "minor transnationalism" an investment in examining "micropractices of transnationality" that are typically overlooked in favour of major networks (7).

The essays collected in this special issue explore multiple sites of reference inside, outside, within, and beyond the nation. They begin to do the work

of positing Asian Canadian critique as what Chen calls an "imaginary anchoring point" or "alternative horizon" through which to engage the world histories that are sedimented in our daily lives and take seriously the materiality of Asia rather than reducing it to an adjective. Our contributors take as their points of departure literary form and avant-garde poetics (Yu), structures of nationalism and settler colonialism (Wills, Phung), spatial referencing (Leung), and competing modes of defining and imagining transnational figures that include refugees and victims of ecological disaster (Goellnicht, Beauregard). Together, they generate and constellate a set of new directions for the future of Asian Canadian critique.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Margery Fee for offering the opportunity to edit this special issue, Laura Moss for graciously shepherding us through the entire process, and the staff of *Canadian Literature* for attending to the details of publication. We are grateful to our contributors for their thoughtful writing, punctuality, and participation in this collective project.

The guest editors are grateful to the Office of the VP Research at Simon Fraser Univeristy for supporting the publication of this special issue.

NOTES

1. For a more extended discussion of the problematics of nation-based thinking in Asian Canadian studies, see Lai; Kamboureli; and Miki's *In Flux*.
2. We borrow the notion of "racial forms" from Lye.
3. See Chang for more details. Also see Adam McKeown, *Melancholy Order*.
4. See John Price's *Orienting Canada*.

WORKS CITED

Beauregard, Guy. "Asian Canadian Studies: Unfinished Projects." Introduction. *Canadian Literature* 199 (2008): 6-27. Print.

Chang, Kornel. *Pacific Connections: The Making of the US-Canada Borderlands*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2012. Print.

Chen, Kuan-Hsing. *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization.* Durham: Duke UP, 2010. Print.

"Chinese Canadians. 39th Parliament, 1st session." *House of Commons Debates*. Parliament of Canada, 22 June 2006. Web. 25 July 2016.

Day, Iyko. *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism*. Durham: Duke UP, 2016. Print.

Deer, Glenn. "Asian North America in Transit." Editorial. *Canadian Literature* 163 (1999): 5-15. Print.

Inouye, Karen M. *The Long Afterlife of Nikkei Wartime Incarceration.* Stanford: Stanford UP, 2016. Print.

Kamboureli, Smaro. "The Politics of the Beyond: 43 Theses on Autoethnography and Complicity." *Asian Canadian Writing Beyond Autoethnography.* Ed. Eleanor Ty and Christl Verduyn. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2008. 31-53. Print.

Kazimi, Ali. *Undesirables: White Canada and the Komagata Maru*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2012. Print.

Lai, Larissa. *Slanting I, Imagining We: Asian Canadian Literary Production in the 1980s and 1990s.* Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2014. Print.

Lionnet, Françoise, and Shu-mei Shih, eds. *Minor Transnationalism.* Durham: Duke UP, 2005. Print.

Lo, Jacqueline. "Why Should We Care?: Some Thoughts on Cosmopolitan Hauntings." *Memory Studies* 6 (2013): 345-58. Print.

Lye, Colleen. "Racial Form." *Representations* 104 (2008): 92-101. Print.

Mawani, Renisa. "Law and Migration across the Pacific: Narrating the *Komagata Maru* Outside and Beyond the Nation." *Within and Without the Nation: Canadian History as Transnational History.* Ed. Karen Dubinsky, Adele Perry, and Henry Yu. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2015. 253-75. Print.

—. "Specters of Indigeneity in British-Indian Migration, 1914." *Law & Society Review* 46.2 (2012): 369-403. Print.

McKeown, Adam M. *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders*. New York: Columbia UP, 2008. Print.

Miki, Roy. *In Flux: Transnational Shifts in Asian Canadian Writing.* Edmonton: NeWest, 2011. Print.

—. *Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice.* Vancouver: Raincoast, 2005. Print.

Mongia, Radhika Viyas. "Race, Nationality, Mobility: A History of the Passport." *Public Culture* 11.3 (1999): 527-56. Print.

New, W. H. "Inside Gold Mountain." Editorial. *Canadian Literature* 140 (1994): 4-7. Print.

—. "Papayas and Red River Cereal." Editorial. *Canadian Literature* 132 (1992): 3-6. Print.

Nicholls, Glenn. *Deported: A History of Forced Departures from Australia*. Sydney: U of New South Wales P, 2007. Print.

Price, John. *Orienting Canada: Race, Empire, and the Transpacific.* Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 2011. Print.

Erratum:

In "From Qallunaat to James Bay: An Interview with Mini Aodla Freeman, Keavy Martin, Julie Rak, and Norma Dunning," published in issue 226, the word "Miniuq" on page 120 should be spelled "Minijuq" and "qallunaat" should be "qallunaaq," also on page 120. On page 116 of the same article, editorial clarification was erroneously inserted in brackets, "[about *Oklahoma!*]," in Julie Rak's comments. We apologize for the errors.

Kim Fu

The Fox

Through an overheated room of people
is another overheated room of people,

and through that, down the stairs,
out the door, I see the fox.

As we walk to meet each other
in the road, I'm convinced it's a cat or dog,

from its incautious, expectant approach
delicate steps and back-and-forth swish
of a finishing-school debutante

until we are less than a foot apart,
its nose almost touching my knee.

Broken fox, I decide,
like squirrels and pigeons squatting over gutters.

We circle each other and I retreat first,
head down below the sightline of the road,

through snow deep enough to bathe in,
to the south end of the river where the water still runs

in emerald splits and rivulets,
where no one has drilled and human footprints cease.

I lie on my back on the ice,
in the center of nothingness, beatific white.

The moon begins bright as a work light,
occluded over time by fog
like a thickening swarm of insects.

My bones settle and rearrange as though for sleep.
A lulling warmth spreads through the fat of my thighs
and the webbing between my toes.
I can hear my breathing and then I can't.

I can hear the crackling of foolhardy company,
ice snapping from ice.

Incredibly, the fox has returned.
He scampers weightlessly to safety,

places his body parallel to mine,
stands still and waits
to see what I will do.

Timothy Yu

Waiting for Asian Canada
Fred Wah's Transnational Aesthetics

Fred Wah is one of Canada's pre-eminent living poets and perhaps its leading poet of Asian descent. In academic criticism, Wah is now most frequently discussed as the author of the 1996 book *Diamond Grill*, whose evocation of Wah's Chinese Canadian and multiracial family has made it a central text of Asian Canadian writing. But race was rarely discussed in Wah's work up through the 1980s, when he was read not as a writer of Asian descent but as a leader of the Canadian poetic avant-garde. Examining this shift in the reading of Wah's work provides a new context for the emergence of the category of the Asian Canadian in the 1980s and 1990s, while also revealing the way in which race and ethnicity have become increasingly central to Wah's writing over the course of his career.

To understand this shift in Wah's work, I look past *Diamond Grill* to a text from over a decade earlier, his Governor General's Award-winning 1985 book *Waiting for Saskatchewan*. This text arguably marks the first emergence in Wah's work of what we might call an Asian Canadian aesthetic. The aesthetic of *Waiting for Saskatchewan* is shaped in part by the US avant-garde influences that are central to Wah's early work (of Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan, and Charles Olson, for instance). But it also reflects a new set of influences, as Wah begins to incorporate Asian elements into both the content and form of his work, most notably through his adaptation of Japanese poetic forms. *Waiting for Saskatchewan* offers an emergent articulation of the "Asian Canadian" as a node of transnational flows from China, Japan, and the United States, while also emphasizing the cross-ethnic coalitions that give rise to the category of the Asian Canadian in the 1980s and 1990s. *Waiting for Saskatchewan* posits

Asian Canadian experience as a "language world," one in which the *form* of Asian Canadian expression is paramount. And in the forms of *Waiting*, from Olsonian projective poetics to the Japanese *haibun*, we see Asian Canada emerge as a process of transnational convergence, a dialogic space that is always being rewritten across national borders—North American borders, as well as borders with nations in Asia.

To understand the distinctive place *Waiting for Saskatchewan* holds in the emergence of a transnational Asian Canadian discourse, we would do well to review the shifting critical reception of Wah's work. *Diamond Grill*, a 1996 collection of prose pieces focused on his family history that Wah labels in his acknowledgments a "biotext" (n. pag.), has become the foundation for reading Wah as an Asian Canadian writer. Peter Jaeger calls *Diamond Grill* an "extensive investigation of hyphenated subjectivity" (200), while Carrie Dawson argues that *Diamond Grill* "is centrally concerned to address the familial, social, and psychic upheaval that is the legacy of the Chinese Head Taxes and the Chinese Exclusion Act" (5).

As several critics have pointed out, however, ethnicity has not always been the central lens through which Wah's work has been read or articulated. Prior to the 1990s, Wah was seen primarily as a leader of the Canadian poetic avant-garde, most notably as a member of the group associated with the 1960s journal *Tish*. George Bowering's "The Poems of Fred Wah," first published in 1979, typifies this framing, emphasizing Wah's American influences—Olson, Creeley, Duncan, and Ed Dorn—and seeing Wah's poetry as one which "tangle[s] with the phenomenal, the first act of noticing something" (7). Bowering makes only brief mention of Wah's ethnicity, folding it into his claims about Wah as a Canadian regional writer: "His father's side of the family was Chinese, and his mother's side Scandinavian. Thus his background is atypical, but symbolic for the creation of our west" (3). Pamela Banting's 1988 essay "Fred Wah's Syntax: A Genealogy, a Translation" examines the ways that Wah "departs from the syntactical expectations of English" in order to "avoid the outworn habits of thought inevitably imposed by the structures of standard language" (102). And in "Fred Wah: Poet as Theor(h)et(or)ician," Banting offers a deconstructive reading of Wah's *Pictograms from the Interior of B.C.* (1975), writing that "Wah's grammatological practice underwrites the dialogical play between pictogram and pictograph, incorporating both the poet and the figure in the pictograph, both the spoken and the written subject(s), both reoralization and further textualization" (15).

What accounts for this seeming shift in the reading of Wah's work—this "discovery" of Wah as an Asian Canadian writer in the mid-1990s? In his essay "Making Race Opaque: Fred Wah's Poetics of Opposition and Differentiation," Jeff Derksen argues that "Wah's work, despite having working-class Chinese-Canadian content . . . has been predominantly read not as the work of a writer of colour, nor even much as an ethnic writer, but rather as a member of the *Tish* avant-garde" (70). Derksen attributes this elision to a "split . . . between the formal qualities of [Wah's] work and its content" (66), as well as to an "assimilationalist multicultural criticism" in which Wah's ethnic difference made him all the more distinctively "Canadian" (69). What Derksen's essay does not fully account for is why issues of race in Wah's work should suddenly have become visible in the mid-1990s. Indeed, Derksen's own earlier essay on Wah, "Torquing Time," reads Wah primarily through his associations with *Tish* and his adaptation of the influence of Olson, making no mention of Wah as a racialized or Chinese Canadian writer and arguing instead for the multiplicity of identity in Wah's poetry.

I think that we can point to two major factors in this "discovery" of Wah as a Chinese Canadian writer in the mid-1990s. The first is, quite simply, the emergence of "Asian Canadian literature" as a critical category. Donald Goellnicht's account of the emergence of Asian Canadian literary studies in "A Long Labour" begins in 1993, with papers delivered on Asian Canadian writing at the Association for Asian American Studies and Modern Language Association conferences. In 1991, Wah's work was included in *Many-Mouthed Birds: Contemporary Writing by Chinese Canadians*, edited by Bennett Lee and Jim Wong-Chu. For critics who had previously read Wah through the lens of his avant-garde or regional connections, race became legible in Wah's work when he was recognized by other Asian Canadian writers and critics and incorporated into an emerging category of Asian Canadian literature.[1]

The second factor is arguably an increasing shift in Wah's own writing toward the autobiographical, beginning as early as his 1981 collection *Breathin' My Name with a Sigh*, which thematizes Wah's own Chinese surname. In her introduction to an interview with Wah, Susan Rudy distinguishes between Wah's early books, which were "insistently located within a personal geography and history," and his work of the 1980s and after, in which "Wah emerged as a central figure in the articulation of a racialized poetics in North America" (144). As Paul Lai observes in his essay "Autoethnography Otherwise," Rudy's "bifurcation" of Wah's work "suggests

that his later work is more amenable to the (auto)ethnographic rubric of reading ethnic writing" (62-3).

While acknowledging the notion of a break or shift in Wah's work, I argue that there is an important continuity between the early "avant-garde" Wah and the later "ethnic" Wah. Influenced by US Black Mountain poetics, Wah developed a decentered lyricism whose autobiographical impulses are tempered by a skepticism of conventional narrative. The growing exploration of autobiography in *Waiting for Saskatchewan* thus takes place in the realm of *form* as much as content, as Wah seeks new forms that can help map the transnational connections that characterize both his family's history and his contemporary political context. As Lily Cho argues in "'How Taste Remembers Life': Diasporic Memory and Community in Fred Wah's Poetry," assuming a "transparency to race" in Wah's work may prevent a deeper "engagement with the formal innovations of his writing" (81); constructing a deeper formal genealogy of Wah's work can help us understand the distinctiveness of his engagement with race and ethnicity.

In arguing for a *transnational* reading of Wah's work, I gesture toward the increasingly dominant tendency to study race and ethnicity not simply in national, but global terms. As I have noted elsewhere,[2] while the term "international" suggests relationships among fixed, stable national entities, transnationalism studies flows, structures, and relationships that exceed national boundaries, yet that also register their movements across even terrains. Works such as Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic,* Aihwa Ong's *Flexible Citizenship,* and David Palumbo-Liu's *Asian/American* are prime examples of such transnational approaches to race and ethnicity. Within fields such as African American and Asian American studies, transnational approaches have been seen by many critics as part of a necessary evolution of these fields past their origins in cultural nationalism.

The historical trajectory of Asian Canadian studies—in particular, what Donald Goellnicht has famously called its "protracted birth" through the 1990s and 2000s—may have led to a field that is just now, as the critic Iyko Day suggests in her essay "Must All Asianness Be American?," arriving at its "cultural nationalist" moment (45). Day calls for narratives of Asian Canadian studies that do not make the concept of the Asian Canadian "reliant, even parasitic, on the association with Asian American literary studies and on US conceptualizations of race" (46). But as I hope my reading of Wah will suggest, attending to Asian Canadian distinctiveness does not necessarily entail looking for such distinctiveness solely within Canadian

national borders. Instead, *Waiting for Saskatchewan* reveals Asian Canada as a transnational formation, one that from its very beginnings emerges from the intersection of cultural flows from the US and Asia. To recognize this is not, I hope, to develop a "parasitic" vision of Asian Canada, but rather one that is open and flexible, with forms that are constantly being negotiated. Just as Asian American identity emerged in transnational contexts, such as the Vietnam War and "Third World" solidarity,[3] the category of the Asian Canadian emerges in Wah's work in contexts that exceed Canadian borders.

Finally, it is important to distinguish an *Asian* Canadian reading of Wah's writing from a more narrowly ethnic reading that would see him primarily as a *Chinese* Canadian writer or as a writer of the Chinese diaspora. Although Wah foregrounds his Chinese heritage, particularly in the visit to China narrated in *Waiting for Saskatchewan,* he chooses Japanese poetic forms, such as the *utanikki,* to portray those experiences. As I argue below, this seemingly counterintuitive formal choice can be understood in the context of the coalition between Chinese and Japanese Canadians that lead to the emergence of the category of the Asian Canadian in the 1980s and 1990s. What *Waiting for Saskatchewan* gives us, I argue, is a formal expression of "Asian Canada" itself, one that signals its transnational origins but also its status as a *racial* category that represents a conscious linkage between multiple ethnic identities.

Early Work: Borders and Influences

From its beginnings, Wah's work is marked by its transnational connections, but his early work was seen primarily as crossing the border between the US and Canada; his writing from the 1960s and 1970s has most often been read through its US influences, particularly from the poets of the Black Mountain school. A brief glance at Wah's early work shows that while Wah draws on Black Mountain poetics, he retains a lyric sensibility that sets the stage for his later autobiographical turn.

"Mountain that has come over me in my youth," the first poem in Wah's 1980 selected poems *Loki Is Buried at Smoky Creek,* extends a classic Romantic genre, epitomized by Shelley's "Mont Blanc"; Wah's apostrophes to the landscape—"O Mountain" and "O creek"—are not ironized, but are counterbalanced through an earthy embodiment, as Wah observes the mountain's "burns on your sides your many crotches rocked" and calls the creek to "sing in the hot thirst my sticky tongue" (1-2). The influence of Black Mountain poetics can be seen in the poem's unpunctuated flow, as well as

in the indentation of lines that follows the rhythm of breath and thought, with direct addresses to the mountain appearing at the left margin and subsidiary thoughts following in indented lines. But Wah also maintains a strong lyric connection to the landscape, evoking the "Mountain that has come over me in my youth . . . O Mountain that has hung over me in these years of fiery desire" (1). The lyric I and the landscape are ultimately linked not through the poet's gaze or memory—the poem remains in the present tense throughout—but through the body, with an interpenetration of the mountain and the speaker's body. As the speaker drinks from a mountain creek, his mouth becomes a part of the mountain—"my sticky tongue / my jaw catch beneath the bridge"—and the water becomes the mountain entering the body: "sweet cold on teeth in flow and eddy / in swirl my gut it fills and bloats with fluid Mountain" (2). The visceral language of "gut" and "bloat" punctures the pretensions of the poem's Romantic lineage, replacing it with an embodied lyricism that follows Olson's assertion in "Projective Verse" that "man is himself an object" (n. pag.) among the other objects of nature, while still maintaining a first-person perspective that evokes personal emotion and desire.

The lyric sensibility of "Mountain" thus shows how Wah both adopts and diverges from the aesthetic of the US Black Mountain poets. Wah does not take the turn toward historical and archival materials that Charles Olson does in the *Maximus Poems*' effort to encompass the history and geography of Gloucester, Massachusetts (or that E. J. Pratt does in *Towards the Last Spike*); if Olson's impulse is epic, Wah's remains lyric, with the poetic I retained as a central, perceiving presence in the poem.[4] Wah's interest in lyric subjectivity and his strong interest in local contexts leads to an autobiographical turn in his work that becomes increasingly pronounced by the early 1980s.

In his interview with Susan Rudy, Wah observes that the writing of *Diamond Grill*, which he began in 1988, was driven by "what had been driving *Breathin' My Name with a Sigh* and *Waiting for Saskatchewan*: the notion of my father, the push to try to say something about myself. Looking back, I see that I was getting caught up in questions of identity that I hadn't really had any means to think about before" (147). But perhaps what is most intriguing is Wah's two-pronged account of why "questions of identity" began to emerge in his work around 1980, an account that links a narrative of aesthetic development with a changing political and social context. Wah pegs the emergence of biographical elements in his work to a very specific moment: a poem from his 1975 text *Pictograms from the Interior of B.C.*:

> The bio starts for me with a poem I wrote in *Pictograms from the Interior of B.C.* in which I mention my cousins. That poem became provocative for me because I kept wondering, how did that get in there? Why all of a sudden "cousins"? And then a combination of other poems about death, about our dog dying, just sort of accumulated to a point where I started addressing my father. (148)

It's striking to note that Wah assigns himself relatively little agency in this narrative. Wah's account is consonant with the aesthetics that he derives from Black Mountain poetics and Charles Olson's "Projective Verse" in particular, in which the biographical self is not the source of poetry, but is simply one object among others in the "field" of composition. An echo of this idea can be heard in "A Prefatory Note" to *Waiting for Saskatchewan*, in which Wah writes of "the range of forms a particular content ('father') . . . has generated" (n. pag.). This is an allusion, of course, to the Olson/Creeley maxim: "Form is never more than the extension of content."

But Wah also acknowledges a shifting social and political context that helps allow this content to be heard and that gives it a particular shape and political valence. That context, as Wah discusses in his interview with Rudy, is the emergence of a discourse around Asian Canadians in the late 1970s and 1980s:

> But what permitted me to start writing about the father or about race and identity was something going on in the late 1970s both for myself as a person, as a poet, as a writer, as well as something going on in the culture more generally. The Japanese Redress movement started then for example. All of a sudden a dialogue about Asianicity in Canada was possible. . . . Joy Kogawa's book *Obasan* came out in 1981. All of a sudden there was an opening for questions of historical identity, like "where did you come from," that up until then had been possible only in a very silenced and unproblematic way. (148-9).

Like many others, Wah links the emergence of Asian Canadian issues to the campaign for redress for the internment of Japanese Canadians during World War II beginning in the late 1970s. But Wah also draws particular attention to the close linkage of social activism and literature. *Obasan*, a fictionalized version of Kogawa's own childhood experience of displacement, dislocation, and internment, became central to public discourse around internment and redress, with a passage from *Obasan* even being read on the floor of Parliament by NDP leader Ed Broadbent during the announcement of the redress settlement in 1988. And one of the leading figures in the redress movement was Wah's fellow poet and frequent collaborator, Roy Miki, who would go on to become one of the major theorists of Asian Canadian literature.

It's worth noting that Wah's citation of Kogawa, a Japanese Canadian writer, as an influence for his own foray into autobiography and ethnic heritage, is made possible because of Wah's use of the category of "Asianicity," a category that emphasizes commonalities between Chinese and Japanese Canadians. For Wah, the historical and cultural differences between China and Japan are less relevant than the contemporary Canadian political context, in which people of Chinese and Japanese ancestry can be linked through the racialized category of the "Asian." It is this sense of a racialized Asian Canadian coalition that we will see Wah negotiating through the forms of *Waiting for Saskatchewan.*

Waiting for Saskatchewan

Waiting for Saskatchewan represents Wah's first full-length foray into autobiographical material. It incorporates a half-decade of work, including selections from *Breathin' My Name with a Sigh* (1981) as well as the entirety of the short collection *Grasp the Sparrow's Tail* (1982). The book's title, which is also the first line of its first poem, signals a continuity with Wah's early interest in place. *Waiting for Saskatchewan* reflects the remembered landscape of Wah's early childhood, which he evokes in the opening poem as a transnational node of convergence:

> Waiting for Saskatchewan
> and the origins grandparents countries places converged
> europe asia railroads carpenters nailed grain elevators
> Swift Current my grandmother in her house
> he built on the street
> and him his cafes namely the "Elite" on Central
> looked straight ahead Saskatchewan points to it (3)

The effect of these opening lines is of a kind of zooming in, as "origins grandparents countries places" converge on the small town of Swift Current, and then on the individual figure of "my grandmother in her house." In the following line, however, the focus shifts to the unnamed "he" who built the house, a shift that is reinforced with the "and him" that opens the next line. With this shift of subject, our angle widens again, taking in the cafés, the town, and returning in chiasmic fashion to Saskatchewan. We see illustrated here Wah's sense of the intertwining of person and place, with individuals introduced in relation to the places they occupy or build, and the entire passage contained within the frame of "Saskatchewan." But we can also, I think, see indications of Wah's new lean toward the biographical. Saskatchewan is not simply a place, but also a *sign*, something that "points

to" the personal history Wah begins to evoke here, marked in the following line by Wah's citation of his family's European and Chinese surnames: "Erickson Wah Trimble" (3).

Wah's new sense of a changing political context for his work—one that we might retrospectively label Asian Canadian, even if that label was not entirely available to Wah himself as he wrote this poem—can be glimpsed in the poem's striking statement that the location it evokes is "the most political place I know" (3). If we see this as a moment—perhaps *the* moment—of the emergence of an Asian Canadian politics in Wah's poetry, then it is worth making two crucial observations about this moment.

The first is that the politics invoked here is an explicitly transnational and multiethnic one. Swift Current is not itself an "origin," but a place where different origins and countries "converged." It is a meeting point of "europe asia," and Wah's refusal to capitalize either term or to place punctuation between them suggests a fluidity and continuity that differs strikingly from, say, a more conventional narrative in which the "Asian" immigrant arrives in, and is defined in opposition to, "European" North America. The troika of family names, "Erickson Wah Trimble," alludes to Wah's own mixed-race heritage, but also establishes Wah's Saskatchewan as a multi-ethnic space, a subject Wah will return to later in the collection.

The nation, however, is strikingly absent as an identifying location. Although Saskatchewan is named repeatedly, Canada is not. When the speaker wonders of his family, "why on earth would they land in such a place," that place is defined not in national but geological terms, "mass of Pleistocene / sediment plate wedge" (3). While this geological framing is characteristic of Wah's earlier work, in this context, its explicitly prehistoric orientation displaces the modern nation as the primary label for this space. So, while Wah's Swift Current is explicitly defined through its transnational flows, its status as a "Canadian" space is left undefined.

The second point to note is that, unlike in works such as *Obasan*, Wah's engagement with Asian Canadian politics is not primarily a *narrative* one. In his interview with Susan Rudy, Wah remarks that although the shifting contexts of the late 1970s provided an opportunity for him to delve into his personal history, he remained skeptical about exploring that history in narrative form:

> Well, I wasn't a storyteller. I wasn't a prose writer and I had always been suspicious of story because story is something that had been very much controlled by the "mainstream," by the West, a British inheritance. I had been able to undermine that for myself in poetry because poetry is language-based, whereas story is much more context-based. (149)

Wah frames his rejection of narrative as both an aesthetic and a political choice, identifying "story" with a British colonial heritage and proposing poetry's focus on language as a means of critiquing that heritage. What Wah offers as an alternative to narrative is the experimental, language-oriented aesthetic he derives in large part from the Black Mountain poets, thus using the influence of the US poetic avant-garde as a means of critiquing Canada's colonial heritage. It's important to note, however, that this resistance to narrative is distinctive to Wah's conception of Asian Canadian writing, diverging both from the narrative work of Asian Canadian novelists like Kogawa and from the post-confessional and largely narrative aesthetic of many Asian American poets of the same period.[5]

Memory for Wah is not a process of recounting a story, but of positioning the self with regard to a place, as the speaker presents himself as "waiting / for Saskatchewan to appear for me again" (3). The speaker juxtaposes his own body with the landscape in a manner reminiscent of Wah's earlier poem "Mountain," as the "huge sky" and the "mass" of the mountains press against the speaker's body with surprising intimacy: "the hard edge of it sits on my forehead" (3). But unlike in "Mountain," where speaker and landscape interpenetrate as the mountain is incorporated into the speaker's body, in this poem speaker and landscape exist in a new tension, as the speaker regards the landscape "as if the mass owed me such appearance," and the poem concludes: "it still owes me, it does" (3). What is it that the landscape "owes" the speaker? The debt is never specified, but the surging up of autobiographical material in the poem suggests that it is this transnational history the speaker wishes to recover: "I want it back" (3). The recovery of that history will not be the completion of a story, but the making whole of the speaker's own body ("my body to get complete"), a trope that is congruent with Wah's longstanding examination of the links of landscape and body. It is this "waiting," then, that constitutes the poem's politics; this history is not something the speaker can command through narration, but must wait for the landscape to grant to him. Yet the political necessity and urgency of this recovery is expressed in the language of owing and debt, in the impatience of "it still owes me, it does." The impulse to relate personal history—a task that had become politically pressing in the early 1980s with the redress movement and beyond—runs up against Wah's skepticism of narrative and story, leaving the poet in a posture of "waiting" for the landscape of his childhood to yield up its history in a way that can be communicated through the body: in short, an embodied history rather than a narrated one.

The remainder of *Waiting for Saskatchewan* is a struggle to find a *formal* solution to this political dilemma. Wah's movement toward prose poetry as the collection develops might on the surface appear to be a concession to narrative. But a closer look at the *range* of forms with which Wah experiments in this collection shows that the struggle for an embodied history leads Wah to increasingly complex poetic forms that, like his Saskatchewan, embody the convergence of transnational forces that constitute his Asian Canadian aesthetics.

It is in the second section of *Waiting for Saskatchewan*, "Grasp the Sparrow's Tail," where Wah truly begins his formal investigation of an Asian Canadian aesthetic as he chronicles a trip with his family to China. It would be simple enough to read this as a return to origins, a reversal of the diasporic arrow that brings a writer of Chinese descent closer to his heritage. But the form Wah chooses for "Grasp," I argue, marks it as an *Asian* Canadian text, one that registers the transnational and cross-ethnic nature of such a category while also signalling the broader North American context in which the category emerges.

In a prefatory note to *Waiting for Saskatchewan*, Wah writes that "Grasp the Sparrow's Tail" is "a *utanikki,* a poetic diary of mixed prose and poetry" (n. pag.). This Japanese poetic form has been adapted by a number of Canadian poets, including Daphne Marlatt and bpNichol.[6] Wah cites the earliest exemplar of the poetic diary, the tenth-century Tosa Diary (or *Tosa Nikki*), in one of the sequence's early poems. Wah's version of the *utanikki* is a dialogic form in which short, diaristic prose entries are paired with more explicitly poetic passages, either in prose or verse:

> *Friday the 20th August in Beijing*
> *Touring the city. Lotus fields everywhere. Look at the hats they wear. Everything happiness and longevity.*
>
> At the Summer Palace the peach
> the symbol of "lucre"
> each picture different
> from the classics
> 5,000—no repetition (54)

As Susan Fisher remarks in her article "Japanese Elements in the Poetry of Fred Wah and Roy Kiyooka," it is tempting to read Wah's adoption of Asian forms as an extension of his growing interest in his own Asian heritage: "[C]onnections between Japanese literature and the work of Asian Canadian writers are usually explained as reflections of ethnicity" (94). But of course, as Fisher points out, such an argument runs into the awkward

fact that Wah's ancestry is not Japanese: "Whatever aesthetic a Canadian-born person of Chinese ancestry might unconsciously absorb from the conversation of parents or grandparents, it is not a Japanese one" (100). Although Fisher concludes from this fact that there is "no particular 'politics of ethnicity'" in Wah's work (101), Lily Cho critiques Fisher's conclusion as assuming a "transparency to the racialization of Wah's writing," driven by "an ethnographic desire" (83). Instead, Cho argues for a more complex examination of the "relationship between race and aesthetics" (83). Wah's use of a Japanese form to recount a trip to China does indeed disrupt a simplistic notion of diasporic or Asian Canadian poetics in which Wah's work can be examined for its diasporic Chinese influences, but I argue, following Cho, that it points toward a more complex relationship between *race* and form. The apparent "disconnect" between form and content in "Grasp" pushes the reader away from "natural," *ethnic* connections toward a *racialized* transnational and coalitional mode of reading.

Wah offers a clue to his own path to Japanese-inspired poetic forms in a poem describing a stop in Japan before continuing on to China: "*Dreaming in Tokyo. The margins of the page, the limits the 'boundary walker' and Duncan's Shinto gate, the arche, the architecture, the roof beam (?), prime, oriental ridge pole*" (37). Here, Wah references one of his most important mentors, the poet Robert Duncan; the particular allusion is to Duncan's *Passages* 23, "Benefice":

the sun

on the horizon
in the West

(setting)
rises

thru the Shinto Gate
as at Stonehenge the Mid-Winter Sun

rise a message

from the Orient West of us (76)

That Wah sees Tokyo through the lens of a Duncan poem reminds us that the US avant-garde tradition from which his aesthetic emerges is one that is already deeply influenced by Japanese culture. What might initially appear to be a return to Wah's Asian "roots" instead points toward a much more complex transnational poetics, in which Asian poetic influences are already present in the "American" aesthetic from which Wah draws.

There may be yet another way to understand Wah's turn to Japanese forms, one that points toward the cross-ethnic coalitions that characterize the emergent category of the Asian Canadian. As Wah notes, one of the primary sources of his own turn toward issues of race and ethnicity was the example of Japanese Canadian political and literary activism. Since the belief that "form is never more than the extension of content" is central to Wah's aesthetic, we can conclude that Wah perceives a necessary relationship between the content of "Grasp the Sparrow's Tail"—a trip to China, and the search for the Chinese father that is at its core—and its Japanese-inspired form. In this link of Chinese content and Japanese form, then, we might read a political allegory of Wah's emerging sense of the link between Chinese and Japanese Canadians that leads to the developing category of the Asian Canadian. The routing of these Japanese influences through American poetics further reinforces this idea, presenting Asian poetic forms not as exotic and foreign, but as already having migrated to and taken up residence within North American writing. The nexus of Chinese, Japanese, and American influences thus makes "Grasp the Sparrow's Tail" a transnational space, but one that allegorizes the cultural location of Asian Canadians.

Paradoxically, this moment of Asian Canadian emergence takes place entirely outside of Canada. It is only through his travels in China that the speaker seems able to "find" his late father. Touring Hong Kong, he "start[s] taking notes re places I've seen my father since he died" (39); upon reaching Guangzhou, "I see my father everywhere" (41). Here, the dialogic form of the *utanikki*, in which the speaker's diaristic musings are followed by a kind of poetic riffing on the topics raised, disrupts what might otherwise become a straightforward narration of the speaker's travels. Perhaps most importantly, Wah uses the dialogic form to open up a transnational space of memory, as the speaker follows his observations of "seeing" his father in Guangzhou with a more expansive evocation of the father's departure from and return to Canada:

> You would have had to learn Cantonese
> just as you acquired Canadian prairie world view age 5.
> Must have hurt to have to find new boyhood lingo
> (no silence)
> then at 19 to relearn English Swift Current
> Elite Cafe sufficiency. What tax on your life
> left you with all that angry language world inside
> and from China too (silent) (41)

It is the encounter with the father in China that seems to allow Wah to enter, at least speculatively, the experiences of the father in Canada. What the speaker

encounters in his father's experience, however, is not a straightforward narrative of memory but an "angry language world," focused on his Canadian-born father's experience of having to learn Cantonese upon being taken to China at age five, then having to "relearn" English upon his return to Canada at age nineteen. Moreover, that world remains inaccessible to the speaker, "inside" the father and "silent."

This transnational encounter, and the glimpse of the "language world" of the father that it enables, is also what allows the speaker himself to begin to describe his own Asian Canadian position, a position for which the form of the *utanikki* provides space. Two poems later, the speaker describes telling his tour group and guides that "*my father was sent here as a child to be raised and educated by his Chinese relatives*" (43). Contained within the italicized, diaristic section of the poem, this recitation of the bare facts of the father's biography proves inadequate to establish the speaker's identity; since the mixed-race speaker does not *look* Chinese, his claim is rejected by his listeners: "You were part Chinese I tell them. / They look at me. I'm pulling their leg" (43). How, then, is the speaker to articulate his own disputed, invisible Chineseness? Again, the dialogic form of the *utanikki* provides the answer. The verse lines that form the poem's second half create an open space of poetic response to the narrative facts of biography. Just as the father's Chinese Canadian experience can be found in his "angry language world," the speaker locates his Chineseness not phenotypically, but linguistically: "So I'm Chinese too and that's why my name is Wah" (43). And if identity is not merely genetic but also linguistic—written—then it can be rewritten, available to the creative intervention of the poet. This insight leads Wah to one of his pithiest statements of identity as an open and creative process: "When you're not 'pure' you just make it up" (43).

What these first two sections of *Waiting for Saskatchewan* sketch out is a transnational path toward an articulation of what we might call an Asian Canadian identity, both in content and in form. The figure of the father, at first circumscribed in the local space of Saskatchewan, is opened up and made accessible as a poetic subject through the speaker's travel to Asia. But access to the father's "angry language world" also requires a formal intervention through the Japanese form of the *utanikki*—an influence that points as much to Wah's American precursors and the context of Japanese Canadian activism as to ancestral origins. And it is also this formal intervention that allows the speaker to begin to locate himself with regard to his father, using the tenuous linguistic connection of his surname as a grounds for "making up" his own identity.

The remaining two sections of *Waiting for Saskatchewan* "return" to Canada, but reflect a new opening of content and form. The third section, "Elite," takes its name from the café in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, run by the speaker's family. In his prefatory note, Wah describes his use of the prose poem here as an extension of his experiment with the *utanikki*, as it "explores further the tenuous division between those two genres [prose and poetry] in working with the prose poem" (n. pag.). The pieces in "Elite" appear more conventionally narrative than almost anything in Wah's previous work: "I was driving across the prairies on New Year's eve last year and we decided to stop for the night in Swift Current. It was close to midnight and so we thought we'd welcome in the New Year in a pub downtown. I hadn't been there for over thirty years but I felt natural in following Central Ave. to the old train station" (59). But Wah also signals that he does not intend to use prose narrative for conventionally autobiographical purposes. Having responded to the inaccessibility of his father's language world through an embrace of the aesthetic of "making it up," he immediately signals the self-consciously fictive nature of his historical investigation: "I know all these 'facts' existed once, and I could check some of them out . . . somehow I don't want it or need it. The facts seem partially unreal" (59). The prose of "Elite" is a speculative space in which the speaker imagines his father's experiences and emotions, often by projecting himself into them:

> I know when you came back from China you must have felt more Chinese than anything else. . . . You were a half-breed, Eurasian. I remember feeling the possibility of that word "Eurasian" for myself when I first read it in my own troubled adolescence. I don't think you ever felt the relief of that exotic identity though. (62)

While the opening poems emphasized Saskatchewan as a signifier, one whose meaning is always deferred—"waiting for Saskatchewan"—"Elite" brings with it a new assertion that "Swift Current Saskatchewan is at the centre" (59). But if Swift Current is a "centre," it is not an "origin," but a node of diasporic flows: "The ethnicity here feels so direct. I mean the Chinese are still connected to China, the Ukrainians so Ukrainian, in the bar the Icelanders tell stories about Iceland, the Swede still has an accent, the French speak French. Here you're either a Wiebe or a Friesen, or not. What is a Metis, anyway?" (62). At first glance, we might see here an idyll of a multicultural, diasporic Canada, in which the integrity of different cultures is preserved in a Canadian space. But Wah quickly makes clear that this landscape of managed ethnic particularity is *not* one in which the father, or the speaker himself, feels at home:

> But I remember you saying later that the Chinese didn't trust you and the English didn't trust you. . . . In North America white is still the standard and you were never white enough. But you weren't pure enough for the Chinese either. You never knew the full comradeship of an ethnic community. So you felt single, outside, though you played the game as we all must. To be a mix here on the prairies is still noticed. . . . I don't think you felt there was anyone else in the world like you. (62)

Wah punctures multiculturalism with a blunt acknowledgement of *racial* hierarchy: "white is still the standard." "Ethnic community" here is as much an exclusive as an inclusive force, and the relationship among ethnic and racial groups is a "game" all are compelled to play. The condition of being "a mix" is, of course, one the speaker shares with his father, and it complicates any straightforward sense of belonging within a diasporic community, while also alienating the speaker and his father from the space of "the prairies" that could otherwise provide a grounding.

If the dialogic form of the *utanikki* lays the groundwork for a dialogic, transnational frame for Asian Canadianness, "Elite" seeks to "re-centre" Asian Canadian identity in the landscape of Swift Current, using prose narrative as the vehicle for an autobiographical exploration of memory. But Wah also uses the prose poem form to critique the closure of narrative, replacing the recitation of facts with a more speculative space. The last two poems of "Elite" dramatize this rejection of narrative closure by dispensing with periods. Each unfolds in a single run-on sentence that incorporates the projective qualities of Wah's earlier aesthetic into a prose form that includes autobiography and history without narrativizing them. The prose form developed in "Elite" will become the form used a decade later in Wah's most widely read treatment of Asian Canadianness, *Diamond Grill*. Thus, while *Diamond Grill* is most often cited by critics as the urtext of Wah's exploration of Asian Canadian identity, *Diamond Grill* is in fact extending a proto-Asian Canadian aesthetic pioneered in *Waiting for Saskatchewan*.

It is characteristic of Wah that this turn toward prose is not the book's final gesture, but is instead followed by another dialogical form, that of the *haibun*. Like the *utanikki*, the *haibun* is a Japanese poetic form that has been widely adopted by North American writers. Wah also describes his version of the *haibun* as a mixed-genre form of "short prose written from a haiku sensibility and, in this case, concluded by an informal haiku line" (n. pag.). Although, as Susan Fisher notes, there are significant differences between Wah's use of the form and its Japanese original,[7] Wah's evocation of a "haiku sensibility" again routes the question of "Asian" identity through poetic form.

The "sensibility" Wah seeks is not one identified with a particular culture (of which Wah himself might not be a part), but one identified with a particular poetic form, and one that may be altered with new poetic interventions.

This final section, titled "This Dendrite Map: Father/Mother Haibun," can in some ways be seen as completing the integration of Wah's earlier aesthetic with his new interest in Asian Canadian concerns. "This Dendrite Map" returns to the lyric preoccupations and post-Black Mountain style of Wah's earlier work, with an emphasis on the first person and a fluidity of syntax that blurs boundaries between the self and other, between the self and landscape: "you, my father, almost too, thus me, such particles caught in the twig-jam holding the water back impedimenta and this dendrite map I'm finally on now for no reason but time" (75). But in contrast to *Grasp the Sparrow's Tail*, where the prose sections take on a more conventionally diaristic form, in "This Dendrite Map" both the prose and poetic sections of each poem share a lyric sensibility and style. The prose sections emphasize interiority and, unlike the prose of the preceding sections, most frequently take the form of run-on statements without periods. The "haiku line" that concludes each section is set off in boldface, and superficially they appear most like Wah's work of the 1970s: simple, direct statements often evoking landscapes: "Smoke sits on the lake, frost tonight, eyes thinking" (94).

We might understand "This Dendrite Map," and *Waiting for Saskatchewan* more generally, as providing a retrospective, and revisionist, genealogy of Wah's aesthetic. If earlier in his career, Wah's work was often read through its US antecedents, the positioning of his lyric lines at the end of prose passages that evoke his own negotiations with family history provides a very different context for that aesthetic, placing his work within an expansive transnational framework that includes Chinese heritage and Japanese forms in addition to US and Canadian influences. In short, "This Dendrite Map" shows Wah newly understanding his own aesthetic as a possible answer to the *formal* questions presented by his father's and his own racialized experiences. The "wordgame" of poetry, as Wah puts it in "Father/Mother Haibun #12," is nothing more—and nothing less—than a "strategy to get truth's attention" (87).

Perhaps the most significant value of returning to *Waiting for Saskatchewan* for insight into the emergence of the Asian Canadian is the very complexity of the model Wah offers. It is the *distinctive* convergence of transnational flows in Wah's book that resonates with Iyko Day's call for "categorical self-possession" in Asian Canadian studies (45). And the range of forms employed in *Waiting for Saskatchewan* challenges what Lily Cho calls the

assumption of "transparency to the racialization of Wah's writing" that may result from limiting our view to a single, more narrative text like *Diamond Grill.* In short, Wah's formal experimentation in *Waiting for Saskatchewan* offers a highly nuanced and complex *theorizing* of the Asian Canadian as a transnational, racialized category at the very moment of its emergence.

NOTES

1 The Asian Canadian framework did not, of course, arise in an academic vacuum; Goellnicht places the emergence of the category in the context of the discourse of Canadian official multiculturalism from the 1970s onward, as well as of ongoing critiques of multiculturalism.

2 See Yu, "Transnationalism and Diaspora in American Poetry."

3 In "Denationalization Reconsidered," Sau-ling C. Wong observes that even in the 1960s and 1970s, Asian American studies "was already witness to much critical interest beyond the domestic American scene" (127), including the "inherently transnational" struggle against the Vietnam War (128). She quotes Sucheta Mazumdar's assertion that "the very genesis of Asian American studies was international" (128).

4 See Louis Cabri's discussion of the way Wah's poetry "offers lyricism—without lyricism's I-centric, i-dentical iteration of poetic voice" (xiii) in *The False Laws of Narrative*, as well as Iyko Day's argument that "Despite his disjunctive formal style, Wah nevertheless commits to an author-situated rather than subjectless exploration of race, ethnicity, and class experience" ("Interventing" 42). Wah's critical negotiation with lyric is part of the *Tish* poets' wider interest in going beyond the lyric tradition, and can also be understood as extending the poetic project of Canadian modernism. In "E. J. Pratt and the McGill Poets," Adrian Fowler cites Northrop Frye's assertion that Pratt "rudely shattered" the Romantic lyric, creating "unsentimental" and "unromantic" portraits of nature (274), while David Staines, in his chapter on "Poetry" in *The Cambridge Companion to Canadian Literature,* remarks on the emphasis on "the unadorned language of everyday speech" in the work of writers such as Pratt, A. J. M. Smith, and F. R. Scott (141).

5 For a more extensive discussion of the relationship of Asian American poetry to the mainstream US post-confessional aesthetic, see my *Race and the Avant-Garde: Experimental and Asian American Poetry since 1965,* especially Chapter 5.

6 Joanne Saul's *Writing the Roaming Subject* discusses Marlatt's use of the poetic diary form (59), while Susan Fisher remarks on the links between the *utanikki* and Nichol's *The Martyrology* (100).

7 Fisher observes that there are "obvious differences" between Wah's *haibun* and the *haibun* of the form's most famed practitioner, Basho, most notably in Basho's much more explicit link between the prose and poetry sections. Without Wah's labelling of this form as *haibun,* Fisher argues, "readers would never think of comparing it" with Basho (97).

WORKS CITED

Banting, Pamela. "Fred Wah: Poet as Theor(h)et(or)ician." *Open Letter* 6.7 (1987): 5-20. Print.

—. "Fred Wah's Syntax: A Genealogy, a Translation." *Sagetrieb* 7.1 (1988): 99-113. Print.

Bowering, George. “The Poems of Fred Wah.” *Concerning Poetry* 12.2 (1979): 3-13. Print.
Cho, Lily. “‘How Taste Remembers Life’: Diasporic Memory and Community in Fred Wah’s Poetry.” *Culture, Identity, Commodity: Diasporic Chinese Literatures in English.* Ed. Tseen Khoo and Kam Louie. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s UP, 2005. 81-106. Print.
Dawson, Carrie. “The Importance of Being Ethnic and the Value of Faking It.” *Postcolonial Text* 4.2 (2008): 1-10. Print.
Day, Iyko. “Interventing Innocence: Race, ‘Resistance,’ and the Asian North American Avant-Garde.” *Literary Gestures: The Aesthetic in Asian American Writing.* Ed. Rocío G. Davis and Sue-Im Lee. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2006. 35-53. Print.
—. “Must All Asianness Be American? The Census, Racial Classification, and Asian Canadian Emergence.” *Canadian Literature* 199 (2008): 45-70. Print.
Derksen, Jeff. “Making Race Opaque: Fred Wah’s Poetics of Opposition and Differentiation.” *West Coast Line* 29.3 (1995-1996): 63-76. Print.
—. “Torquing Time.” *West Coast Line* 25.1 (1991): 161-65. Print.
Duncan, Robert. “*Passages* 23: Benefice.” *Bending the Bow*. New York: New Directions, 1968. 76. Print.
Fisher, Susan. “Japanese Elements in the Poetry of Fred Wah and Roy Kiyooka.” *Canadian Literature* 163 (1999): 93-110. Print.
Fowler, Adrian. “E. J. Pratt and the McGill Poets.” *The Cambridge History of Canadian Literature.* Ed. Coral Ann Howells and Eva-Marie Kröller. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. 422-40. Print.
Goellnicht, Donald. “A Long Labour: The Protracted Birth of Asian Canadian Literature.” *Essays on Canadian Writing* 72 (2000): 1-44. Print.
Jaeger, Peter. “Ethnicity, Ecopoetics, and Fred Wah’s Biotext.” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 46.2 (2010): 199-208. Print.
Kogawa, Joy. *Obasan.* Toronto: Penguin, 1981. Print.
Lai, Paul. “Autoethnography Otherwise.” *Asian Canadian Writing Beyond Autoethnography*. Ed. Eleanor Ty and Christl Verduyn. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2008. 55-70. Print.
Lee, Bennett, and Jim Wong-Chu, eds. *Many-Mouthed Birds: Contemporary Writing by Chinese Canadians.* Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1991. Print.
Olson, Charles. *The Maximus Poems.* Ed. George F. Butterick. Berkeley: U of California P, 1985. Print.
—. “Projective Verse.” *Poetry Foundation.* 13 Oct. 2009. Web. 22 Aug. 2016.
Pratt, E. J. *Towards the Last Spike.* Toronto: Macmillan, 1952. Print.
Rudy, Susan, and Fred Wah. “Fred Wah on Hybridity and Asianicity in Canada.” *Poets Talk: Conversations with Robert Kroetsch, Daphne Marlatt, Erin Mouré, Dionne Brand, Marie Annharte Baker, Jeff Derksen, and Fred Wah.* Ed. Pauline Butling and Susan Rudy. Edmonton: U of Alberta P, 2005. 143-69. Print.
Saul, Joanne. *Writing the Roaming Subject: The Biotext in Canadian Literature.* Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2006. Print.
Staines, David. “Poetry.” *The Cambridge Companion to Canadian Literature.* Ed. Eva-Marie Kröller. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. 135-54. Print.
Wah, Fred. *Diamond Grill.* Edmonton: NeWest, 2005. Print.
—. *The False Laws of Narrative: The Poetry of Fred Wah.* Ed. Louis Cabri. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2009. Print.
—. *Loki Is Buried at Smoky Creek: Selected Poems.* Ed. George Bowering. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1980. Print.

—. *Waiting for Saskatchewan.* 1985. Winnipeg: Turnstone, 2004. Print.
Wong, Sau-ling C. "Denationalization Reconsidered: Asian American Cultural Criticism at a Theoretical Crossroads." *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race, Ethnicity, and Literature.* Ed. Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2000. 122-48. Print.
Yu, Timothy. *Race and the Avant-Garde: Experimental and Asian American Poetry since 1965.* Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009. Print.
—. "Transnationalism and Diaspora in American Poetry." *The Oxford Handbook of Modern and Contemporary American Poetry.* Ed. Cary Nelson. New York: Oxford UP, 2011. 624-37. Print.

Jim Johnstone

To Carthage Then We Came

G-20 summit protest, Toronto, Ontario

To deny sight is to lay an ear to rail,
its couplings – white noise ringing
in flange that steadies the line,
the echo that frames the city's arrival.
We choose no kin but adopted
strangers, a coda of arms
that tear at the back of a woman's
neck, the lineaments that linger

as she's divided, sense by sense.
Past eight Union's platform rises
to meet the rush of bodies paused
in daylight's corneal scratch—they pass
in an arc of sweat, sibilant disarray—
not the ground, but our legs moving away.

Donald Goellnicht

Paul Wong and Refugee Citizenship

In the summer of 1999, four rusty ships carrying 599 Chinese "boat people" who were seeking refuge arrived on the West Coast of Canada, causing heated debate in the media, in government, and in the general public about refugee status and national belonging. Most of these undocumented migrants were detained, incarcerated, and ultimately denied refugee status. On September 8, 1999, in the midst of this debate over Chinese "boat people," Adrienne Clarkson, of Chinese ethnicity herself and arguably Canada's most famous refugee, was approved as Governor General of Canada on the recommendation of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. Clarkson was sworn in on October 8 of that year, the first racialized minority person to hold the position of the Queen's representative, the highest political office in Canada.

If Clarkson's appointment ostensibly indicated a triumph of official state multiculturalism, the detaining and rejection of the "boat people" potentially signalled its "failure."[1] In the wake of these events, Vancouver-based video artist Paul Wong was commissioned by the Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF), a state-funded agency that operates at arm's length from the government and is self-described as "Canada's leading agency dedicated to the elimination of racism and all forms of racial discrimination in Canadian society" (n. pag.), to make a series of brief public service announcements for television. These announcements, which Wong titled *Refugee Class of 2000*, form part of the CRRF's "See People for Who They Really Are: Unite Against Racism" campaign, "the largest anti-racism campaign of its kind in Canadian history," designed "to engage Canadians in a national dialogue about racism"

(n. pag.).[2] Wong points out that, unlike regular public service announcements, which appear in free television slots provided by the broadcaster, "the Canadian Race Relations Foundation purchased the advertising spaces, specifically for me, [and] the 30 second ads were placed within the context of the CTV 11 [o'clock pm] National News" ("Refugee Class of 2000" n. pag.), during a prime time slot for adult viewers. In a video interview that accompanies the ads on the CRRF website, Wong also states that *Refugee Class* is made up of different layers:

> [It] was motivated by the mainstream venomous and racist view of the boat people, and I was looking for even one perspective that revealed these people as brothers, mothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, immigrants, people who had hopes and dreams and aspirations for better lives. The layer of the graduating class of 2000, which is going to be high school students; I'm going to return to my old high school because demographics have changed a lot in the inner city. I mean, I think it's gone from probably predominantly white to now predominantly Asian. The second layer is working with graphics and texts, and throws in words that are used to identify people. And then I'm going to use, I'm going to call it, the inauguration of our new Governor General. (n. pag.)[3]

The announcements, designed as education for the new millennium, began airing on January 15, 2000. In them, Wong brought the viewer face to face with students from the graduating class at Sir Charles Tupper Secondary School in Vancouver, while also exhuming the history of racism and racist exclusion in Canada. This paper examines the subtle ways in which Wong in *Refugee Class of 2000*, working for a state-funded agency, negotiates the complex balancing act between satisfying the agency's objectives and critiquing the state itself in dealing with issues of national belonging, official multiculturalism, racism, identity politics, citizenship, and transnational or diasporic identity.[4] I argue that in Wong's form of Asian Canadian critique, the transnational identities of the refugee subjects—not all of whom are Asian, and not all of whom are refugees by conventional definitions[5]—bring pressure to bear on nationalist concepts of citizenship and belonging, insisting on the paradoxical notion of refugee citizenship as an alternative to conventional concepts of national belonging.

Paul Wong had, by 1999, established a reputation as a radical video artist whose work focused on issues of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. One of Canada's most critically acclaimed and celebrated video artists, Wong has had a forty-year career in which he has exhibited his work around the world. He has had many screenings at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, where some of his videos are in the permanent collection. In 1992, he received the

Bell Canada Award in Video Art, the most significant national prize in this field; in 1994, he was a featured Canadian artist in the prestigious CBC series *Adrienne Clarkson Presents*, thus initiating a relationship with the future Governor General; and in 1996, the National Gallery of Canada mounted a solo exhibition, *On Becoming a Man.* Later, in 2002, the Vancouver Art Gallery held a major exhibition of his work and he won the Asian Canadian Heritage Award for Transforming Art. Further high points in his career came in 2003, when his *Hungry Ghosts* was presented at the Venice Biennale, and 2005, when he won the Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts. In 2008, the Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival held a retrospective of his work and in 2010 Wong was selected as the lead artist and curator presenting public artistic spectacles for the Vancouver Winter Olympics. The period I wish to focus on in Wong's *oeuvre* is the late 1990s, by which time he had moved from his earlier status as young rebel to that of highly respected artist with national and international reputations.[6]

To say that Wong was a respected artist by the 1990s does not imply that he had lost his critical edge, however. Wong began the 1990s by curating a foundational exhibition for Asian Canadian art, *Yellow Peril: Reconsidered*, "a diverse selection of experimental and documentary photo, film and video work produced by Asian Canadians" (6) that toured the country in 1990. Following on the heels of the 1988 federal Multiculturalism Act, *Yellow Peril: Reconsidered* sought, according to the introduction to the exhibition catalogue, "to contribute in a positive way to these discussions [of multiculturalism] before policies and programs [were] defined. . . . To be understood, we [Asian Canadians] must first be seen and be heard," he claimed (6-7). Christine Miguel asserts that "*Yellow Peril: Reconsidered* was the first exhibition in the country to feature Asian Canadian work so visibly and prominently" and that it "contribute[d] in a concrete way to the ongoing discussion of race and representation" (Wong and Miguel 130). It should come as no surprise, then, that Wong ushered in the new millennium with the scathing, witty works for television that are the focus of my discussion here. These brief ads demonstrate that he had not lost his radical, activist edge, but that he was now pairing it with a subtle wit and irony that enabled him to straddle the line between working for a state-funded agency and critiquing the state. He thus avoided incorporation into the bounded nation, challenging it with the concept of the transnation.

The collective title and the subtitles of the three brief videos in the *Refugee Class of 2000* series bear examination for the hints they give about

Wong's objectives. The first and briefest (30 seconds) is subtitled "The Class of 2000"; the second (1 minute), "I Am a Refugee"; and the third (2 minutes), "A Refugee Prisoner's Lament." The title and subtitles consist of juxtapositions of the general or communal—the *Refugee Class of 2000*—with the increasingly particular or personal: from "The Class of 2000" through "I Am a Refugee" to "A Refugee Prisoner's Lament." Wong's technique, to which I will return shortly, encourages the viewing audience to become increasingly concerned with individual subjects in the videos through an attempt to piece their stories together as the videos, which initially use very rapid intercutting, slow down and become longer, allowing us more and more engagement of an intellectual, but especially of an affective, kind. The fact that these are public announcements that were repeated on television over a period of a month, according to Wong's recollection, adds to the creation of a narrative dimension, despite the fast-paced montage technique that makes the videos so difficult to follow on first viewing. The montage technique, I suggest, allows for the initial "hiding" of subversive or confrontational messages that accumulate greater meaning with successive viewing. Wong observes that he "created the works based on knowing [the purchased time slot of 11:00 pm] in advance," and emphasizes that this influenced his technique: "it was interesting to see this [work] slammed up against the other tv ads and news stories[;] I purposely created the fast paced, multilayered work of visuals and text so that it could be seen again and again, in fragments, in whole[,] with or without sound" ("Refugee Class of 2000" n. pag.) He intended his announcements to participate intrusively in debates about national issues that were appearing on the nightly news, and to build in effect as they were seen repeatedly.

The "Class" the title refers to is made up of thirty-four students in the 2000 graduating class from Sir Charles Tupper Secondary School in central Vancouver, a working-class, ethnically diverse area of the city. Ironically, Sir Charles Tupper, the school's namesake, was a Conservative and a staunch imperialist, embodying the Anglo-Canadian nationalist and monarchist qualities of an "ideal citizen" in his time. He was a baronet who served as the premier of Nova Scotia from 1864 to 1867, when he led the province into Confederation, then as a member of federal parliament from 1867 to 1884, and as Canadian High Commissioner to Britain from 1883 to 1895. Tupper became the shortest-serving Prime Minister in Canadian history when he held the office for sixty-nine days (May-July) in 1896. The refugees in the 2000 graduating class were clearly outsiders to the political,

governmental class represented by Sir Charles Tupper; from Wong's ironic perspective, however, they were the new founders of the Canadian nation, those who might build a truly multicultural Canada—or world, since this was ultimately a global movement more than a national one—for the twenty-first century. They provided the opportunity for a new form of confederation made up of refugees from outside and inside of Canada, from around the globe, that challenged the traditional hegemony of Anglo-Canada represented by their school's namesake, as well as the contemporary hegemony of state multiculturalism, by offering instead a transnational foundation that is supranational.

The "refugee class" of Wong's title also ironically evokes the notion that refugees constitute a group, "type," or "kind" who share common experiences—"the refugee experience." According to Liisa Malkki, nothing could be further from the truth. She states categorically that:

> "refugees" do not constitute a naturally self-delimiting domain of anthropological knowledge. Forced population movements have extraordinarily diverse historical and political causes and involve people who, while all displaced, find themselves in qualitatively different situations and predicaments. Thus, it would seem that the term refugee has analytical usefulness not as a label for a special, generalizable "kind" or "type" of person or situation, but only as a broad legal or descriptive rubric that includes within it a world of different socioeconomic statuses, personal histories, and psychological or spiritual situations. (496)

Malkki's description of the diversity of refugee experience and subjectivity speaks directly to Wong's pedagogical objectives in these public announcements: moving beyond the narrower concerns of what it might mean to be "Chinese Canadian" that he had tackled in some of his earlier videos, Wong now widens his focus to the larger issue of racism more generally and refugee subjectivity in particular. He makes the viewer ponder: "*Who* is a refugee?"[7] Two potential answers to this question had emerged into Canadian public perception in 1999: the stereotype of the Chinese "boat people" who appeared off the BC coast in the summer of 1999, and the ascendancy of Adrienne Clarkson to the position of Her Excellency, the Right Honourable Governor General of Canada.

In the summer of 1999, the stereotypical refugee was in the news almost daily: 599 Chinese "boat people" had arrived off the BC coast in four rusting boats, seeking asylum as refugees after being smuggled across the Pacific in deplorable conditions. Their arrival threw into "crisis" Canada's immigration and refugee policies: denied refugee status, the Chinese subjects were kept in detention at Canadian Forces Base Esquimalt, outside Victoria, and most

were then deported to China, an unusual treatment in a contemporary Canadian context.[8] As Joshua Greenberg observes in "Opinion Discourse and Canadian Newspapers: The Case of the Chinese 'Boat People'":

> Despite evidence that upwards of 30,000 refugees attempt entry to Canada each year (Beiser, 1999), the general feeling conveyed by news coverage of these events was that the immigration and refugee systems were being flooded by an influx of Asian "gatecrashers" (Francis, 1999a), whose presence posed numerous harms to the public. (518)

In a later article that analyzes newspaper coverage of the arrival of the Chinese migrants further, Greenberg and Sean Heir point out that:

> Although [Canada's immigration and refugee] system has been heralded as "one of the best in the world" (Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, 2000, p. 3), news coverage suggested, somewhat paradoxically, that its humanitarian imperative necessarily invites transgressions of the law because it is "too open." These themes were thus normally spoken of together, as a sequential, cause-and-effect chain of events: weak immigration/refugee system => "invitation" and "opportunity" to abuse => "influx" of illegal Chinese migrants => increase in crime.
>
> The overall ideological effect was to problematize not only the identity of the immigration and refugee systems, but also the very identities of Canadian citizens, whose sense of self, community, and nation have always been strongly aligned to an understanding of the country as a humanitarian nation state (Henry and Tator, 1994; Henry et al., 2000). (573)

It needs to be stressed that while the migrants were described as Chinese "hordes," thus implying that there were huge numbers of them, they were in fact a small minority of refuge seekers to Canada and not typical in that arrival by sea rarely occurs. Ashley Bradimore and Harald Bauder, in summarizing the academic studies of the 1999 Chinese "boat people," point out that "the consensus among these studies is that the Canadian media was heavily biased in its reporting, racializing and criminalizing the migrants. The studies revealed that the discourses of security and risk were the dominant modes of representation in the media" (640). It is precisely these racializing and criminalizing discourses that Wong seeks to make visible and to dismantle in his three brief videos, stressing instead the humanity of refuge seekers.

In direct contrast to the figure of the stereotypical refugee was the exceptional figure of Adrienne Clarkson, who came to Canada in 1942 as a two-year-old "refugee" from Hong Kong. In fact, Clarkson's father worked for the Canadian government and the family was evacuated from Hong Kong with Canadian officials after the Japanese invasion of the colony in December 1941. Clarkson grew up in Ottawa and had a very successful career as a journalist in Canadian television broadcasting before becoming a diplomat

for the Ontario government and then being selected as Governor General, the first "visible minority" person and the second woman to hold the office. Her life was represented in the national media as exceptional at the same time as her ascendancy to the position of Governor General was used to "prove" a number of national myths: Canada as a multicultural country; Canada as the place where refugees can aspire to and succeed in gaining, even "transforming," the highest non-elected office in the land.[9] With her Anglo surname, assumed through marriage and maintained after divorce, and her Asian looks, Clarkson comes to embody Canada as a "post-race" society.

Wong's videos bring together both the Chinese boat people and Clarkson, particularly in the third of the series. Made using a collage technique whereby a succession of rapidly changing students make declarations about themselves, the videos employ five repeated statements that dominate the ads: "I am a refugee" is proudly proclaimed like a chorus, interspersed with:

> "I am . . . a student, an MC, a pianist, a photographer, a mother, tall, a superstar, a basketball player, Chinese, Cambodian, the only child, part of the graduating class of 2000."
> "My name is . . . Jennifer, Sarah, Angela Koh, Lisa, Rita, Venita, Tracey Nguyen, Paul, John Ly, Jason, Jackie, Erin Ritchie."
> "I was born in . . . Vancouver BC, Ontario, BC, Lautoka Fiji, Vietnam, Korea, Taiwan, Mexico, Canada, Macao, Toronto Ontario, Penticton BC."
> "I want to be . . . a chef, a police officer, a kindergarten teacher, a marine biologist, a lawyer, a computer programmer, a famous singer, a nurse, an athlete, an accountant, travel the world, happy."

The effect of this rapidly changing collage of different speaking subjects with its voice-overs and visual intercuts is astutely analyzed by Ming Tiampo:

> Framed as a public service announcement and not art, the viewer's immediate response is surprise at the prevalence of refugees in the general population. Taken in the context of Wong's artistic practice, however, the viewer begins to wonder where fact leaves off and fiction begins. With each speaker leaving open the possibility that they too, are a refugee, self and other are broken down as discrete categories in this act of solidarity. (195)

Via the uncertainty of the status of each speaker, Wong creates a deconstructive set of reversals between "refugee" and "citizen," the two terms that are usually held in binary opposition in traditional refugee studies, until there is a vertiginous collapse between the two signifiers. Peter Nyers states that "[t]he visibility, agency, and rational speech of the citizen is lacking in the prevailing representations of the refugee. Instead, qualities of invisibility, voicelessness, and victimage are allocated with the effect of effacing the

political subjectivity of the refugee" (*Rethinking* xv). By identifying so many subjects as "refugee," including persons born inside Canada, Wong suggests that to be Canadian is to be a refugee; or that to be a refugee is to be Canadian. He articulates a bold vision of "refugee citizenship," a form of citizenship constituted not from within a predominantly Anglo-Canadian nation with a state modeled after Britain, but by refugees who arrive from all over the globe with different cultural, social, and political heritages. He offers this proposal not blithely or naively, but rather with a powerful sense of the history of Canadian state racism that he is working to change. He dares to imagine a bold new vision of the future at the cusp of the new millennium.

Both visually and through text, Wong evokes Canada's history of racist exclusion on which the traditional nation is based. As a backdrop for the speaking subjects in the third video, he shows current refugees, the "boat people," being taken to detention centres, shackled and in chains, herded by armed police. Layered over these images are several different kinds of textual statements, including a list of evocative alphabetized words ranging from "Aboriginal, AIDS, Albanian, Alberta, Alien, Apartheid, Arabic, Arrest, Aryan, Asylum, Auschwitz . . ." to "Xenophobia, You, Youth, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zealot, Zero tolerance," each of which recalls a complex history of racism and other forms of discrimination that stretch well beyond immediate Asian Canadian concerns. The three videos are further intercut with textual messages in blue script that begin in the first ad with innocuous statements that would offend no one—"Equality for all"; "Make this a better place through your actions"—and that become, in the second, more complex, but still positive, seemingly supporting the dominant ideology: "My parents, like so many immigrants, dreamed their children into being Canadians"; "Imagine a new world country, a free and tolerant society." By the third, the statements are highly critical of Canada for its history of racism: "The lost, the rejected come dreaming of another life"; "Profiting from racism, Canada was notorious for the head tax"; "Chinese had to pay extra to be denied basic citizen rights"; "The Exclusion Act: Legislation to stop Chinese immigration"; "Classified as enemy aliens, Japanese Canadians were deported." This last statement not only evokes a particularly violent event in Canadian racial history, but plays ironically against our knowledge that Clarkson came to Canada as a "refugee" at exactly the same period as the internment. A whole segment of the Asian Canadian community, Japanese Canadians, the majority of whom were citizens by birth, were labelled "enemy aliens" and targeted for incarceration, while a few select

Asians, like Clarkson's family, were welcomed for their service to Canada's government abroad, their service to empire.

In the third video there is an additional scrolling text along the bottom of the screen that is meant to come from the mouth of one of the 599 Chinese refugees who landed on the BC coast the previous summer. This is the titular "Prisoner's Lament":

> To come to this far away land, we suffered and risked our lives. In this civilized country, I could not have imagined we would end up being treated this way. You saved us to be locked up in your prisons. Is this your justice? I do not understand. How could I not be sad? We are shuffled here to there, days and nights turn into months. We know no peace. My tears never stop. What is the crime? I do not understand. We wait and wait, hoping for release. Is this to be my fate? Judge, oh judge, please give me my freedom.

The lament evokes the writings scratched on the walls of immigration detention centres in the late-nineteenth century by Chinese immigrants who were made to pay the head tax. At the same time as he evokes the racist history on which Canada is founded, Wong implicitly asks his viewers to consider: What has changed in a century?

The final textual message of the video, "Try to forgive what is past," is taken from Adrienne Clarkson's installation speech as Governor General and appears over her portrait. This particular part of her speech resonates with Wong's message in provocative ways:

> There seem to be two kinds of societies in the world today. Perhaps there have always been only two kinds—punishing societies and forgiving societies. A society like Canada's, with its four centuries of give-and-take, compromise and acceptance, wrong-doing and redress, is basically a forgiving society. We try—we must try—to forgive what is past. The punishing society never forgets the wrongs of the past. The forgiving society works towards the actions of the future. The forgiving society enables people to behave well toward one another, to begin again, to build a society in hope and with love.

Wong's art also seeks "to build a society in hope," but it adamantly refuses "to forget the wrongs of the past," to forgive if forgiving means forgetting, as Christian doctrine urges. Instead, it seeks to build on a belief in justice for all.

After all we have witnessed in this final video, are we to take this statement—"Try to forgive what is past"—at face value, as a plea to Canada's racialized minorities to forget the racist past, to forgive the crimes committed against them, and to enter into a modern multiculturalism represented by Clarkson and all she is made to stand for? Or are we to take this statement ironically, as a critique of the presentist nature of official

multicultural policy, which advocates closure on the past, a forgetting of history as we enter into a future where all will putatively be equal? Wong's art has it both ways. It allows those who want to view the announcements as acknowledging a racist history that is recalled only to be disavowed in pursuit of new beginnings to do so, while at the same time allowing for a slant viewing in which the multiculturalism represented by Clarkson is critiqued and a call for justice is evoked, if not openly enunciated. By showing us the past repeating itself in the current racist treatment of the Chinese refuge seekers, Wong suggests that the past cannot be forgotten, cannot be laid to rest: it haunts us in the present, demanding that we refuse to "get over" it without a just reckoning. As Judith Butler reminds us in "Afterword: After Loss, What Then?": "the past is irrecoverable and [yet] the past is not past; the past is the resource for the future and the future is the redemption of the past" (467).

At the same time, the current group of refugees, the class of 2000, offers hope for "the redemption of the past," hope for the creation of "a new world country, a free and tolerant society." Such a society is based not on a singular notion of a monolithic Canadian culture, language, and race (the Sir Charles Tupper model of Anglo-Canada), or even on an English/French binary model of Canadian culture, languages, and races—Pierre Elliott Trudeau's "multiculturalism within a bilingual frame" that was always designed to privilege the "two founding races."[10] Rather, Wong's vision grounds twenty-first century Canadian citizenship on the foundation of the transnational and diasporic subjectivity of the refugee that he re-presents in both senses of the word. Refugee citizenship, an apparent oxymoron, is articulated by Wong as a goal, a future to be attained in this new millennium. We might even say that Wong has ironically recast Clarkson, a Chinese Canadian refugee who speaks fluent Cantonese, English, and French, as the head of state of this new polity of refugee citizens, thus simultaneously invoking and subverting her profoundly nationalist installation address, which is full of refugee gratitude towards Canada.[11]

The contemporary concept of the "refugee" is predicated on the prior concept of the modern bounded nation-state as a natural or organic entity, so that forced migration or "displacement" in terms of the "refugee experience" becomes an anomalous movement that threatens or destabilizes the secure, sedentary life that is considered normative in the modern nation-state. "Refugees," in this context, become populations that need to be managed, contained, resettled, and assimilated, or ideally repatriated, as if

"home" is an essential point of origin where the refugee naturally belongs—"there, not here" as dictated by xenophobic nativism. "Common notions of culture," James Clifford comments, are biased "toward rooting rather than travel" (338). Sarah Kyambi observes that,

> Standing at the threshold of nation[,] the refugee comes both to fulfil and to undermine the identity of nation. He or she is both what the nation relates itself to and what it separates itself from. In the recognition of refugees through the grant of asylum the nation fulfils its universalist claim in what is beyond it in a display of civility and humanity. Yet the refugee's presence is also seen as foreign and other, a threat to the order and unity of national identity, undermining the nation's self-presence. (25)

Wong attempts to destabilize traditional, fixed notions of the refugee further, not only by making refugees visible on camera, giving them individual and collective voices, and asserting their agency, but also by focusing not on what refugees "lose" in their routings to new places, but what they bring with them—what Canada "gains" in terms of its identity and culture, or how "they" can change "us." Wong's art thus deconstructs the binary distinctions between refugee and citizen, alien and native, foreign and domestic, "them" and "us." What it means to be "Canadian," Wong suggests, is challenged by what it might mean to be a "world citizen" in a genuinely multicultural society.[12]

In envisioning the refugee as the symbol of the world citizen, Wong is working within a significant theoretical tradition that emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century. Michel Foucault, in his adumbration of the concept of "international citizenship," states: "One of the duties of international citizenship is to reveal human misery to the eyes and ears of government, as it is not true that they are not responsible for it. Human misery must never be the silent residue of politics" (qtd. in Malkki 517). Foucault's focus on the figure of human misery as the representative of international citizenship harks back to Hannah Arendt's claim in *The Origins of Totalitariansim* "that stateless persons comprise 'the most symptomatic group in contemporary politics'" (qtd. in Hayden 57), and aligns with Giorgio Agamben's assertion that the refugee, the one who experiences bare life, "is perhaps the only imaginable figure of the people in our day" ("We Refugees" n. pag.).

In "We Refugees," Agamben goes on to make the claim that "the refugee is the sole category in which it is possible today to perceive the forms and limits of a political community to come" (n. pag.), the base figure or ground

zero on which to found political rights, the one who represents "nothing less than a border concept that radically calls into question the principles of the nation-state" (n. pag.). In "Beyond Human Rights," he states further:

> If we want to be equal to the absolutely new tasks ahead, we will have to abandon decidedly, without reserve, the fundamental conceptions through which we have so far represented the subjects of the political (Man, the Citizen and its rights, but also the sovereign people, the worker, and so forth) and build our political philosophy anew starting from the one and only figure of the refugee. (159)

Wong takes up Foucault's and Agamben's challenge of revealing the human misery—but also human potential—of the refugee as the figure of the political future to the eyes and ears of government and the broader public, even if he does so subversively. As he says in the Preface to *Yellow Peril: Reconsidered*, "we must first be seen and be heard" (6), which is why he turns to video art to get his message across of the refugee as the base or ground zero of a new type of citizenship. His viscerally affective "aesthetics of heterogeneity" (Tiampo 195) makes clearly *visible* the written theories of philosophers like Foucault and Agamben.

Wong's highly radical method and message also intersect with or anticipate the work of national and local activists like Sunera Thobani, who was President of the [Canadian] National Action Committee on the Status of Women in the mid-1990s, and Harsha Walia, co-founder of the Vancouver Coast Salish Territories chapter of No One Is Illegal. With her concept of "border imperialism," Walia "disrupts the myth of Western benevolence toward migrants," focusing instead on "the processes by which the violences and precarities of displacement and migration are *structurally* created as well as maintained" by colonialism and capitalist empire (4). She observes that "Border imperialism encapsulates four overlapping and concurrent structurings," the first three of which Wong clearly evokes in his videos, albeit in a more subtle and affective manner:

> first, the mass displacement of colonized and impoverished communities resulting from asymmetrical relations of global power, and the simultaneous securitization of the border against those migrants whom capitalism and empire have displaced; second, the criminalization of migration with severe punishment and discipline for those deemed "alien" or "illegal"; third, the entrenchment of a racialized hierarchy of citizenship by arbitrating who legitimately constitutes the nation-state. (4)

In excavating Canada's violent racist past, Wong, like Walia, subverts the common assumption of Canada as a generous, peaceful nation of refuge,

while suggesting that borders create arbitrary divisions between those human subjects deemed alien/refugee/migrant and those granted the privilege of citizenship. In the third video in particular, through his use of flashing words like "apartheid," "camp," "colonialism," "displacement," "ethnic cleansing," and "nationalism"—only a few examples from a long list—he evokes Canada's past and present role in empire building that structurally produces and perpetuates inequality and refuge seekers. Further, he interrogates the need for a securitized national border to hold aliens out, propagating in the process the concept of transnational or global citizenship based on the figure of the refugee. Wong was using a state-funded agency to circulate this message just prior to the events of September 11, 2001, in the aftermath of which the tightening of borders would become even more pronounced and groups like No One Is Illegal would arise.[13]

Thobani also observes that official state multiculturalism casts "white [nationals] . . . as tolerant and respectful of difference and diversity, while non-white [immigrants and refugees are] instead constructed as perpetually and irremediably monocultural, in need of being taught the virtues of tolerance and cosmopolitanism" (148). Further, "Multiculturalism constructs [immigrant and refugee] communities as neatly bounded, separate cultural identities, unchanged by the process of migration and dislocation" (149). Wong reverses these positions to establish a genuinely critical multiculturalism in which the different subjects in the refugee class break out of this state-imposed and discrete racial, ethnic, and national segmentation; different racialized and ethnicized subjects appreciate and explore each other's differences to such an extent that they become confused and so enter into a coalition from below, a solidarity that poses a challenge to the hegemony of dominant whiteness and thus performs a critical multiculturalism. Whiteness becomes just one among many racial positions in the national and transnational conversation he portrays. In his representations, the physical positioning of the refugee subjects becomes important: in the third video they increasingly face sideways, towards each other, or even with their backs to the camera, indicating that they no longer need to account for themselves to a mainstream, white audience, the ubiquitous "dominant viewer."

The viewing audience here is somewhat different from that of Wong's earlier art videos in that Wong is not speaking to the converted, as he might be in a museum setting. Rather, he speaks in these public announcements made for television to a wide viewing audience. The videos give a doubled

message that can be seen as supporting Canadian governmental efforts against racism—official multiculturalism, forgiveness, tolerance, apology—but they also offer an opportunity to read them ironically, for radical critique. In the end, they offer the possibility of an optimistic reading for the future of a transformed Canadian citizenship, which Wong imagines at the dawn of the millennium as a critical multiculturalism, or as a type of world citizenship or transnational refugee citizenship that radically challenges and exceeds modern concepts of the bounded nation. Sixteen years into the twenty-first century, as Canadians debate the fate of a new wave of refugees, this time from Syria in West Asia, Wong's form of Asian Canadian critique remains as vitally relevant as it was in 2000.

NOTES

1 This critique of multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-religious societies based on immigration would gain momentum after 9/11, with Prime Minister Tony Blair declaring "Britain's multicultural experiment over," according to Philip Johnston in *The Telegraph* on December 9, 2006, and on October 17, 2010, Matthew Weaver reported in *The Guardian* that Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany, had asserted that attempts to create a multicultural German nation had "utterly failed." I should make it absolutely clear that, while I—along with many others—mount a critique of official Canadian multiculturalism, I do so from a position that it has failed to deliver its promise of genuine equality/equity, not from a position that it threatens a cohesive (white) national culture to which we should return, the position taken by Blair and Merkel.

2 For a description of the "Unite Against Racism" campaign and access to its videos, visit the Canadian Race Relations Foundation's website.

3 See the Canadian Race Relations Foundation's video, "Unite Against Racism 15."

4 For Asian Canadian and other racialized cultural producers in Canada, state-sponsored multiculturalism provides opportunities as well as constraints in dealing with critical issues such as Canadian citizenship and national belonging, injustice and discrimination (especially racism), and identity-formation within ethnic communities. Often, Asian Canadian artists critique the shortcomings of official multiculturalism in direct ways, but at other times they must construct and advance their work within the confines of state-funded agencies or ethnic minority community groups that reflect an ethnic-community establishment beholden to the state, a situation that makes negotiating between critique and complicity a complex balancing act. Viet Thanh Nguyen and Tomo Hattori, among others, have argued that critics of Asian American literature need to move beyond a binary division between radical critique (Nguyen's "bad" Asians) and complicit accommodation (the model minority), observing that ethnic nationalist radicalism becomes its own commodity fetish within a system of cultural capital (Viet Thanh Nguyen 9-10, 150).

5 The 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees describes a refugee in relation to his/her nation as a person who, "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social

group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it" (UNHCR 14). That Wong has several of his "refugee" subjects list their place of origin or birth as inside Canada suggests that he has broadened the definition of refugee to include persons who are internally displaced for some reason—and that he considers Canada a country that both produces and receives refugees. That all his refugee subjects aren't Asian also suggests his strong commitment to coalition politics across racialized groups in order to combat white supremacy in Canada and the West.

6 In 1984, when he was 29, for example, his nine-hour-long video, *Confused: Sexual Views*, which had been commissioned by the Vancouver Art Gallery to open their new video exhibition space, was cancelled by the Gallery before it was shown on the grounds that it was not art and that it might offend viewers, leading to a huge outcry in the artistic community. Of his early work from the 1970s and 1980s, Wong says: "There is a lot of work there that was extremely personal and very revealing because it was so rebel to do that. It was claiming technology and video and image-making. Taking it from the mass media, which were owned by corporations, or by government and cable companies" (Wong and Miguel 132).

7 As P. Nobel points out, in the late twentieth century, "The overwhelming majority of refugees originate in the Third World. The direct causes of their flight are conflicts kept alive mostly by super-power politics and by weapons forged and manufactured at bargain prices in the rich countries, who export death and destruction, and import the natural and partly processed products of the poor countries" (qtd. in Malkki 504). Wong, through the text that flashes on his screen, suggests that wealthy Western democracies have also created refugee populations.

8 On Canada's immigration and refugee policy and changes in recent years, see George Usha, "Immigration and Refugee Policy in Canada: Past, Present, and Future." Since Canada's refugee policy is also connected to its policies on human rights, it is helpful also to consult Andrew Lui, who traces the national and international perception that Canada is a nation committed to universal human rights against the country's often bleak history of disregard for human rights in the exercise of its foreign policy.

9 Clarkson's official website states: "Welcome to the official website of The Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, Canada's 26th Governor General from 1999-2005. Madame Clarkson is universally acknowledged to have transformed the office during her six years at Rideau Hall and to have left an indelible mark on Canada's history" ("Welcome" n. pag.).

10 This is the term used to describe the English and French in the 1969 Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. For a discussion of the use of this discourse to rewrite Canada's "cultural heritage" in the Commission documents, see Barrett, *Blackening Canada*.

11 On refugee gratitude and indebtedness, see Mimi Thi Nguyen; for a discussion of this topic in a Canadian context, see Vinh Nguyen.

12 For a detailed history and analysis of the concept of "world citizenship" as a form of cosmopolitanism, particularly as it is fleshed out in the work of Kant and in Agamben's counter to Kant in Agamben's theorization of the refugee, see Bishupal Limbu. He writes that "[t]he concept of cosmopolitanism as world citizenship, however, is more metaphorical than literal or practical. It is the expression of a desire or the espousal of an attitude or even the (utopian) claiming of an unrealized right more than the account of an actual state of affairs" (259). Limbu's stress on the potential of the refugee as world citizen

aligns with Wong's use of the refugee in his brief videos.

13 For an account of the rise of the No One Is Illegal movement after 9/11, see Fortier, as well as Nyers, "No One Is Illegal Between City and Nation."

WORKS CITED

Agamben, Giorgio. "Beyond Human Rights." *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*. Ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996. 159-66. Print.

—. "We Refugees." 1994. Trans. Michael Rocke. *Umb.edu*. Web. 10 Jan. 2016.

Barrett, Paul. *Blackening Canada: Diaspora, Race, Multiculturalism*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2015. Print.

Bradimore, Ashley, and Harald Bauder. "Mystery Ships and Risky Boat People: Tamil Refugee Migration in the Newsprint Media." *Canadian Journal of Communication* 36.4 (2011): 637-61. Print.

Butler, Judith. "Afterword: After Loss, What Then?" *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*. Ed. David Eng and David Kazanjian. Berkeley: U of California P, 2003. 467-73. Print.

Canadian Race Relations Foundation. "About the CRRF." *Canadian Race Relations Foundation*. Web. 12 July 2016.

Clarkson, Adrienne. "Her Excellency the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson Governor General of Canada - Installation Speech." *Governor General of Canada*. 7 Oct. 1999. Web. 10 Jan. 2016.

Clifford, James. "Diasporas." *Cultural Anthropology* 9.3 (1994): 302-38. Print.

Fortier, Craig S. "Decolonizing Borders: No One Is Illegal Movements in Canada and the Negotiation of Counter-National and Anti-Colonial Struggles from within the Nation-State." Web. 16 Aug. 2016.

Greenberg, Joshua. "Opinion Discourse and Canadian Newspapers: The Case of the Chinese 'Boat People.'" *Canadian Journal of Communication* 25 (2000): 517-53. Print.

Greenberg, Joshua, and Sean Heir. "Crisis, Mobilization and Collective Problematization: 'Illegal' Chinese Migrants and the Canadian News Media." *Journalism Studies* 2.4 (2001): 563-83. Print.

Hattori, Tomo. "Model Minority Discourse and Asian American Jouis-Sense." *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 11.2 (1999): 228-47. Print.

Hayden, Patrick. *Political Evil in a Global Age: Hannah Arendt and International Theory*. London: Routledge, 2009. Print.

Johnston, Philip. "Adopt Our Values or Stay Away, says Blair." *The Telegraph* 9 Dec. 2006. Web. 16 Aug. 2016.

Kyambi, Sarah. "National Identity and Refugee Law." *Critical Beings: Law, Nation, and the Global Subject*. Ed. Peter Fitzpatrick and Patricia Tuitt. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. 19-36. Print.

Limbu, Bishupal. "Illegible Humanity: The Refugee, Human Rights, and the Question of Representation." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 22.3 (2009): 257-82. Print.

Lui, Andrew. *Why Canada Cares: Human Rights and Foreign Policy in Theory and Practice.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2012. Print.

Malkki, Liisa. "Refugees and Exile: From 'Refugee Studies' to the National Order of Things." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995): 495-523. Print.

Nguyen, Mimi Thi. *The Gift of Freedom: War, Dept, and Other Refugee Passages*. Raleigh, NC: Duke UP, 2012. Print.

Nguyen, Viet Thanh. *Race and Resistance: Literature and Politics in Asian America*.

Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002. Print.
Nguyen, Vinh. "Refugee Gratitude: Narrating Success and Intersubjectivity in Kim Thúy's *Ru*." *Canadian Literature* 219 (2013): 17-36. Print.
Nyers, Peter. "No One Is Illegal Between City and Nation." *Studies in Social Justice* 4.2 (2010): 127-43. Print.
—. *Rethinking Refugees: Beyond States of Emergency*. New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.
Thobani, Sunera. *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2007. Print.
Tiampo, Ming. "Ken Lum, Paul Wong, and the Aesthetics of Pluralism." *Asian Canadian Writing Beyond Autoethnography.* Ed. Eleanor Ty and Christl Verduyn. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2008. 179-200. Print.
UNHCR. *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*. *UNHCR*. 1-52. Web. 10 Jan. 2016.
Usha, George. "Immigration and Refugee Policy in Canada: Past, Present, and Future." *Canadian Social Policy: Issues and Perspectives*. Ed. Anne Westhues and Brian Wharf. 5th ed. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2013. 333-54. Print.
Walia, Harsha. *Undoing Border Imperialism*. Oakland: AK Press/Institute for Anarchist Studies, 2013. Print.
Weaver, Matthew. "Angela Merkel: German multiculturalism has 'utterly failed.'" *The Guardian* 17 Oct. 2010 (corrected 20 Oct. 2010). Web. 16 Aug. 2016.
"Welcome." *The Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson*. Web. 9 Jan. 2016.
Wong, Paul. "Refugee Class of 2000." Email to the author. 12 May 2016. E-mail.
—. *Refugee Class of 2000*. Vtape, 2000. DVD.
—. "Yellow Peril: Reconsidered." *Yellow Peril: Reconsidered*. Ed. Paul Wong. Vancouver: On Edge, 1991. 6-12. Print.
Wong, Paul, and Christine Miguel. "The King of Main: Unplugged." *Reel Asian: Asian Canada on Screen*. Ed. Elaine Chang. Toronto: Coach House, 2007. 127-33. Print.

Corals Zheng

Public Art

Our hands, chain linked fences,
Your arm, my support,
Your height, my shadow.
It was provocatively mundane.

Mall art galleries, free of pretension,
Trying to sell you, public art, free art,
Passing by, art,
Instill a sense of, something,

That you couldn't put your finger on it,
Something's, off,
One wrong shade somewhere, continuously painted over.
I couldn't hear it.

Couldn't hear our clocks slowly ticking. Out of sync
with time, and our hands, long
short, thin, slowly
moved, just

A little bit faster,
The lights grew brighter,
The crowds came, dirty
hands all wanted to touch

this public art.

Malissa Phung

Asian-Indigenous Relationalities
Literary Gestures of Respect and Gratitude

Sister texts *Disappearing Moon Cafe* by SKY Lee and "Yin Chin" by Lee Maracle have initiated an important conversation in Asian Canadian studies about the impact of racial discrimination and colonial oppression on Asian-Indigenous relations, a discussion that typically privileges the relations and tensions of marginalized communities with white settlers rather than with each other. The intertextual dialogue between these stories is made clear by the title of Maracle's short story, a morphed transliteration of the derogatory slang "injun" drawn from the first encounter in Lee's novel between the Chinese patriarch and Kelora, a mixed-race Indigenous woman.[1] While "Yin Chin" follows an Indigenous woman's college experiences with Chinese Canadian allies, framed by a haunting childhood memory of internalized xenophobic attitudes in her community, the melancholic force behind *Disappearing Moon Cafe* lies in a series of nostalgic flashbacks in which Gwei Chang, the elderly family patriarch, mourns his abandonment of Kelora, the greatest love of his life, out of colonial shame and classist denigration. Narrating the effects of racial and colonial discourses on Sino-Indigenous relations,[2] the texts by Lee and Maracle both call forth damaging stereotypes as part of a creative exercise in self-scrutiny, demonstrating the ways in which the imposition and internalization of racist and colonial discourses divide and conquer both communities and prevent them from cultivating mutual relations of respect. As Larissa Lai points out, "[b]oth Lee's novel and Maracle's short story are instances of respect in action, a self-reflexive respect that acknowledges the other, that gestures towards taking responsibility for oneself—both personally and historically—in the face of larger social forces" ("Epistemologies" 104). Within the narrative bounds of the texts, the characters

in "Yin Chin" and *Disappearing Moon Cafe* feel indebted to individuals they have wronged in the past, individuals with whom they have shared kinship and affinity. However, read allegorically beyond the text, the Chinese and Indigenous characters embody a framework for acknowledging and honouring Asian-Indigenous relations and historical indebtedness more broadly in the contemporary moment, a decolonial framework that has become a prominent mode of critique in Asian Canadian studies over the past decade.[3]

Situated within a settler of colour critique, this article extends these intertextual conversations about the impact of racism and colonialism on Sino-Indigenous relations to consider the ways in which contemporary Asian Canadian settler citizens, migrants, and refugees inherit not only the legacies of white supremacy, global capital, and settler colonialism, but also the historical relations of Sino-Indigenous indebtedness. Sino-Indigenous relations of kinship, friendship, and hospitality constitute my primary archive, as well as relations depicted in historical accounts of early Chinese settlement in Canada,[4] or in recent historical fiction such as David H. T. Wong's *Escape to Gold Mountain* and Paul Yee's *A Superior Man*.[5] However, I aim to project the decolonial aspirations of this Chinese Canadian archive onto other Asian Canadian communities, whether they come from post-1967 refugee or economic migrant genealogies.[6] Presenting an allegorical reading of Asian-Indigenous relations through scenes of settler/migrant/refugee indebtedness and gratitude represented in several Chinese Canadian literary texts, as well in *Ru* by Vietnamese Canadian writer Kim Thúy, I argue that the literary tradition of Asian-Indigenous indebtedness has the capacity to generate a sense of mutuality and self-critique amongst all Asian Canadians who need to consider their roles and responsibilities within the structures of settler colonialism. This is particularly important within Asian migrant and refugee communities shaped by an enduring sense of gratitude towards the state for being granted a new life on colonized lands. I propose that this literary tradition has the potential to inspire the cultivation of decolonial epistemologies and solidarities amongst Asian Canadian communities divided by differences often considered too insurmountable to overcome.

Settler of Colour Critique

Explorations of Asian-Indigenous relations are by no means isolated within histories of early Chinese settlement in Canada or the field of Asian Canadian studies. A parallel tradition of acknowledging Japanese-Indigenous relations of kinship, friendship, or even unfriendly and shameful

intimacies has been traced in literary and cultural texts produced on both sides of the Canada/US border: novels such as Joy Kogawa's *Itsuka*; Hiromi Goto's *The Kappa Child*; Leslie Marmon Silko's (Laguna Pueblo) *Ceremony*; Perry Miyake's *21st Century Manzanar*; and the film *Village of Widows* (1999), a Lindum Films documentary on Sahtu Dene travelling to Japan to apologize to World War II survivors for unknowingly mining uranium on Sahtu land at Great Bear Lake that was used in the making of the atomic bombs that decimated Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Marie Clements (Métis) has also explored this history of Dene-Japanese proximities in her play *Burning Vision*, a time-bending confluence of multiple narratives and characters that depicts an intimate history of radioactive colonialism shared by Dene people, Japanese Americans, and Japanese people. As a result of such compelling inter-cultural narratives, scholarly interest in uncovering and theorizing Asian-Indigenous relations has surged over the past decade in the fields of Asian American, Asian North American, and Asian Pacific and Islander studies, producing a vibrant transnational body of research that speaks to a commitment on the part of social justice-oriented scholars to work towards decolonizing established knowledge systems that have previously rendered these inter-community relations politically invisible or irrelevant for academic study.[7]

Certainly, the earlier scholarly gap was shaped by the way in which colonial and settler colonial studies were conducted on Indigenous societies across the Pacific and Atlantic worlds. Once dominated by white, non-Indigenous scholars, this body of work focused primarily on the histories of contact and post-contact dynamics between European, white settler, and Indigenous societies. Consequently, it has been the necessary task of Indigenous academics to produce Indigenous-centered scholarship to rework and critique the problematic research that has been produced about their people, cultures, and histories. However, a paradigmatic shift similar to that in Asian North American and Asian Pacific and Islander studies has also emerged in settler colonial and Indigenous studies: a commitment to study what Paul Lai and Lindsey Claire Smith have termed "alternative contact" (407-408), that is, a move to look past the body of the white settler and focus instead on contact and dialogue between and amongst non-white and Indigenous communities. White colonial structures, knowledges, and perspectives have occupied the centre of scholarly discussions on historical issues that impact Indigenous peoples for far too long.[8] This perspectival shift towards examining non-white communities and Indigenous peoples in a settler colonial framework has also engaged Canadian and American

scholars working in critical race studies, critical ethnic studies, diaspora studies, and postcolonial studies,[9] and has been felt more recently in Canadian literary and cultural studies.[10]

While considerable interest in examining the relations of racialized and Indigenous communities has emerged, there has not been much consensus over determining the settler colonial status of non-Indigenous communities of colour. To date, much of the literature remains divided over the settler categorization of racialized communities, particularly those of racialized migrant, diasporic, and refugee backgrounds. While some scholars would suggest that a racialized community's settler status depends upon the degree to which their migration was voluntary, others would unequivocally define non-Indigenous communities of colour as settlers regardless of whether their dispersal occurred by choice or force.[11] Proposing that we move past the settler-Indigenous binary, Iyko Day claims that folding these communities "into a generalized settler position through voluntaristic assumptions constrains our ability to understand how their racialized vulnerability and disposability supports a settler colonial project" (*Alien Capital* 21). As such, she presents a triangulated theory of settler colonialism in North America that distinguishes the alien (that is, black slaves and Asian migrants) from the Native and the settler due to the role that their racialized labour plays in the production of settler capitalism, which in turn determines the degree of their territorial entitlement. Day concedes that acknowledging these voluntaristic distinctions hardly absolves any community of colour from being willing or unwitting participants in a settler colonial structure meant to eliminate Indigenous peoples. She asserts that "for slaves and racialized migrants, the degree of forced or voluntary migration or level of complicity with the settler state is ultimately secondary to their subordination under a settler colonial mode of production driven by the proprietorial logics of whiteness" (*Alien Capital* 24).

For the most part, I am on board with Day's argument. Her work offers a comprehensive model for conceptualizing the racial formation of white settler, diasporic, and Indigenous communities under the framework of settler colonialism.[12] Unlike older critical race models, her approach addresses both Indigenous land and racialized labour without also collapsing the racialization of Asian migrant genealogies with that of the Black Atlantic diaspora. What is more, her model usefully outlines how the logic of exclusion responds to the way in which the racialization of each positionality becomes an aid or obstacle to the consolidation and expansion of the settler colonial project.[13] However, as much as nuancing our critical race models is

necessary to fully understand both our roles and vulnerabilities under the structures of white settler capitalism, I still hold that the settler of colour critique be retained in our discussions for solidarity-building reasons. Conceptually imperfect as the term may be for its historical reference to European immigrants and their descendants who have stood to benefit from the military and juridical apparatuses of the French and British empires, holding onto the settler category in our contemporary moment becomes at the very least a gesture of respect and solidarity. Despite the scholarly attempts to nuance or revise the term—for example, settler of colour, arrivant (Jodi Byrd), or alien (Iyko Day)—it carries more social impact if settler allies reorient it beyond the academy to acknowledge our colonial complicities and responsibilities. More importantly, it becomes a solidarity project, a mode of self-critique, a process of self-identification that can be reconfigured intersectionally, depending on one's positionalities and migrant genealogies. To build and improve upon Asian-Indigenous relations, today's Asian Canadians must confront and acknowledge their roles and responsibilities in the ongoing structure of settler colonialism, even if they or their ancestors do not benefit from the same privilege systems as many white settlers. Even if Asian North American labour has been made historically alien and continually subject to suspicion and deportation, as Day suggests, for Asian Canadians born or arriving after 1967, I contend that as long as we pay taxes to the Canadian state, own or rent Crown property, and enjoy the social benefits and institutional privileges of Canadian citizenship, we are, without question, settlers too.

Like Dean Itsuji Saranillio, I see great political and pedagogical value in the settler of colour framework as it has the potential "to open one's visual world to the material consequences of aligning oneself with the settler state" (282).[14] Whether communities of colour come from alien or settler migrations, the settler state still provides social, political, legal, and economic dividends to every migrant, diasporic, and refugee community and their descendants, even as race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, able-bodiedness, ethno-national origins, and generation (time of immigration) intersect to downgrade and/or uplift settlers to varying degrees. Of course, retaining the settler category does not mean that we are only settlers all the time. Retaining the settler of colour critique accounts for only one of many genealogies that shape the everyday lives and memories of racialized settlers, migrants, and refugees. Claiming settlerhood and the responsibilities of a settler ally is a political endeavour: as a historical and ongoing relation of indebtedness, it ensures

that we respect, honour, and never lose sight of Indigenous claims to land rights and sovereignty. As for Asian Canadian studies, retaining the settler of colour critique already fits within an established literary and cultural tradition. As I will discuss next, it constitutes a mode of cultivating mutual respect and self-reflexivity in the Indigenous and Asian Canadian imaginary.

Relations of Indebtedness in Chinese Canadian Historical Fiction

A tradition of acknowledging and restoring Asian-Indigenous relations exists in Asian Canadian studies, one initiated by Indigenous and Asian Canadian writers like Lee Maracle, SKY Lee, Marie Clements, and Joy Kogawa. In Chinese Canadian historical fiction more specifically, depictions of these inter-community relations range from stories of friendship, kinship, hospitality, and care, to distrust, disavowal, and cross-racial denigration. Instances of positive and compassionate relations and intimacies crop up, for example, in David H. T. Wong's graphic novel, *Escape to Gold Mountain*. When Ah-Foo, a Chinese male ancestor, is presumed dead by his railway crew after falling off a steep mountain cliff during a blasting expedition, he is saved and nursed back to health by an Indigenous community, only to return to his crew a year later wearing a cedar hat: "a gift from the Native people who saved my life . . . to remind me that all peoples are brothers" (139).[15] While Indigenous characters welcome, befriend, host, and start families with Chinese characters in Wong's graphic novel, in Paul Yee's *A Superior Man* they are sometimes deemed to be untrustworthy, less civilized, and a source of shame for Chinese bachelors. In Yee's novel, the protagonist Hok Yang receives an ill-timed visit from his former lover Mary, a Nlaka'pamux woman. When he is about to ship home with his life's savings to fulfill his filial duties, Mary tracks him down in Victoria to surprise him with their son Peter. She asks Hok for financial support—a pretense, as she quietly leaves Peter behind, trumping Hok's escape plan instead. Intent on returning to China to marry a Chinese woman and avoid shaming his family with a mixed-race child born out of wedlock, Hok enlists the help of Sam Bing Lew, a mixed-race Indigenous guide, to track down Mary near Lytton and return Peter to her and her community. Spliced with Hok's memories of hard labour and racial violence while building the railway, the novel follows the struggles of Hok and Peter together with Sam, who saves Hok's life on multiple occasions. Hok and his lineage end up owing Sam a lifetime of favours, forging a life-long relation of indebtedness that Hok ends up disavowing as soon as they part ways.

A narrative plotline that circles around fears of miscegenation, the disavowal of unwanted kin, and Sino-Indigenous indebtedness also surfaces in SKY Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe*. Like Hok, Gwei Chang does not know that he has fathered a child with his Indigenous lover, but he manages to return home and bring back a Chinese wife to start a Gold Mountain family. Rita Wong and Larissa Lai offer an allegorical interpretation of Gwei Chang's decision to abandon his life with Kelora and her people, a reading that presents a compelling settler of colour critique for Asian Canadian studies. Lai suggests via Wong that Gwei Chang's grief over abandoning Kelora, a woman who found him lost, starving, and unfriendly towards her in the wilderness yet who proceeded to help him complete his ill-equipped bone repatriation project, constitutes "a grief of ingratitude" that can be extended to Chinese Canadians today ("Epistemologies" 103). Building on "Wong [who] suggests that that grief and that ingratitude belong also to the likes of her, me, and the author SKY Lee," Lai writes that

> [a]t the extra-diegetic level, Lee's gesture of respect is her recognition of the wrongs committed by Chinese immigrants against the Indigenous people who helped them. It is also, as Wong notes, a gesture of solidarity in that it recognizes an Asian/Indigenous relationship that includes desire and emotional connection, as well as (differential) subjugation to the same colonial and economic forces and (differential) connection to the land. ("Epistemologies" 103)

At a personal level, early Chinese settlers like Ah-Foo, Hok, and Gwei Chang may remain indebted to the Indigenous communities who assisted them; but on a broader scale, they, along with the early Chinese railway workers, have accrued a historical debt in that "they also participated in the colonial nation-building project that disenfranchised Indigenous peoples" ("Epistemologies" 103). This is a historical debt that scholars like Wong and Lai have claimed for today's Chinese Canadians that extends beyond the personal: if acknowledged and honoured, it becomes a socio-political debt that shapes how communities relate to one another.

Yet, I wonder how the contemporary inheritance of this historical debt could work when not all Chinese Canadians have genealogical ties to the Head Tax generation. The majority of today's Chinese Canadians constitute a post-1967 immigrant demographic vastly different from the early Chinese settlers in class, culture, language, spiritual beliefs, ethno-national origins, diasporic affiliations, and political ideologies. Could solidarity calls to such a heterogeneous community to claim these historical Asian-Indigenous relations of indebtedness supersede internal differences often thought to be too insurmountable to overcome? Along with these decolonial aspirations, is coalition building within the community even possible?

The challenges of building community solidarities are perhaps best illustrated in the ongoing "Monster Homes" controversy in Vancouver that began in the late 1980s, a case of enduring racial and class resentment towards wealthy Chinese migrants and investors for transforming both the aesthetic qualities of Vancouver's affluent neighbourhoods and the affordability of the real estate market till this day. This controversy tends to be cited as contemporary evidence of Canadian xenophobia towards Chinese Canadians, a repeat of the Yellow Peril discourse that agitated anti-Chinese sentiment and racial violence in BC at the turn of the twentieth century. However, Laura Madokoro has argued that compared to earlier Chinese Canadian battles to save Vancouver's Chinatown from a massive gentrification/slum clearance project, the Monster Homes controversy revealed a general lack of solidarity and diasporic cohesiveness within the community. While community members and Chinatown business representatives banded together to preserve Chinatown as a historic site, they expressed little interest in supporting the wealthy Chinese arrivals in their housing battle against the xenophobic attitudes held by so-called "long-time residents" of the exclusive Kerrisdale and Shaughnessy neighbourhoods (Madokoro 20-21). Consequently, Vancouver's history of these housing and residential struggles uncovers profound implications for today's Chinese Canadian community, for it proved that political and historical differences may be too difficult for members of the community to accept and overlook.

Indeed, if building lines of Chinese Canadian solidarity in a case like this was difficult, if not near impossible, then building decolonial solidarities amongst Chinese Canadians and Asian Canadians (already loose umbrella designations in terms of the heterogeneity mentioned above) presents overwhelming challenges as well. However, building solidarity and community affiliations is always hard work even amongst community members who share many political and ideological similarities. Problems like these present an excellent opportunity to turn to the political power of storytelling to imagine otherwise. In "Decolonizasian," Rita Wong looks to representations of Asian-Indigenous relations as having the imaginative potential to decolonize Asian settler epistemologies and relations with Indigenous peoples and the land. While for Wong, "[a]ffective bonds" do not necessarily translate into political solidarity,

> effective solidarity is also less likely to happen without a deeply felt understanding of each other's perspectives and the ways in which oppression is both common and different for people racialized as "First Nations" and "Asian." Fiction offers a speculative space and challenges us to imagine the ways in which dialogue and interaction could spark deeper understanding of our interrelatedness. (166)

Therefore, I stand by Rita Wong's and Larissa Lai's call for contemporary Chinese Canadians to claim this history of Sino-Indigenous indebtedness, a decolonial project that is politically feasible through the mobilizing power of literature. This project requires a settler of colour critique that is already rooted in a literary tradition set forth by Indigenous and Chinese Canadian writers to honour a relation of historical indebtedness, to re-establish mutual respect for each other's communities, and to practice a mode of self-critique that is politically urgent and applicable to all Chinese Canadians and East Asian, Southeast Asian, and South Asian Canadians.

Migrant and Refugee Gratitude

If acknowledging relations of indebtedness constitutes a literary tradition in Asian Canadian writing, then a parallel tradition of expressing migrant and refugee gratitude has also emerged. Denise Chong's family memoir *The Concubine's Children* and Kim Thúy's *Ru,* for example, express gratitude towards individuals who have made migrant and refugee lives of success and settlement in Canada possible. In Chong's memoir, she and her mother come to appreciate the immigrant sacrifices of Chong's grandparents. Chong's family, an ethnic success story, has enjoyed democratic freedoms and economic privileges under a liberal capitalist settler society made possible by the privilege of being born and raised overseas. Chong's mother gains an acute sense of her Gold Mountain privilege when she visits her older sisters who were left behind in China. Due to birth order, poverty, and anti-Chinese immigration legislation, Chong's aunts have been arbitrarily relegated to the "peasant's lot" under a Communist regime, whereas Chong's side of the family has acquired the wealth promised by the Gold Mountain myth, an economic and political liberation that Chong claims was only made possible by her grandparents' act of immigration and labour sacrifices (295). *Ru* is composed of vignettes that flash between Nguyễn An Tịnh's memories of growing up in Vietnam and her family's experiences of living in the refugee camp in Malaysia and resettling in Canada. Part of Saigon's bourgeois class, An Tịnh's family secretly leaves amid mounting fears of being branded as anti-Communists. Written by the narrator who becomes a writer, many of the reflective vignettes centre around family members, teachers, refugee sponsors, employers, friends, and lovers, producing what Vinh Nguyen has theorized to be an archival act of cataloguing gratitude towards those who have helped give the refugee a second start at life, an act of writing that makes a refugee (inter)subjectivity tenable and livable (29-30).

I align these narratives of migrant and refugee gratitude not to conflate their genealogies of loss and exile, but to carve out a decolonial space between them that creates room for acknowledging the histories of Indigenous displacement and dispossession that make settler capitalist accumulation possible in the first place. Granted, it is difficult to ask migrants and refugees to be mindful of the Indigenous nations and communities to which we all remain indebted when the structure of settler colonialism often makes Indigenous claims to sovereignty invisible and irrelevant under the capitalist system. It is also difficult to make this request without coming across as morally righteous and elitist, particularly when the state's liberal "gift of freedom," according to Mimi Thi Nguyen, forever binds the refugee to the giver in an enduring economy of indebtedness, obligation, and recompense (6-11).[16] Moreover, I do not wish to discount or disregard refugee expressions of gratitude and celebrations of success. As Vinh Nguyen reminds us, refugee narratives of success and gratitude "are integral to the intertwined processes of survival and subject formation for those who have experienced intense struggle, loss, and trauma": they constitute necessary life-writing tools for regenerating refugee self-existence, livelihood, being, and identity out of ontological oblivion (18; 23-24). Yet expressions of both migrant and refugee gratitude for such liberal democratic privileges and benefits must also consider the structures that have helped make Canada a safe and prosperous settler society, comparatively speaking, for Asian migrants and refugees. Decolonial allies must join these conversations respectfully and reveal the ways in which Canada's benevolence remains contested by other agents whose role in the act of giving has been masked, that is, Indigenous nations and communities who have been forced to welcome both migrants and refugees as well as the ecologies that sustain them.

By juxtaposing narratives of Asian-Indigenous indebtedness alongside expressions of Asian migrant and refugee gratitude, I suggest that gratitude and indebtedness can be made the basis of Asian-Indigenous relations more broadly. While migrant and refugee gratitude may be structured as a coercive relation of obligation towards the state, expressions of gratitude that acknowledge the history of Asian-Indigenous indebtedness can take on a different register. When Asian-Indigenous relations are built on gratitude and indebtedness, interactions that arise out of such relations entail more than a repayment of a specific amount of debt: this process of relation-building inaugurates an ongoing, future-oriented relation of social return, requiring a continual maintenance of inter-community relations and a constant renewal of trust and solidarity.[17] Of course, decolonial relations of

indebtedness should entail territorial reparations, among other treaty obligations, lest decolonization, as Eve Tuck (Unangan) and K. Wayne Yang assert, only take place in the settler mind (19). But when Asian-Indigenous relations are shaped by a historical and ongoing relation of indebtedness, the conversation of decolonizing Asian-Indigenous relations moves away from prioritizing settler colonial guilt and sorrow, seeking absolution for that (liberal) guilt, and transforming colonial complicity into an actionable project that attempts to decolonize and improve relations. Certainly, prioritizing colonial guilt situates Asian-Indigenous relations within a Eurocentric structure of liberal modes of governance, justice, and sociality that inevitably becomes more about seeking colonial absolution than about addressing the wrongs inflicted upon Indigenous communities, effectively displacing Indigenous peoples and their material experiences. As Deena Rymhs argues, configured under this epistemological framework, "reconciliation, paradoxically, can displace the wronged party" (116). I claim that if settler allies focus instead on relations of indebtedness, then the emphasis shifts towards finding out how Asian Canadians can express gratitude towards a wide range of colonial debts such as the acts of kindness, compassion, and hospitality that Indigenous communities such as the Nuu-chah-nulth and Nlaka'pamux peoples have historically shown to Chinese settlers.

"How Does a Single Blade of Grass Thank the Sun?"

If today's social justice-oriented Asian Canadians wish to claim the historical injustices levelled against Asian Canadian settlers, migrants, and refugees, they must also claim the relations of Asian-Indigenous indebtedness. There is a compelling short story in a recent collection by a new Chinese Canadian author that envisions how contemporary Chinese Canadian youth might acknowledge and honour this historical indebtedness. The title story in Doretta Lau's *How Does a Single Blade of Grass Thank the Sun?* demonstrates that expressions of Asian Canadian gratitude and indebtedness can also be articulated outside the frame of historical fiction, revealing an exciting shift in the storytelling patterns of emerging Asian Canadian cultural producers. It signals a significant turn that grapples with the historical debts that Chinese settlers and their descendants inherit upon migration, and confronts both the discursive erasures of Indigeneity and the legacies of settler colonialism in a contemporary context. The story also offers insights on mutuality and self-critique that may be useful for the challenges of generating a decolonial activist movement within today's Asian Canadian communities.

Above all, Lau's text challenges Asian Canadians to build inter- and intra-community solidarities in the face of genealogical differences that may divide and conquer us. In Lau's story, an unlikely bond develops between five Chinese Canadian youth despite their differences in class, gender, ethnonational origins, and political ideologies. Calling themselves the Dragoons, their individual nicknames also highlight important differences in their migration stories and add a transnational context to their decolonial politics. While Suzie Wrong is a second-generation Chinese female, Yellow Peril is a Taiwanese young woman who believes "with occidental-eyed earnestness that someday Taiwan would 'liberate China from Communism'" (109). As for the young men, Riceboy and Sick Man's families come from Hong Kong, and Chairman obviously hails from mainland China. The care that Lau takes to distinguish the characters' heterogeneous Chinese origins makes visible the historical grievances and seemingly insurmountable differences that these characters would have had to overcome in order to become a tight-knit group. Despite having been differentially impacted by competing empires, wars, regime changes, and the inequities of transnational capital, the gang live in Canada now and so must band together to fight their common foes, namely: orientalism, Yellow Perilism, cultural appropriation, cultural assimilation, the model minority myth, and white supremacy.

The national allegiances and political ideologies that should divide the group end up being rechanneled in diaspora: subjects of empire and capital, the Dragoons distrust authority and thus resist ascribing to the status quo. Observing the gang, Sick Man muses to himself, "[w]e had so much potential, but sometimes it seemed as if we . . . needed a little structure in our lives. We needed to achieve a goal of some sort" (115). Putting their heads together, the crew finally decide to vandalize a local mural, a project they have had their minds set on for months, for "[t]he mural depicted the joys of colonial life, roughing it in the wilderness, and the triumph of the settlers over the natives [sic]" (115). The story ends with the five figures gazing at where the mural once had been: now a beige wall, the painted-over mural commands their quiet and undivided attention. According to Sick Man, it is an evocative moment of political awakening and social fulfillment for the gang. To be sure, it is unclear whether Lau's characters conceive of this act as an acknowledgement of Asian-Indigenous indebtedness. By painting over a mural that inaccurately depicts the story of colonialism as a gift of modernity and civilization to Indigenous peoples, what political goals do the Dragoons accomplish? Read literally, the blank space on the wall is a whitewashing of history, a willful act

of forgetting that is still problematic no matter how inaccurate or racist that history was portrayed in the mural. Read generously, however, this act of vandalism, no matter how juvenile or politically ineffective it may be, is at best a symbolic gesture. It is a politically inspiring gesture for the Dragoons, a historical achievement or Great Wall monument of their own that could potentially signify a shared connection and solidarity with Indigenous peoples. A gesture of respect and solidarity on the imperfect terms that they know, it is still likely an acknowledgement of colonial interrelatedness—not an equation of colonial oppression but an acknowledgement of kinship across difference, of distinctive yet linked colonial injustices that matter even in the absence of embodied relations.[18] As an expression of gratitude, it can never repay—not fully, not ever—but as a gesture of respect and acknowledgment of Asian-Indigenous relations and indebtedness, it has the potential to inspire future generations of Asian Canadians to reflect upon and ask Indigenous communities how their relations might be restored, how we can all attempt to rebalance past and ongoing historical indebtedness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I must thank my thesis committee supervisors Donald Goellnicht, Daniel Coleman, and Nadine Attewell for their feedback on a previous version of this paper, as well as Sharlee Cranston-Reimer, Christine Kim, Chris Lee, and the anonymous reviewers for helping me refine my argument.

NOTES

1 Bewildered that Kelora, who looks like an Indian to Gwei Chang, can speak Chinese, he insults her, calling her a "'wild injun,'" but she only hears "'yin-chin'" instead (Lee 4).
2 Throughout this paper, I deploy the terms Sino-Indigenous and Asian-Indigenous to reference historical relations between Indigenous communities and Chinese settlers dating back to 1788 and contemporary relations amongst Indigenous peoples and Asian Canadians, respectively.
3 For foundational research by Asian Canadian studies scholars on this topic, see Henry Yu; Rita Wong; Marie Lo; Renisa Mawani; and Lai ("Epistemologies").
4 Not widely known is the history of the first Chinese settlers who arrived in 1788 with Captain Meares to build a trading post that would foster fur trading between merchants in Canton and the the Nuu-chah-nulth (Nootka Sound) peoples on Vancouver Island. Left behind due to Meares' clashes with competing Spanish traders, these fifty artisans sought refuge and integrated with the Nuu-chah-nulth peoples (Chan 33). More community members, local historians, and researchers have begun to archive such relations in monographs, documentaries, and historic sites. See Diana E. Leung and Kamala Todd; Justine Hunter; and the Chinese Canadian Historical Society of BC.
5 These relations are also portrayed in Ling Zhang's *Gold Mountain Blues*. See Larissa Lai

(*Slanting*) for an insightful discussion of the novel's controversy and whether Chinese Canadian history, literature, and culture constitutes intellectual property that can be appropriated by a Chinese Canadian author who immigrated to Canada in the 1980s but lacks personal ties to the communities that she writes about.

6 Though the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act was repealed in 1947, the last vestiges of its explicitly racial discrimination policies were not removed until 1967. Only then did Asian immigration to Canada increase substantially, especially during the 1980s and 1990s (Stasiulus and Jhappan 118).

7 For major works published on this topic, see Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Y. Okamura (2000; 2008); Cari M. Carpenter and K. Hyoejin Yoon; Karen Leong and Myla Vicenti Carpio; Lisa Lowe (2006; 2015); and Iyko Day (2010; 2016).

8 For more on this paradigm shift in Indigenous and settler colonial studies, see Chadwick Allen; Alice Te Punga Somerville (Maori); and Shona Jackson.

9 Far from exhaustive, the list of key scholars who have written on this topic from across various fields include Bonita Lawrence (Mi'kmaw) and Enakshi Dua; Sunera Thobani; Nandita Sharma and Cynthia Wright; Zainab Amadahy and Bonita Lawrence; Celia Haig-Brown; Harsha Walia; and Daniel Coleman. See also the edited collections *Alliances* and *Cultivating Canada.*

10 For instance, see *Narratives of Citizenship*; *Cultural Grammars of Nation, Diaspora, and Indigeneity in Canada*; and *Critical Collaborations.*

11 Some scholars take exception to the settler of colour critique, claiming that the concept reinforces power binaries, lacks historical specificity, confuses immigration with colonialism, or fails to account for the involuntary conditions of migration for some communities: for example, see Adam J. Barker; Jodi Byrd; Day; Lorenzo Veracini; Sharma and Wright; Dana Y. Takagi; and Patrick Wolfe. Meanwhile, scholars who have taken a more unequivocal stance include Fujikane and Okamura; Haig-Brown; Lawrence and Dua; Dean Itsuji Saranillio; Thobani; and Haunani-Kay Trask. For a more comprehensive literature review and analysis of this debate, see Day; and Saranillio.

12 Beyond the scope of her study, Day's work does raise the question: do Latino/a and Chicano/a communities count as alien migrations as well? Communities that can trace genealogical origins to the western coastal and southwestern regions of the US before the successive waves of Spanish and American colonization add further complexity to our critical race and settler colonial theorizing.

13 As I understand Day's overall argument, Asian migrants and black diasporas have been imported respectively as excludable and exclusive labour forces in order to expand and reproduce white settler entitlement to land and property, but what differentiates their exclusion (for example, via state-sanctioned violence or immigration controls) is the degree to which emancipated black labour and the presence of Asian labour and capital contaminates white supremacy or threatens to replace and dispossess white livelihoods.

14 In a parallel context, *pakeha*, the Maori word for the descendants of European colonizing settlers, came to invoke a particular form of politics in Aotearoa/New Zealand, one which emerged from a revisionist conception of New Zealand's colonial history, and recognized Maori claims to sovereignty and institutional racism within New Zealand's society. For more on the concept of settlerhood as ally politics, see Wendy Larner and Paul Spoonley.

15 There is historical basis for such an account. In a footnote, Wong, the author, explains that he was inspired by similar stories he heard while growing up, particularly "a story told to the author by people from the Salish Nation near Lillooet, BC, in 2011" (230).

16 To be sure, Nguyen's theorization of the US empire's gift of liberal governance may not

map that easily onto the Canadian context. Canada's role in the hot wars throughout Asia during the Cold War was less direct and active than that of the US, which positions the refugee's expression of gratitude on a different register of state benevolence. However, while Canada is not an uncontested super power with a global military presence like the US, the peace and prosperity that it enjoys to this day comes from its collaborative role and support, along with that of other NATO allies, in the ascension and consolidation of the American empire (Price 314-15).

17 For instance, expressing gratitude in Vietnamese, *Cám Ơn*, means to carry debt. By thanking a person, you acknowledge that you owe the person a debt that you will repay in the future. This is more than repaying the same favour or gesture; it is also an acknowledgement of social indebtedness that promises a future meeting, a future opportunity to renew your relations. I must acknowledge the many conversations I have had with Vinh Nguyen on this topic.

18 My writing on this subject has been immensely influenced by Lai's "Epistemologies of Respect." Lai turns to Indigenous concepts of respect and acknowledgment as theorized by Marie Battiste (Mi'kmaq) and Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee) to put forth an epistemological frame that can guide Chinese Canadians in how they engage with and remain implicated in settler culture, navigate their contradictory positionality as both settler and formerly colonized subjects, and restore balance in their relations with human and non-human beings. Just as how eastern and western US tribal nations have undergone differential treatment at the hand of colonizers, Asian Canadians have been affected by the same colonial and neo-colonial forces that also impact Indigenous peoples, calling for our respect and acknowledgement even in the absence of sameness and likeness.

works cited

Allen, Chadwick. *Trans-Indigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies.* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2012. Print.

Amadahy, Zainab, and Bonita Lawrence. "Indigenous Peoples and Black People in Canada: Settlers or Allies?" *Breaching the Colonial Contract: Anti-Colonialism in the US and Canada.* Ed. Arlo Kempf. Dordrecht: Springer, 2009. 105-36. Print.

Barker, Adam J. "The Contemporary Reality of Canadian Imperialism: Settler Colonialism and the Hybrid Colonial State." *American Indian Quarterly* 33.3 (2009): 325-51. Print.

Byrd, Jodi A. *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism.* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2011. Print.

Carpenter, Cari M., and K. Hyoejin Yoon, eds. *Native/Asian Encounters.* Spec. issue of *College Literature* 41.1 (2014): 7-202. Print.

Cedar and Bamboo. Dir. Diana E. Leung and Kamala Todd. Vancouver: Moving Images, 2010. DVD.

Chan, Anthony B. *Gold Mountain: The Chinese in the New World.* Vancouver: New Star, 1983. Print.

Chinese Canadian Historical Society of BC. "Bibliography." *Chinese Canadians and First Nations: 150 Years of Shared Experience.* n.d. Web. 15 Aug. 2016.

Chong, Denise. *The Concubine's Children: The Story of a Family Living on Two Sides of the Globe*. 2nd ed. Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2006. Print.

Clements, Marie. *Burning Vision.* Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2003. Print.

Coleman, Daniel. "Indigenous Place and Diaspora Space: Of Literalism and Abstraction." *Settler Colonial Studies* 6.1 (2016): 61-76. Web. 6 July 2015.

Davis, Lynne, ed. *Alliances: Re/envisioning Indigenous-Non-Indigenous Relationships.* Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2010. Print.
Day, Iyko. *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism.* Durham: Duke UP, 2016. Print.
—. "Alien Intimacies: The Coloniality of Japanese Internment in Australia, Canada, and the U.S." *Amerasia Journal* 36.2 (2010): 107-24. Print.
Fleischmann, Aloys N. M., Nancy Van Styvendale, and Cody McCarroll, eds. *Narratives of Citizenship: Indigenous and Diasporic Peoples Unsettle the Nation-State*. Edmonton: U of Alberta P, 2011. Print.
Fujikane, Candace, and Jonathan Y. Okamura, eds. *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai'i.* Honolulu: U of Hawai'i P, 2008. Print.
—. *Whose Vision? Asian Settler Colonialism in Hawai'i*. Spec. issue of *Amerasia Journal* 26.2 (2000): i-263. Print.
Haig-Brown, Celia. "Decolonizing Diaspora: Whose Traditional Land Are We On?" *Cultural and Pedagogical Inquiry* 1.2 (2009): 4-21. Print.
Hunter, Justine. "A Forgotten History: Tracing the Ties between B.C.'s First Nations and Chinese Workers." *Globe and Mail* 9 May 2015. Web. 15 Aug. 2016.
Jackson, Shona. *Creole Indigeneity: Between Myth and Nation in the Caribbean.* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2012. Print.
Kamboureli, Smaro, and Christl Verduyn, eds. *Critical Collaborations: Indigeneity, Diaspora, and Ecology in Canadian Literary Studies.* Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2014. Print.
Lai, Larissa. "Epistemologies of Respect: A Poetics of Asian/Indigenous Relation." *Critical Collaborations: Indigeneity, Diaspora, and Ecology in Canadian Literary Studies.* Ed. Smaro Kamboureli and Christl Verduyn. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2014. 99-126. Print.
—. *Slanting I, Imagining We: Asian Canadian Literary Production in the 1980s and 1990s.* Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2014. Print.
Lai, Paul, and Lindsey Claire Smith, eds. *Alternative Contact: Indigeneity, Globalism, and American Studies.* Spec. issue of *American Quarterly* 62.3 (2010): v-790. Print.
Larner, Wendy, and Paul Spoonley. "Post-colonial Politics in Aotearoa/New Zealand." *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Class.* Ed. Daiva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis. London: Sage, 1995. 39-64. Print.
Lau, Doretta. *How Does a Single Blade of Grass Thank the Sun?* Gibsons: Nightwood, 2014. Print.
Lawrence, Bonita, and Enakshi Dua. "Decolonizing Anti-Racism." *Social Justice* 32.4 (2005): 120-43. Print.
Lee, SKY. *Disappearing Moon Cafe.* Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1990. Print.
Leong, Karen, and Myla Vicenti Carpio, eds. *Carceral States.* Spec. issue of *Amerasia Journal* 42.1 (2016): v-156. Print.
Lo, Marie. "Model Minorities, Models of Resistance: Native Figures in Asian Canadian Literature." *Canadian Literature* 196 (2008): 96-114. Print.
Lowe, Lisa. *The Intimacies of Four Continents.* Durham: Duke UP, 2015. Print.
—. "The Intimacies of Four Continents." *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History.* Ed. Ann Laura Stoler. Durham: Duke UP, 2006. 191-212. Print.
Madokoro, Laura. "Chinatown and Monster Homes: The Splintered Chinese Diaspora in Vancouver." *Urban History Review* 39.2 (2011): 17-24. Print.
Maracle, Lee. "Yin Chin." *Canadian Literature* 124 (1990): 156-61. Print.
Mathur, Ashok, Jonathan Dewar, and Mike DeGagné, eds. *Cultivating Canada:*

Reconciliation through the Lens of Cultural Diversity. Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2011. Print.
Mawani, Renisa. *Colonial Proximities: Crossracial Encounters and Juridical Truths in British Columbia, 1871-1921.* Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 2009. Print.
McCall, Sophie, Christine Kim, and Melina B. Singer, eds. *Cultural Grammars of Nation, Diaspora, and Indigeneity in Canada.* Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2012. Print.
Nguyen, Mimi Thi. *The Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and Other Refugee Passages.* Durham: Duke UP, 2012. Print.
Nguyen, Vinh. "Refugee Gratitude: Narrating Success and Intersubjectivity in Kim Thúy's *Ru*." *Canadian Literature* 219 (2013): 17-36. Print.
Price, John. *Orienting Canada: Race, Empire, and the Transpacific.* Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 2011. Print.
Rymhs, Deena. "Appropriating Guilt: Reconciliation in an Aboriginal Canadian Context." *English Studies in Canada* 32.1 (2006): 105-23. Print.
Saranillio, Dean Itsuji. "Why Asian Settler Colonialism Matters: A Thought Piece on Critiques, Debates, and Indigenous Difference." *Settler Colonial Studies* 3.3-4 (2013): 280-94. Print.
Sharma, Nandita, and Cynthia Wright. "Decolonizing Resistance, Challenging Colonial States." *Social Justice* 35.3 (2008-2009): 120-38. Print.
Stasiulus, Daiva, and Radha Jhappan. "The Fractious Politics of a Settler Society Canada." *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Class.* Ed. Daiva Stasiulus and Nira Yuval-Davis. London: Sage, 1995. 95-131. Print.
Takagi, Dana Y. "Faith, Race, and Nationalism." *Journal of Asian American Studies* 7.3 (2005): 271-88. Print.
Te Punga Somerville, Alice. *Once Were Pacific: Māori Connections to Oceania.* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2012. Print.
Thobani, Sunera. *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada.* Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2007. Print.
Thúy, Kim. *Ru*. Trans. Sheila Fischman. Montréal: Vintage Canada, 2015. Print.
Trask, Haunani-Kay. "Settlers of Color and 'Immigrant' Hegemony: 'Locals' in Hawai'i." *Amerasia Journal* 26.2 (2000): 1-24. Print.
Tuck, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang. "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1.1 (2012): 1-40. Print.
Veracini, Lorenzo. *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. Print.
Village of Widows. Lindum Films, 1999. Film.
Walia, Harsha. *Undoing Border Imperialism.* Oakland: AK Press/Institute for Anarchist Studies, 2013. Print.
Wolfe, Patrick. "Recuperating Binarism: A Heretical Introduction." *Settler Colonial Studies* 3.3-4 (2013): 257-79. Web. 15 Aug. 2016.
Wong, David H. T. *Escape to Gold Mountain: A Graphic History of the Chinese in North America.* Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp, 2012. Print.
Wong, Rita. "Decolonizasian: Reading Asian and First Nations Relations in Literature." *Canadian Literature* 199 (2008): 158-180. Print.
Yee, Paul. *A Superior Man*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp, 2015. Print.
Yu, Henry. "Towards a Pacific History of the Americas." *Amerasia Journal* 33.2 (2007): xi-xix. Print.
Zhang, Ling. *Gold Mountain Blues.* Toronto: Viking Canada, 2011. Print.

Julie Anne Joosten

"At first [wo]men spoke only poetry (only much later did it occur to anyone to reason)"

A [woman] alone in a forest sees others moving beyond the shadow of the trees. She's frightened and senses through her fear that they're bigger and stronger than she is. She names them (the bodies of those others) (which might, who knows, pounce like lions, charge like bears) *Giants* : *Giants* names the fear they draw out in her (which is of and in her body, its discrepant size and strength). Over time she studies their faces, their arms and legs; she watches their chests rise and fall with breath, notices their taut waists as they run. And she measures her own body: they're neither bigger nor stronger than she is—

Fear will have diminished, dissolving the distance between her body and theirs.

They no longer embody her idea of *Giant*, so she invents another name that refers both to herself and to them, *woman* perhaps and *women*. And the memory of the experience of fear persists. As does its name. She now restricts *Giant* for the fiction conjured by her passion. The idea, not the word, transposes: *Giant* names an inner feeling, an aberrant perception that swings away from the beings it perceives. To the fear that interprets that perception. Fear textures the forest—

It's a passion, *Giant*.

"That the first language must have been figurative," writes Rousseau. That discrepancy figures giants to decorate the forest. Figures decorate and: they impose ideas. Fear becomes the distance—*Giant*—between what she felt she saw and the bodies themselves moving through shadow across the forest floor.

She will have sensed fear as the Giant's body touching her from the inside of her smallness.

Julie Anne Joosten

At first women felt with their organs (only much later did it occur to anyone to fear)

A woman alone in a forest sees others moving beyond the shadow of the trees. Heart thuds, pulse quickens, breath shortening. Sweat. Her organs press her into a future whose intensity is the present, the will-be-/-will-have-been-lost gathering dimension on her skin.

Her body, poised electric, activated for flight. Or paralysis. A suspense of no duration, wrapped in the body's movements—to sense her heart's thudding, to sense through that thudding—paralysis, flight.

Fear approaches softly through the forest.

Becomes a surface, warm with life. Beneath which she shivers. Her body extends through the forest, and the others, extending to meet her, give her body back to her, small and trembling, a thin film of sweat covering the skin she shivers under. Becomes a skin through which her body touches theirs.

Through fear they're bigger and stronger than she is, names them *Giants*. *Giants* move shadows over the forest floor.

Over time, their faces, their arms and legs; their chests rise and fall with breath; their taut waists as they run. Her own body: they're neither bigger nor stronger than she is—she is a woman, they are many woman, become women.

The *Giant* passes softly by.

Slips into the future, beneath pine needles at the base of a tree, slides between ground and sky, its dusky half-presence texturing the forest. Caves and gullies, a tunnel of rotting logs clammy to the fingertips. For having once become skin then touch, fear now gathers the future into the giant's hands. Which press against her present, press against her past. And in touching, burn.

Without leaving a mark.

Jenny Heijun Wills

Competing Nationalisms in *Ru* and *La Trilogie coréenne*

Francophone Asian Québécois Literatures

Over two decades ago, Sau-Ling Cynthia Wong published a provocative essay, "Denationalization Reconsidered," in which she investigated three phenomena occurring in Asian American studies at the time: the "easing of cultural nationalist concerns" (126) as the fight for "indigenization" (128) was being replaced by explorations of feminist, queer, and other Asian American perspectives; the disciplinary flexibilities arising in scholars' understandings of Asian American and Asian Studies (124); and "the sweep of the postmodern condition [that] made it more and more acceptable to situate Asian Americans in a diasporic context" (127). Debates ensued and, as Wong outlines in the introduction to the reprint of her article in Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt's *Postcolonial Theory and the United States*, numerous Asian American cultural theorists have taken up these topics in order to imagine the ways that transnationalism and globalization might impact the field. The third phenomenon covered by Wong, the diasporic turn, arguably opened doors for Asian Canadian cultural theorists to enter into these conversations in meaningful ways as well; we could discuss the similarities of our experiences and histories while not being entirely subsumed under the sometimes inappropriate American umbrella. Curiously, what Wong saw as an expression of denationalization for Asian Americanists fostered a nationalist opportunity for Canadian scholars to outline a unique Asian Canadian identity separate from their American counterparts.

But what's sometimes missing from these conversations is an elaborated critique of what constitutes the nation, as if a singular national identity is either available, reliable, possible, or desired. While much focus has been

given to diversifying and de-homogenizing the meaning of what constitutes Asian identity, less work has been done to nuance what is meant by *Canadian* within an Asian Canadian context. Thus when the editors of this special issue asked how we are to understand Asian Canadian literary studies beyond the nation, I wondered who was imagined as "Asian" and also what was considered "Canadian." Assumptions about what constitutes the nation in Asian Canadian studies, for instance, rarely interact with the official bilingual and bicultural (English and French) nature of the country. In other words, when it comes to thinking through nationalism in Asian Canadian studies (as this special issue seeks to do), scholars need not always look beyond the state, to anti-nationalist and transnational discourses. We might also turn our attentions to certain francophone Asian Canadian writers who find themselves at a cultural impasse by living and working in the province of Québec—a quasi-nation-state animated by a competing sovereign impulse, and an entity that deliberately and continuously interrupts the assumed singularity of Canadian nationalism as a whole. Asian Canadians who live and write in French, and particularly in the province of Québec, expose the limitations in the ways that Asian Canadian cultural critics read and interpret nationalist gestures, and force scholars to more clearly articulate who is considered part of Asian Canada. In the most general sense, Québec nationalism is primarily articulated through language issues where separatist demands are predicated on a national specificity that is articulated via claims of historical and cultural differences mainly understood in connection to language. French language-as-culture has long been a source of contention in the Canadian nationalist project, prior to and since the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1963-1969); and Québec nationalism has historically haunted its Canadian counterpart, evidenced in the 1995 referendum and at nearly every federal election before and after, as Québec's exceptionalism is understood even when the province's autonomy is articulated as *part* of a unified, whole Canada. So what does it mean, then, to be a francophone Asian Québécois writer living and working in the language of a *competing* nationalism, and particularly a competing nationalism that defines itself overtly in terms of language but inferentially through an exclusionary Europeanness that harkens back to French settlements and the mythologies of white labourers, explorers, and settlers? In other words, what does it mean to write in French as an Asian Canadian, and what does it mean to be a francophone Asian Québécois in a land of *pure laine*?

In this essay I analyze two contemporary francophone Asian Canadian semi-autobiographical novels that invite us to think about language tensions

beyond our typical conversations about assimilation and deculturation. Kim Thúy's *Ru* (2009) and Ook Chung's *La Trilogie coréenne* (2012) explore the cultural significance of language, and particularly the French language, in relation to both English and other Asian languages—Vietnamese in Thúy's case, Japanese and Korean in Chung's. In both novels, protagonists discuss language through considerations of colonialism in Asia, making a provocative analogue given the status of Québec as both colonizer and colonized. Most importantly, these Asian Canadian novelists are writing in the language of a *competing nationalism* and one that, as I note above, complicates Canadian nationalist and constitutional debates. At the same time, although they write in French as Asian Québécois authors, Thúy and Chung do not share the ethnic and racial origins and genealogies (*la souche*) that would allow them entrance into that national body. Thúy, in particular, comments on this situation in her novel. These writers are doubly excluded: mostly omitted from the anglo-hegemonic conversations about Asian Canadian literary studies, and marginalized in the Québécois publishing scene in which they are considered authors of "migrant" but never Québécois literature. Hence, they find themselves in a neither/nor situation, an ambivalent position without resolution that is different from the liminal subjectivities we customarily associate with Asian Canadian communities.

I have two goals here. First, I want to intervene into the anglocentricism of Asian Canadian literary studies and suggest that the competing Québécois nationalism influences francophone Asian Canadian literature. Second, I want to analyze the theme of language, and particularly characters' preoccupation with French, in both books. I draw on images of in-betweenness and themes of colonialism in both novels, arguing that these representations parallel the ambivalent and precarious statuses of francophone Asian Québécois writers, within both the linguistically marginalizing framework of Asian Canadian literature and the racially and ethnically marginalizing framework of Québécois' competing nationalism. I argue that, by writing in French, these authors disrupt one nationalist project while also exposing the limitations (and contradictions) of another.

I.

In his important commentary on the history and then-current state of Asian Canadian literary studies, "A Long Labour: The Protracted Birth of Asian Canadian Literature" (published in 2000), Donald Goellnicht explains the field in contrast with its American counterpart. Arguing that

the particularities of a Canadian context that featured a comparatively subtle civil rights and Black Power drive to which Asian Canadians could ally themselves (4-6), as well as relying on a history of official multiculturalism that mainly manifested as English-French biculturalism (9-10), Goellnicht understands national, political, and social factors as central to our understanding of Asian Canadian literature's "protracted birth" (1-2). What is missing from this important conversation, however, is any significant reference to francophone Asian Canadian writers, and specifically those who live and work in Québec, a state that is paradoxically both colonizer and colonized, and whose ethnic majority is mainstream within provincial borders but federally marginalized. Goellnicht's essay begins with a settling on terms that bespeaks what is considered Asian Canadian literature. "[B]y the term 'Asian Canadian literature,'" he says, "I mean the clear identification of an ethnic minority literary tradition in *English* and the academic study of it as such" (2 emphasis added). "In English" stands out in this explanation, especially given the care Goellnicht takes to explain Canada's biculturalism and official bilingualism in the pages that follow. In other words, while much of the article is concerned with how we might understand Asian Canadian subjectivity in terms of races and cultures of origin—focusing on the *Asian* parts of this identity politic—little to no mention is made of how precarious the concept of *Canadian* might be as well, or of how it operates implicitly within an English framework.[1]

While the logical reason for this approach stems from the fact that the majority of Asian Canadian literature and literary criticism is produced in English and in English Canada—a fact that was even more true when Goellnicht's foundational essay was first published than it is now—if we are to undertake a project that challenges dominance and norms in an earnest way, we must attend to other, sometimes more complex, experiences as well.[2] Texts by francophone Asian Québécois writers, like Ying Chen, Bach Mai, and Aki Shimazaki, I suggest, offer an opportunity to upend many of our assumptions about Asian Canadian literature and the political work we uphold in our analyses of it. For instance, in her *Slanting I, Imagining We*, a brilliant intervention into the field of Asian Canadian literary studies, Larissa Lai notes that the "English-speaking Chinese Canadian" must choose between "speak[ing] the master's tongue in order to break the silence and so enter into liberated 'Canadian' subjectivity" and "betraying her ancestors" by writing in her "mother tongue" (11). Yet, Lai focuses here on an anglophone linguistic mainstreaming in Canada; the Charter of the French Language

(Bill 101) in Québec, which indeed complicates such discussions about dominance and compulsory language practices, falls beyond her purview. This is not to say that French is any less a colonizing language or is somehow redeemed of this truth because of its minority status in Canada as a whole; I simply want to draw on the experiences of other, non-anglophone Asian Canadian perspectives in order to understand the particular suppositions about nationalism that are at hand here. My thinking falls in line with what Jack Yeager points to when he argues that

> the production of literary texts in French by immigrant writers in Québec problematizes contemporary issues of nationalism and sovereignty and of belonging and citizenship that are of concern in Canada's only province with a majority of French speakers. When writers of Asian origins address important questions such as these, we are forced to rethink what it means to be Québécois(e). (137)

Moreover, I contend that literature in French by Asian Québécois writers (whether immigrant writers or not) more broadly forces us to rethink what it means to be Asian Canadian as well. If, as Christopher Lee poignantly notes, "Asian Canadian cultural formations continue to demonstrate the instability of identity" (32), how might we consider these works when they are produced in a sovereigntist space like Québec that is also "always in the process of becoming" (Yeager 144)?

Many francophone literary critics of Asian Québécois literature tend to group writers alongside other "migrant" authors and contemplate the ways in which authors speak to notions of Québécois trans- and interculturalism, as Gilles Dupuis does in one of his many important essays, "La littérature migrante est-elle universelle?" Junga Shin and Yong Ho Choi, in their article "De l'espace transculturel," turn to francophone Asian Québécois literature in order to "dévoile . . . les implications culturologiques dans l'histoire de la littérature du Québec" (103).[3] This approach is part of a relatively broad critical perspective that focuses on "minority literatures" and migration in Québec, which includes Robert Berrouët-Oriol and Robert Fournier's foundational article, "L'émergence des écritures migrantes et métisses au Québec." This was also the approach at work in the development of the important special issue of *The International Journal of Francophone Studies* that focused on "Francophonie(s) Asiatique(s)"—a term which editor Gabrielle Parker explains "réfère à la fois à des points de départ (Asie) et des points d'arrivée (France, Québec) qui englobent une grande diversité" (241).[4] In that instance, critics imagined writers as global figures whose experiences of marginalization are used as points of comparison for Québec nationalism.

Consequently, scholars did not link works by francophone Asian Quebécois writers with the larger oeuvre of Asian Canadian literary studies; instead, they perpetuated the linguistic divide that separates francophone and anglophone Canadian literature more generally. But what would happen if we thought about Asian Québécois writers as part of Asian Canada, and as subjects dislocating that category from within?

II.

> En français, *ru* signifie « petit ruisseu » et, au figuré, « écoulement (de larmes, de sang, d'argent) » (*Le Robert historique*). En vietnamien, *ru* signifie « berceuse », « bercer »[5]
> —Kim Thúy, *Ru*

Kim Thúy's critically acclaimed, semi-autobiographical novel *Ru* features the memories of a Vietnamese Canadian protagonist, Nguyễn An Tịnh, as she reminisces about her early childhood in Vietnam, time spent in a refugee camp, her grammar-school years in Granby, Québec, experiences as an adult and with motherhood in Montréal, travels to France and Thailand with her small children, and a three-year sojourn in her country of origin. It is a challenge to locate Thúy's protagonist either temporally or spatially; the non-linear and postmodern movement of the novel mimics An Tinh's disorienting cosmopolitanism as people, places, and memories melt into one another. But every so often, the reader is re-anchored in Canada, usually in small-town Québec with its "paysage aussi blanc, aussi virginal" (18)[6] or bustling Montréal, and the narrator describes her experiences of being Asian Canadian and Asian Québécoise. But as Vinh Nguyen argues in "Refugee Gratitude," although Thúy's novel features a refugee success narrative that may be interpreted as having been "produced for and deployed by the state and its apparatuses," it can also be read "beyond the determining frame of liberal democratic nationalism" (19), as narratives that, on the surface, appear to express success stories may also have subtexts denoting "struggle, loss, and trauma" (18). The winner of a number of literary awards, including the Governor General's Literary Award for Fiction and the Archambault Grand Prix Littéraire, *Ru* is at once celebratory of Québec as the land that welcomed An Tịnh's family after their arduous journey and at times critical of the sovereigntist state's ethnic nationalism that blatantly refuses her.

In the epigraph to *Ru*, Thúy gestures to the key role that language shall play in the ensuing pages. She notes the inconsistency of meaning attached to her titular phoneme: in French *ru* is a symbolic stream, in Vietnamese a lullaby—but both, in turn, prove fitting imagery for what follows. That is,

the collection of prose-poetry snapshots flow together in a way that mimics both the ebb and flow of recollection and also the acts of remembering and telling that swell gently to and fro with a calming, lulling tone. One episode streams into its successor; one story triggers while the next soothes in response. In this way, the many traumatic events captured in *Ru* are ironically represented in a quiet, calming style. The images evoked by Thúy's examples of what, in the French language, might be symbolically streaming—tears, blood, money—foreshadow the grief to be portrayed throughout the book, but a grief that is expressed with a kind of lyrical tranquility. Ru, in French, suggests loss; in Vietnamese it signifies acts of pacifying. Early in the novel, themes of lullaby and loss come together in one of the text's most memorable images as the narrator recalls the scene on a boat when her family fled Vietnam:

> Le paradis et l'enfer s'étaient enlacés dans le ventre de notre bateau. Le paradis promettait un tournant dans notre vie, un nouvel avenir, une nouvelle histoire. L'enfer, lui, étalait nos peurs : peur des pirates, peur de mourir de faim, peur de s'intoxiquer avec les biscottes imbibées d'huile à moteur, peur de manquer d'eau, peur de ne plus pouvoir se remettre debout, peur de devoir uriner dans ce pot rouge qui passait d'une main à l'autre, peur que cette tête d'enfant galeuse ne soit contagieuse, peur de ne plus jamais fouler la terre ferme, peur de ne plus revoir le visage de ses parents assis quelque part dans la pénombre au milieu de ces deux cents personnes. (13-14)[7]

In contrast to the visceral horrors depicted in this passage, the symbolism of a whale-like vessel and the anaphoric expressions of fear throughout—mimicking the repetitive motion of the heaving sea—ironically transform the boat into a cradle being rocked and the description into a horrible lullaby. Passengers become accustomed to that fear and their dreadful environment: "Ce goût d'huile dans la gorge," the narrator recalls, "sur la langue, dans la tête nous endormait au rythme de la berceuse chantée par ma voisine" (15).[8] The image also gestures to the importance of language and communication, even if long after the unspeakable event; language is stopped on the boat both by looming dread but also by the biscuits that coat An Tịnh's throat and tongue (an important homonym for language in French) with poisonous motor oil.

The boat scenes, to which An Tịnh returns throughout the novel, are crucial not only because of the allusion to lullaby and loss, but also because the linguistic coming together that illuminates the book's title is set in the ambiguous and unanchored liminal space of the sea. The tiny but crowded vessel in *Ru* becomes "entouré, encerclé d'un seul et uniforme horizon

bleu" (15)[9] when its passengers are out at sea, and this causes its passengers to feel paralyzed with fear because they are between recognizable states, between nations, and without land. Vinh Nguyen describes the liminality and insecurity of the boat in the ominous sea in terms of insecurity: on the boat, the passengers "sit waiting, drifting" (25) for something, anything, to happen. On the one hand, there is notable danger, not just of discovery by communists or pirates, but also in the journey itself; An Tịnh recalls that the many "qui avaient coulé pendant la traverse . . . n'avaient pas de noms" (24),[10] and the aggressive way that her Vietnamese identity was "jeté . . . à l'eau quand elle nous a fait traverser le golfe du Siam" (12).[11] On the other hand, it is only by boat that the refugees can find asylum because borders to neighbouring countries are made permeable to the surviving "boat people" (24). The boat and its motions interrupt the static boundaries of nationhood not just as it physically traverses the liminal space of ocean and sea, but also as the ominous imagery interrupts the pleasant and teleological trajectory of the so-called successful immigrant story, which Nguyen argues is a crucial element in the Canadian nationalist narrative.

The liminality of the boat, I contend, is also symbolic of the precariousness of language, and in my opinion of the difficult way that An Tịnh and other Vietnamese refugees living in Québec relate to Québécois nationalism. An Tịnh is confronted with a similar sensation of anxiety and un-anchoredness when she first arrives in Québec: "[J]e ne pouvais pas parler ni écouter, même si je n'étais ni sourde ni muette. Je n'avais plus de points de repère" (18).[12] Just as the boat was most vulnerable when it traversed the open water between landmarks, so too does An Tịnh feel exposed, "dénudée, sinon nue" (18)[13] when she cannot speak French in Québec. It is therefore critical that, shortly after her arrival in Granby, An Tịnh immediately begins to learn how to speak in French and English as their "langue maternelle était devenue non pas dérisoire, mais inutile" (29),[14] though she notes that her parents already spoke enough French (having been children when Vietnam gained independence from France) to be considered overqualified for the free language integration courses offered in Québec. Quickly learning to communicate in French benefits An Tịnh, whose childhood in Québec is comfortable and happy. Considered "good immigrants" who do not contribute to the potential decline of the French language, the Nguyễn family is welcomed in Granby, which An Tịnh recalls was "le ventre chaud qui nous a couvés durant notre première année au Canada" (21)[15]—quite the contrast to the horrible belly of the boat that transported them from Vietnam to

Malaysia. But when she returns to Vietnam as an adult, An Tịnh finds herself in the predicament faced by many 1.5 generation subjects who return to their countries of origin: she is alienated from the languages (as well as cultural practices) of the place. She notes:

> J'ai dû réapprendre ma langue maternelle, que j'avais abandonée trop tôt. De toute manière, je ne l'avais pas vraiment maîtrisée de façon complete parce que le pays était divisé en deux quand je suis née. Je viens du Sud, alors je n'avais jamais entendu les gens du Nord avant mon retour au pays. De même, les gens du Nord n'avait jamais entendu les gens du Sud avant la réunification. Comme au Canada, le Vietnam avait aussi ses deux solitudes. (88-89)[16]

This passage is meaningful because An Tịnh compares the language duality of pre-unified Vietnam with the "two solitudes" notion of the English-French divide in Canada. While not analogous situations, An Tịnh's point is that in both cases, language segregation is a tangible manifestation of political and cultural differences. Thus, when An Tịnh speaks and thinks in French, and when Thúy writes in French, we are witnessing deliberate political acts. But, as I will argue later on, these acts do not necessarily fit neatly into the nationalist ideology of assimilation as might be originally assumed by Asian Canadian cultural critics.

III.

> Si j'écris en français, ce n'est pas tant parce que je trouve la langue française belle que parce que j'ai « quelque chose à dire. » Et, paradoxalement, ce que j'ai à dire est ma condition d'exilé.[17]
>
> —Ook Chung, *La Trilogie coréenne*

Ook Chung's *La Trilogie coréenne* also draws on themes of partition and colonialism in Asia to discuss issues of language and culture. It is strikingly different from Thúy's novel; the style is direct and at times almost perfunctory, and it is less introspective and more narrative-driven than *Ru*. But despite these differences, I contend that it is a provocative complement to the ways that language is both theme and political gesture in *Ru*. The first part of *La Trilogie coréenne* focuses on the lives of protagonist O Jeung's ancestors and parents as *zainich'I* in Japan during the period when "L'armée imperial japonaise a débarqué en Corée et, sous le menace de la baïonnette, a forcé toute une generation de Coréens—de 1910 à 1945—à parler japonais dans leur propre pays" (14).[18] Reflecting the ways that culture and language were fractured for Koreans in that period, these early chapters are non-linear and structurally fragmented; it is only once the narrative shifts to O Jeong's

childhood in Montréal in the years just following the Quiet Revolution that chronology takes over, though even here the first-person narrator often interrupts himself with memories of immigrant hardships in Québec, including ponderings about childhood experiences of xenophobia and racism. The second section of the novel features a now-adult O Jeong, who returns to his birth nation of Japan and faces the paradox of a space shaped by his mother's anecdotes and a contemporary nation that maintains some residual anti-Korean sentiments. In the final section, O Jeong accepts a teaching position as a French language professor at a national university in Jeongju, approximately three hours south of Seoul. Here, Chung provides the perspectives of multiple Korean diasporic characters who encounter O Jeong (some are professional colleagues and students, while others are friends), many of whom are themselves cosmopolitan travellers who have just returned from lives abroad in Paris or elsewhere. O Jeong's life is like a palindrome: he ends up in the land of his ancestors; Korea bookends his birth and return to Japan after being raised in Montréal. As the final section of the novel suggests, language—particularly the French language—is a crucial aspect of O Jeong's subjectivity, and is a pressing theme for other characters as well. When he accepts the teaching position we are reminded of his Korean father's belief that French is a superior language, which led to both the elder Jeong's French studies at Yonsei University in his youth and his decision to move to Québec instead of Alberta, recommended to the family as "une province en pleine expansion économique, riche de possibilités pour un nouvel arrivant" (68).[19] Language, as always, is connected to power; in the context of a Korean Canadian man returning to the Japan of his birth in order to teach French—a language that is protected as marginalized and disappearing in his home province of Québec—we see that the connection between language and power can be highly complex and ambiguous.

Throughout the novel, O Jeong ponders the significance of language for diasporic people: political exiles like his father, people who migrate as children, and young people studying abroad. He considers his own cultural confusion and the identity crisis he seeks to address in the telling of his life history as direct outcomes of speaking so many languages. His story begins:

> Je viens d'une famille dont les origines sont coréennes. Cependant, je ne parle pas le coréen. Je suis né au Japon, et le japonais est ma langue maternelle; là-bas on m'appelait Noboru. Mais cette langue a cessé d'être ma langue première après mon immigration au Canada à l'âge de deux ans. Aujourd'hui, à quarante-huit ans, j'écris donc en français plus par la force des circonstances que par choix. (13)[20]

From the outset, we understand O Jeong's complex subjectivity in relation to the ways that language has been given to and taken from him throughout his life. As a result, O Jeong recognizes that language is a tool of oppression and control, not just in terms of what is spoken but also by way of which languages are denied or prohibited. The one situation to which he repeatedly returns is that of his mother Mitsouyo, who, having been born and raised in Kyushu, is profoundly regretful that she could not speak Korean fluently. He explains: "Mitsouyo, elle est née au Japon et elle a parlé le japonais toute sa vie, même si ses parents lui parlaient en coréen . . . Ma mère n'a pas choisi . . . le japonais comme langue première. Toute sa vie, elle a nourri le regret de ne pouvoir parler couramment le coréen, même si c'est une langue qu'elle comprend" (15).[21] Mitsouyo, we gather, is particularly disturbed by the fact that one language was forced upon her and another refused, and that the result of this oppression is alienation from her family, their culture, and her ancestral past. Estranged from other Koreans, Mitsouyo finds herself "entre l'arbre et l'écorce . . . nulle part où aller" (20)[22]—in other words, liminal between cultures and places. O Jeong suggests that Mitsouyo's experiences are not unique and that the Korean language is marked by its long history of being splintered, prohibited, and disparaged. Oppressed by "l'histoire de la Corée et à ses soubresauts," the Korean language, according to O Jeong, can be characterized as "une acclimatation au malheur" sustained first "sous l'occupation japonaise" and "[la] séparation des deux Corées après la partition" (51).[23] On the one hand, O Jeong mourns the loss of the Korean language for people like his mother; on the other hand, he celebrates its survival despite the colonial violences of the last one hundred years.

Although he does not explicitly make the connection, O Jeong's thoughts on language and colonialism in Korea, and particularly his evocations of occupied Koreans as "bilingues" (287),[24] invite us to think about language rights in Canada and Chung's decision to live and identify as a francophone Asian Québécois. Such connections between language and identity are inferred in O Jeong's declaration that he chooses to communicate in French not because the language is beautiful, but because it is political. In the epigraph to this section, we see O Jeong insist that he speaks French when he "has something to say," and I think his statement gestures less to the content of his speech than to the political implications of how he expresses himself. Moreover, when he motions to his condition of exile, that which he feels compelled to discuss in French, it signals a critical relationship between language and subjectivity, particularly in connection to fraught circumstances of residual

colonial oppression. Kyeongmi Kim-Bernard makes the connection between O Jeong's loss of his mother tongue and Mitsouyo's loss of Korean, observing

> Comme sa mère Mitsouyo qui ne s'exprime bien qu'en japonais, sa langue maternelle imposée par la domination coloniale, le narrateur, lui, se trouve sous la domination culturelle francophone à cause de son immigration au Québec. Comme Mitsouyo qui a regrettée toute sa vie de ne pas pouvoir parler couramment le coréen, tout en appréciant la lecture et l'écriture en japonais, le fils adopte le français comme outil d'expression tout en gardant un regret de ne pas pouvoir maitriser aussi couramment le japonais et le coréen. (360-61)[25]

This comparison, I think, troubles not just our anglocentric understanding of Asian Canada; it also points to the paradox of a Québécois nationalism that imagines itself as the object of cultural oppression, ignoring other forms of marginalization, occupation, and oppression enacted in the name of that nationalism. That is not to say that recent immigrants to Québec are colonized subjects, are not themselves settlers occupying Indigenous land, but novels like *La Trilogie coréenne* point to some of the contradictions that often exist within various ethnic nationalist movements.

In both novels, we witness a deliberate linking of colonialism in Asia with the complex coloniality of Québec: a space that is both colonizer and colonized, a land that maintains strict law protecting the dominant (colonial) language. Thinking about migrant literature in Québec, Simone Grossman reminds us that "la littérature du Québec diffère de celle des pays du Nouveau Monde anciennement colonisé en ceci que les colons venus de France ont eux-mêmes été colonisés par les Anglais" (177).[26] Beyond the false notion here that Québec (or Canada) is "formerly colonized"—that it is not an ongoing settler colonial space—I wonder what it means, then, to explore the relationship between colonialism and language in Asia within the same literary works that are dealing with similar, though not identical, conflicts in the West? In the case of *Ru*, the link between language and colonization is particularly fraught: the Nguyễn family migrates from a place traumatized by French colonialism, where even after independence "les campagnes vietnamiennes étaient terrorisées par différentes factions de voyous implantées par les autorités françaises pour diviser le pays" (73),[27] to a land where claims to sovereignty and independence are predicated on a nostalgia for the colonial days of *pure laine*.[28]

IV.

As I have suggested in the preceding pages, both *Ru* and *La Trilogie coréenne* intervene in the anglocentricity of Asian Canadian literary studies just in the very fact that these books are written and published in French, the

language of a competing nationalism that unsettles Canadianness from within. And indeed, language is a crucial issue for Asian Canadian writers not just in terms of working in what Lien Chao and others call authors' "mother tongues" and the tensions between them and the official language(s) of the nation, but also along the francophone-anglophone divide that makes up the latter category. Robert Berrouët-Oriol and Robert Fournier consider this issue in relation to the waves of non-European immigrants arriving in Canada in the late twentieth century. "Cette migration arc-en-ciel," they explain, "a lentement, mais de manière irréversible, modifiée l'habitus canadien dans différents domaines (social, culturel, etc.), et très tôt se trouvera au cœur du vieux et toujours actuel dilemme linguistique anglophone-francophone" (7).[29] That is, the issue of language and questions of which language(s) Asian Canadian writers elect to work in have numerous effects, including those that extend out to nationalist concerns over how subjects might "claim Canada." And indeed, in *La Trilogie coréenne*, O Jeong seems fixated on the idea that for "néo-Québécois" like him, those who have a "visage asiatique [et qui] parlent français avec l'accent Québécois" (108),[30] language is the most important marker of belonging.

But let me be clear: by writing in French, these authors are not necessarily substituting one nationalism for another. Despite the fact that Québec nationalism is predicated on a cultural exceptionalism that centres on the French language as paradigmatic object, implied in this nationalism too is the cultivation of a white French settler historical "*souche*"[31] from which non-white francophone immigrants are always already excluded, even within the assimilationist language of "intégration" championed by Québec's inter- (rather than multi-)culturalism. This was made infamously apparent in 1995 when Jacques Parizeau conceded defeat in the referendum on independence, stating "It's true that we were beaten, but by whom? Money and ethnic votes" (qtd. in Picard A1); and more recently in the subtext of the 2007 Bouchard-Taylor Commission, which Québécois scholar Bruno Cornellier summarizes as a reassertion of interculturalism as an ideal policy to "foster a civic pluralism predicated on the harmonious and reciprocal integration of 'ethnocultural minorities' into a normative, socio-institutional framework that is contingent upon the precarious futurity of a foundational, francophone majority culture" ("Interculturalism" 79). For decades, cultural critics have pointed out what Cornellier and others before him have recently articulated as the Québécois finding themselves in a "peculiar location as white colonial/colonized subjects in the margins of the Anglo-American

sphere of dominance" ("Pierre Vallières" n. pag.). Theirs is a precarious subjectivity which features a white ethnic nationalism lingering not far beneath the surface of a nationalism concerned with language rather than race—or so it claims.[32]

Francophone Asian Québécois writers, then, unearth the contradictions of this sovereigntist nationalism that articulates itself through language but rejects French speakers of non-European origins, or sees them only as an analogy for their own subjectivity. Thúy's narrator recalls a moment when this becomes apparent to her: "[M]on patron a découpé dans un journal montréalais un article qui réitérait que la 'nation Québécoise' était caucasienne, que mes yeux bridés me classaient automatiquement dans une catégorie à part même si le Québec m'avait donné mon rêve américain, même s'il m'avait bercée pendent trente ans" (88).[33] Again we see the emergence of lullaby imagery, as the narrator imagines herself cradled by the Québec nation and its promise of belonging. But she is lulled no longer. Even though she grew up as a French Canadian subject, even though as a schoolgirl she "réciter par cœur le texte sur Jacques Cartier" (82),[34] the narrator is denied Québécois subjectivity. Thus, the dedication of the novel, "aux gens du pays,"[35] is at once charitable and ironic; Gilles Vigneault's 1975 song of the same name speaks of love and hope but infers who is considered a proper member of the nation, not just in its lyrics but also by its repeated use by members of the sovereigntist movement. Thúy can dedicate her novel to the Québécois people of the country, and Chung's characters can declare themselves to be "plus québécois que les Québécois" (95),[36] but they will continue to be imagined as migrant subjects peripheral to the competing nationalism of Québec.

V.

In the final pages of *Unfastened: Globality and Asian North American Narratives,* Eleanor Ty uses the term "global writing" to encapsulate the works by Asian North American writers who are overtly discussing globalization and transnational movement, subjects who "have little or nothing to do with the adopted country of the authors," or works that do not "deal with anything Asian" at all (131). In these senses, we could easily understand *Ru* and *La Trilogie coréenne* as examples of global writing, as texts that push beyond the nationalist goals of "claiming America"—or Canada, as is the case here. Thúy's novel, which ebbs and flows between various places in Southeast Asia and Québec, and Chung's, which showcases

the plights of ethnic Koreans who are first *zainich'I* in Japan and later migrants to Québec, reveal state borders to be flexible and abstract in a number of ways. Chung's protagonist reflects upon his cosmopolitan subjectivity when he notes:

> Parfois, je me réveille la nuit dans mon hotel en me demandant: "Où suis-je?" À Montréal, Paris, Londres, Mexico, ou Tokyo? Car depuis ces dix dernières années, je n'ai pas cessé de voyager. Moi qui ai été si longtemps en proie à l'immobilité, me voici maintenant devenu un nomade, un citoyen du monde. J'ai une boulimie du voyage que rien ne rassasie. (253)[37]

Embodying what Aihwa Ong would call a "flexible subject" (1), figures like O Jeong incite us to "pay attention . . . to the *transnational practices and imaginings* of the nomadic subject and the social conditions that enable his flexibility," granting us "a different picture of how nation-states articulate within capitalism in late modernity" (Ong 3). O Jeong is constantly in motion, travelling between Canada and Asia as well as parts of Europe. The novel considers the ways in which people are dispossessed, exiled, and relocated because of war and colonialism and the intricacies of diasporic communities that result. Thúy's protagonist too is a transnational subject, always moving between different spaces. She recounts her frequent movements, her unanchoredness: "Je dors aussi bien dans le lit d'un hôtel" she explains, ". . . d'une chambre d'amis ou d'un inconnu que dans mon propre lit. En fait, je suis toujours heureuse de déménager" (108).[38] Her youngest brother, she comments, is also a transnational subject, living in "New York, à New Delhi, à Moscow ou à Saigon" (116).[39]

In this essay, I have tried to reframe the ways we think about nationalism in the contexts of Asian Canadian studies not by looking elsewhere or reading texts that deliberately disavow the state. Instead, I have analyzed writers and works that by their very natures reveal some of the limitations to the ways we have been thinking about Asian Canadian cultural communities, particularly in relation to the English language. It is not just that francophone Asian Québécois writers are writing in a language connected to a competing nationalism, but that it is a competing nationalism from within the borders of the state. I close by aligning with Ty and others who seek to challenge nationalism but also acknowledge its political benefits because I want to add to this conversation by suggesting that not all Asian Canadian nationalisms are alike, and that we need to recognize the political aims of marginalized subjects living within different kinds of nationalist spaces if we are to fully imagine Asian Canadian studies beyond the nation.

NOTES

1 Not surprisingly, anglophone Asian Québécois writers, like Shauna Singh Baldwin, are often included within the general field of Asian Canadian literature.
2 This does not just end at including a few francophone Asian Québécois perspectives on our syllabi and in our criticism; this is an invitation to reimagine who qualifies as a French Canadian writer and, moreover, our assumptions that they are necessarily from Québec and not other provinces or territories.
3 reveal . . . cultural implications in Québécois literary history. (All translations from French to English are mine, unless otherwise noted.)
4 refers simultaneously to points of departure (Asia) and points of arrival (France, Québec) that circumscribe an important diversity.
5 In French, *ru* means a small stream and, figuratively, a flow, a discharge—of tears, of blood, of money. In Vietnamese, *ru* means a lullaby, to lull, (trans. Sheila Fischman).
6 landscape so white, so virginal (trans. Sheila Fischman).
7 Heaven and hell embraced in the belly of our boat. Heaven promised a turning point in our lives, a new future, a new history. Hell, though, displayed our fears: fear of pirates, fear of starvation, fear of poisoning by biscuits soaked in motor oil, fear of running out of water, fear of being unable to stand up, fear of having to urinate in the red pot that was passed from hand to hand, fear that the scabies on the baby's head was contagious, fear of never again setting foot on solid ground, fear of never again seeing the faces of our parents, who were sitting in the darkness surrounded by two hundred people (trans. Sheila Fischman).
8 The taste of oil in our throats, on our tongues, in our heads sent us to sleep to the rhythm of the lullaby sung by the woman beside me (trans. Sheila Fischman).
9 surrounded, encircled by the uniform blue horizon (trans. Sheila Fischman).
10 who'd gone down during the crossing . . . had no names (trans. Sheila Fischman).
11 flung . . . into the water when it took us across the Gulf of Siam (trans. Sheila Fischman).
12 I was unable . . . to talk or to listen," she recalls, "even though I was neither deaf nor mute. I now had no points of reference" (trans. Sheila Fischman).
13 naked, if not stripped bare (trans. Sheila Fischman).
14 mother tongue had become not exactly insufficient, but useless (trans. Sheila Fischman).
15 the warm belly that sheltered us during our first year in Canada (trans. Sheila Fishman).
16 I had to relearn my mother tongue, which I'd given up too soon. In any case, I hadn't really mastered it completely because the country was divided in two when I was born. I come from the South, so I had never heard people from the North until I went back to Vietnam. Similarly, people in the North had never heard people from the South before reunification. Like Canada, Vietnam had its own two solitudes. (trans. Sheila Fischman).
17 If I write in French, it is not because I find the French language beautiful but because I have "something to say." And, paradoxically, that which I have to say is my status as exiled.
18 The Japanese imperial army landed in Korea and, by threat of bayonets, forced an entire generation of Koreans—from 1910 to 1945—to speak Japanese in their own country.
19 a province full of economic expansion and rich with possibilities for a newcomer.
20 I come from a family whose origins are Korean. However, I don't speak Korean. I was born in Japan, and Japanese is my mother tongue; there they called me Noboru. But this language stopped being my first language after my immigration to Canada at the age of two years. Today, at forty-eight years, I therefore write in French more by force of circumstances than by choice.

21 Mitsouyo, she was born in Japan and spoke Japanese all her life, even if her parents spoke to her in Korean. My mother didn't choose . . . Japanese as her first language. All her life, she maintained regret that she could not speak Korean fluently, even if it was a language she could understand.
22 Between a rock and a hard place . . . with nowhere to go.
23 The history of Korea and its upheavals; an acclimatization to misfortune; under Japanese occupation and the separation of the two Koreas after partition.
24 bilingual
25 Like his mother Mitsouyo, who can only express herself well in Japanese, her mother tongue imposed by colonial domination, the narrator finds himself under francophone cultural domination because of his immigration to Québec. Like Mitsouyo who regretted her whole life that she could not speak Korean fluently, all the while appreciating reading and writing in Japanese, the son adopts French as a useful tool of expression all the while maintaining regret that he was not also able to master Japanese and Korean.
26 Québécois literature differs from that of any other formerly-colonized country in the New World on the grounds that the colonizers who came from France were themselves colonized by the English.
27 the Vietnamese countryside was terrorized by different factions of thugs introduced there by the French authorities to divide the country.
28 Literally meaning "pure wool," *pure laine* signifies French Canadian ethnic purity where ancestry can be (or is imagined to be) linked back to original French settlers.
29 This rainbow migration slowly, but in an irreversible manner, modified Canadian practices in different domains (social, cultural, etc.), and very early on we once again found at the heart of these developments, the age-old and always present anglophone-francophone linguistic dilemma.
30 an Asian face [and who] speak French with a Québécois accent.
31 *De souch*e, literally "of the root/stump," symbolizes people who are descendants of original settlers.
32 But this is not to say that writers like Thúy and Chung are ignored by the majority. Again, Berrouët-Oriol and Fournier: "des *francophones canadiens* (de souche française ou anglaise) se réappropriant l'Ailleurs-proche, des mémoires historiques venues d'Ailleurs habitant ou traversant la trame fictionnelle, dans un dynamique transcuturelle" (13). Translated, "*Francophone Canadians* (of French or English stock) reappropriating the Far-near, historical memories from Elsewhere that inhabit and crossing over the narrative plane, in a transcultural dynamic."
33 [M]y employer, who was based in Québec, clipped an article from a Montréal paper reiterating that the "Québécois nation" was Caucasian, that my slanting eyes automatically placed me in a separate category, even though Québec had given me my American dream, even though it had cradled me for thirty years (trans. Sheila Fischman).
34 could recite by heart a passage about Jacques Cartier (trans. Sheila Fischman).
35 In English, "to the people of the land," this dedication appears in neither language in the English translation of the book.
36 More québécois than the Québécois.
37 From time to time, I wake up in the middle of the night in my hotel room and ask myself: "Where am I?" In Montreal, Paris, London, Mexico, or Tokyo? Because for the past ten years I haven't stopped travelling. I, who for a long time was plagued by immobility, have now become a nomad, a citizen of the world. I have a hunger for travel that nothing satisfies.

38 I sleep just as well in a hotel room, a guest room or a stranger's bed as my own. In fact, I'm always glad to move (trans. Sheila Fischman).

39 New York, New Delhi, Moscow or Saigon (trans. Sheila Fischman).

WORKS CITED

Berrouët-Oriol, Robert, and Robert Fournier. "L'émergence des écritures migrantes et métisses au Québec." *Québec Studies* 14 (1992): 7-22. Print.

Chao, Lien. "Anthologizing the Collective: The Epic Struggles to Establish Chinese Canadian Literature in English." *Essays on Canadian Writing* 57 (1995): 145-70. Web. 1 Dec. 2015.

Chung, Ook. *La Trilogie coréenne.* Montréal: Boréal, 2012. Print.

Cornellier, Bruno. "Interculturalism, Settler Colonialism, and the Contest over 'Nativeness.'" *Biopolitics and Memory in Postcolonial Literature and Culture.* Ed. Michael R. Griffiths. London: Ashgate, 2016. 77-99. Print.

—. "Pierre Vallières, Québécois Settler Nationalism, and the N-word Today." *Discourse: Journal for Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture* 39.1 (Forthcoming, 2016).

Dupuis, Gilles. "La littérature migrante est-elle universelle? Le cas de Ying Chen." *Croisements* 1 (2011): 23-33. Print.

Goellnicht, Donald C. "A Long Labour: The Protracted Birth of Asian Canadian Literature." *Essays on Canadian Writing* 72 (2000): 1-41. Print.

Grossman, Simone. "La realisme magique dans les récites d'Ook Chung." *Page D'accueil* 8.2 (2013): 175-202. Print.

Kim-Bernard, Kyeongmi. "La quête identitaire d'Ook Chung: Analyse thématique de *La Trilogie coréenne*." *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 16.3 (2013): 352-72. Print.

Lai, Larissa. *Slanting I, Imagining We: Asian Canadian Literary Production in the 1980s and 1990s*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2014. Print.

Lee, Christopher. "Enacting the Asian Canadian." *Canadian Literature* 199 (2008): 28-44. Print.

Nguyen, Vinh. "Refugee Gratitude: Narrating Success and Intersubjectivity in Kim Thúy's *Ru.*" *Canadian Literature* 219 (2013): 17-36. Print.

Ong, Aihwa. *Flexible Citizenship: the Cultural Logics of Transnationality*. Durham: Duke UP, 1999. Print.

Parker, Gabrielle. "Francophonie(s) Asiatique(s) Contemporaine(s): Perspectives Critiques." *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 16.3 (2013): 241-62. Print.

Picard, Andre. "NO -by a whisker Parizeau promises to 'exact revenge' for sovereigntist loss." *Globe and Mail* [Toronto]. 31 Oct. 1995: A1. *Canadian Periodicals Index Quarterly*. Web. 9 Aug. 2016.

Shin, Junga, and Yong Ho Choi. "De l'espace transculturel: Le transculturalisme revisité à traverse la littérature migrante du Québec." *French Cultural Studies* 26.1 (2005): 101-12. Print.

Thúy, Kim. *Ru*. Montréal: Les Éditions Libres Expression, 2009. Print.

—. *Ru*. Trans. Sheila Fischman. Toronto: Vintage, 2012. Print.

Ty, Eleanor. *Unfastened: Globality and Asian North American Narratives*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2010. Print.

Ty, Eleanor, and Donald Goellnicht, eds. *Asian North American Identities: Beyond the Hyphen*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2004. Print.

Vigneault, Gilles. "Gens du pays." Perf. Paul Piché. *Retrouvailles 2*. Tandem, 2011. CD.
Wong, Sau-Ling Cynthia. "Denationalizaton Reconsidered: Asian American Cultural Criticism at a Theoretical Crossroads." *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race, Ethnicity, and Literature.* Ed. Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt. Jackson: U of Mississippi P, 2000. 122-50. Print.
Yeager, Jack A. "Bach Mai and Ying Chen: Immigrant Identities in Québec." *Textualizing the Immigrant Experience in Contemporary Québec*. Ed. Susan Ireland and Patrice J. Proulx. Westport: Prager, 2004. 137-47. Print.

Nathaniel G. Moore

On A Stupid Husband

O Kelowna, who has rolling hills
winding on forever upward

and hell's angels drink well
and are ready to dance,
though you fear
the useless law
the burning forests
will raise the price of furniture
as they tumble with flame
and lie in deep ash:
let a good chair
be made from cinder,
dust and brine
to sit on in a game
of leap-frogging
some will call *Frogger*

Kelowna, give me that greatest gift,
a good prawn.
I want a fellow-citizen of mine
to go summersault straight
into the deep
from your rooftop bars,
on a night of rubbish
when the blackest sky is tarred

The man's totally skull,
knows no more than
a two-year-old chimp,

asleep in its father's
lice-pooled arms.
some poor bride
is in chains and tears!

We tire of passing figs,
eating grapes
discussing your weak new love
We fill a Ligurian ditch
with fog and hearsay
Who knows if your wife
is real or phantom art

Such is his prosaic nature,
he who doesn't see, or hear,
he who doesn't know
 what day it is,
or whether he is
pet or houseplant.

Now I want to toss him
Hercules style
from your rooftop
happy hours,
the mules
will nudge his bloody shoes
with their useful noses.

Guy Beauregard

On Not Knowing
A Tale for the Time Being and the Politics of Imagining Lives After March 11

On March 11, 2011, Japan was struck by a series of disasters: a 9.0 magnitude earthquake, the strongest in Japan's recorded history and listed as one of the five most powerful ever recorded; a tsunami that devastated the northeast coast of Honshū; and the meltdown of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station. Based on 2013 data,[1] scholars have estimated that around 18,600 people were killed during these events, including some 2,700 people whose bodies have not been found. Approximately 380,000 buildings were completely or partially destroyed, while an additional 710,000 were in other ways damaged. Due to radiation emitted by the nuclear meltdown—part of a nuclear crisis that is in no way finished[2]—around 100,000 people residing in Fukushima prefecture were forced to leave their homes; an additional 50,000 left voluntarily. In the aftermath of the devastation, there has been an extraordinary proliferation of accounts of March 11, leading one scholar to assert that "there is probably no other disaster which has received as much documentation" (Slater 25). In addition to accounts disseminated through social media, blogs, and other websites, there is a growing body of films, photography, literary writing, ethnographic studies, and critical reflection.[3] In one notable study, David Slater has argued for the importance of "urgent ethnography" after March 11. While Slater acknowledges the risks involved in conducting "rushed fieldwork" (32), he maintains that "most survivors want their stories told" (32), especially as "they often felt unheard" (44). Yet what is at stake in attempting to "hear" such stories?

In this paper I foreground the transpacific dimensions of attempting to hear and respond to such stories by focusing on one Asian Canadian text:

Ruth Ozeki's award-winning novel *A Tale for the Time Being* (2013).[4] Ozeki's novel vividly thematizes encounters across the Pacific through the story of a figure named Ruth, a writer living on an island off the west coast of Canada where she comes across "a scarred plastic freezer bag" (8) containing a diary and other texts and objects heaved onto the shore—materials that, in Kris Kosaka's circumspect reading, "may, or may not, be debris from the March 11, 2011, tsunami" (n. pag.). Through conversations between Ruth and her partner, Oliver, along with their neighbours and friends in British Columbia and elsewhere, Ozeki's novel sets in motion a story based on "forensic unpeeling" (9): an extended process of imagining lives in Japan primarily but not exclusively through excerpts from the diary, with a focus on the story of a figure named Nao, the diary's protagonist, whose life was dramatically transformed and plunged into precarity after her father lost his job as a computer programmer in California and moved with his family back to Japan. In unfolding this story about reading stories, one that moves across and beyond realist conventions, Ozeki's novel challenges readers to see how stories that are apprehended in Canada are not limited to Canadian stories alone. For critics, acknowledging this point is not a matter of being content to recognize, or celebrate, a plurality of possible narratives. Instead, as I will develop in my reading of Ozeki's novel, we need to underline, in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's phrase, how the imagination—in this case, the act of imagining the lives in North America and across the Pacific—might "place a question mark upon the declarative" (4). Doing so will not bring back lives that have been lost. And it will not lead to straightforward accounts of imagined lives that we can finally presume to know. But it might, as Spivak observes, help us "change how we construct objects for knowing" (4).

A central plank of my argument is that critics responding to Asian Canadian texts, including *A Tale*, need to scrutinize the terms on which the lives of figures are imagined, both within and beyond the nation. But before I develop this argument, I wish to provide some disclaimers. In contributing to this special issue on "Asian Canadian Critique Beyond the Nation," my essay will not be suggesting that the act of reading Ozeki's novel (or any other text) could somehow, in and of itself, propel our critical work out of a presumably narrow national frame into a more globalized mode of critical engagement. Nor will my discussion of Ozeki's novel attempt to develop a form of reading that could comprehensively "cover," once and for all, this or any other text. Instead, my approach draws its inspiration from scholarship that underlines the complexities of Asian Canadian critique. Of

particular importance in the context of my argument is the work of Roy Miki, who underlines how the term *Asian Canadian* "functions as a limit term that lacks a secure referential base but rather is constituted through the literary and critical acts that are performed under its name" (xiii-xiv). Miki's scrupulously antiessentialist approach echoes some of the strongest work produced in Asian American cultural criticism, including Jodi Kim's discussion of Asian American critique as an *analytic*, which is for Kim "decidedly not a reified identity category" but rather an attempt to apprehend the workings of American empire in Asia (10). What makes Miki's work especially helpful, however, is its call for us, as variously situated critics, "to draw on the resources of the imagination to invent writing forms" that could adequately address and work at the limits of terms such as "CanLit" or "Asian Canadian" (274). As I discussed in my article "Interwoven Temporalities: Reading Madeleine Thien's *Dogs at the Perimeter*" on the politics of reading difficult histories, developing such kinds of writing—what Miki calls "creative critical practices" (274)—is nevertheless a struggle. In the case of reading Ozeki's novel, the struggle to develop "creative critical practices" has taken a particular form, one that sharply encapsulates Miki's observation about "the potential of the imagination either to open up or to foreclose a reflexive approach to the somatic and social production of cultural values" (262). As we shall see, the meanings produced in and around *A Tale* create space for readers to think through the politics of imagining lives beyond the nation, while also raising troubling possibilities that such acts of imagination might reinforce rather than unsettle existing relations of power.

I.

Some of the troubling yet also potentially generative possibilities about acts of imagination can be glimpsed in the marketing and initial reception of Ozeki's novel. The book trailer for the Viking edition of the text, for example, focuses on the figure of Ruth walking along the shore of Cortes Island, where she comes across Nao's diary and begins reading.[5] Particularly notable here are the trailer's overtitles and the ways they position some of the novel's key figures. Nao, for example, is depicted as "a troubled schoolgirl in Tokyo," who presumably requires some form of rescue. Ruth, by contrast, is presented as "a novelist on a remote Canadian island," thereby raising the question: remote in relation to where?[6] In the initial reception of Ozeki's novel, it is remarkable how frequently these tropes have appeared. Reviewers have at times positioned Nao, in starkly possessive terms, as Ruth's "dear, vulnerable

Nao" (Boyce) while at other times describing the setting of the novel's narrative present as "isolated" (Grassi), "sparsely populated" (Donaldson), and "remote" (Connelly; Johnstone; Moore; Smith).

Such discourses of presumed helplessness and assumed remoteness have not simply circulated through the marketing and the initial reception of *A Tale*; they also appear in the novel itself. The figure of Ruth, for example, at one point expresses an awareness of her desire to "help the girl" or "save her"—but in Ozeki's text, both phrases are followed by a question mark, and answered with the single word "Ridiculous" (29). Later in the novel, referring to the possibility of Nao and her father being "in trouble," Ruth admits that "she wanted to help" (311). Soon afterward, Ruth glumly notes that "[i]t's too late" to "help her," an observation that is again followed by a question: "So what's the point?" (314). Despite such apparently scrupulous self-questioning, Ruth retains a "protective" feeling about Nao (35), a feeling of worry and concern that propels her reading of the diary and the other texts that were washed up on the shore, even as she asks a fundamental question facing any reader engaged with a narrative text: "What was she doing wasting precious hours on someone else's story?" (31). Ozeki's novel thereby positions figures in Japan as presumed objects of rescue while implicitly presenting Canada as a presumed site of refuge—but it also offers possibilities for its variously situated readers to reflect upon how and why we might read Ozeki's text or other texts representing the connections between scattered lives before and after March 11.

Likewise, depictions of the setting of the novel's narrative present as "a remote island" (11)—and, later, as a place with "remote shores" where Ruth and Oliver, following Oliver's illness, are "wash[ed] . . . up" (57)—also appear in Ozeki's novel, which depicts Cortes Island as "sparsely populated" and as a place where "human culture barely existed and then only as the thinnest veneer" (61). This problematic framing forcibly brackets the lives of Coast Salish peoples, who are in the novel positioned as spatially removed through Ruth's glimpse of "lights from the Klahoose reservation" located "*on the far side of the cove*" (225; emphasis added) and as temporally in the past through Ruth's act of imagining "the Salish who *used to tend* [the clam gardens]" on the island (188; emphasis added).[7] The violence of this framing appears in contrast to Ruth's longing for the built environment of New York City, a comparison that is followed by Ruth's claim that "[i]t was only in an urban landscape, amid straight lines and architecture, that she could situate herself in human time and history" (61). At this point, however, the novel opens

possibilities for a more nuanced reading than one predicated on an urban/nature binary. It does so in two ways: by later suggesting that excavations of the complexities of "human time and history" are in no way limited to urban settings, a point I will elaborate on in the next section; and, also, by arguably undercutting its depictions of the setting of the novel's narrative present with humour. One example of *A Tale*'s deadpan humour is the way its first reference to the island's presumed remoteness is immediately followed by a description of the local library's collection, which in Ozeki's account seems to consist mostly of "books on gardening, canning, food security, alternative energy, alternative healing, and alternative schooling" (11).

The "alternative" perspectives foregrounded here, when read as an assemblage of textual refusals to accept singular or received accounts, lead us to another way we might engage with the discourses circulating in the novel's marketing and initial reception: by emphasizing the evident diversity of perspectives that appear in Ozeki's text. Such diverse perspectives (as indicated metonymically by the books housed in the local library as well as the diary and letters within the novel) may, in part, be a function of the way the novel brings together an extraordinary plurality of topics and materials cutting across various times and spaces, including (as one reviewer put it) "Schrödinger's cat, quantum mechanics, Japanese funeral rituals, crow species, fetish cafes, the anatomy of barnacles, 163 footnotes and six appendices"—all of which appear in this novel and "jostle for attention" (Jensen n. pag.). If anything, this list understates the range of topics, intertextual references, and formal experiments (including typographical ones) appearing in Ozeki's text. But it is not enough to be content with recognizing such plurality. Instead, we must push further to investigate the ways in which this plurality has been represented and received. One way to do so is to turn to the portrayal, in Ozeki's novel, of what Lawrence-Minh Bùi Davis has perceptively called a "community of engagement" (n. pag.). In this community, various characters in the novel's narrative present—including, most prominently, Oliver, but also Muriel, Callie, Benoit, Dr. Leistiko, Kimi, and Tosh—have differential access to Nao's narrative and the other texts found on the beach, as each of these figures provides (variously) questions, insights, counter-positions, background information, and invaluable translations into English of texts written in French and Japanese. In his review of *A Tale*, Davis underlines how the novel "leaves us with the promise of dialogue, of broad community engagement via reading and writing" (n. pag.). But how—if at all—could this "promise" be fulfilled?

II.

Two brief and seemingly inconsequential scenes in *A Tale* may help us to further scrutinize the "community of engagement" Davis has identified. The first features a conversation between Ruth and Muriel, in which Ruth states simply that she found the freezer bag and its contents "below Jap Ranch":

> No one on the island called it by that name anymore, but Muriel was an old-timer and knew the reference. The old homestead, one of the most beautiful places on the island, had once belonged to a Japanese family, who were forced to sell when they were interned during the war. The property had changed hands several times since then, and now was owned by elderly Germans. Once Ruth heard the nickname, she stubbornly persisted in using it. As a person of Japanese ancestry, she said, she had the right, and it was important not to let New Age correctness erase the history of the island. (32)

By evoking the state-directed dispossession of racialized subjects on Cortes Island (in this case, an unnamed "Japanese family") who were forcibly relocated and forced to sell their home, this passage points our attention to figures who are no longer present in this community. But it also emphasizes Ruth's stubborn refusal to allow the lives of those subjected to such forced relocation to disappear. As Kyoko Matsunaga notes, "Ruth is acutely aware of the violent colonial history of the region" (88), a history that—as I discuss below—extends beyond the forced removal and dispossession of subjects racialized as "Japanese" in British Columbia in the 1940s. While Oliver protests that "[i]t's hardly fair" that Ruth can reclaim and reiterate the term "Jap Ranch" while he, as a German Canadian, cannot, Ruth retorts: "Exactly. . . . It wasn't fair" (32).

A second scene also takes us to the 1940s, this time involving a character named Callie, a marine biologist and environmental activist contacted by Ruth to inspect and to date (eventually unsuccessfully) the barnacles attached to the freezer bag found on the beach. In this scene, we learn that Callie earns a living by giving lectures about whales and other cetaceans on cruise ships travelling through the Inside Passage to Alaska. On one such cruise, a skeptical passenger laughed derisively at the chance to see humpback whales—but, to Callie's surprise, subsequently attended her lecture and later came up to watch another pod swimming close to the ship. Just before disembarking, he handed Callie a $500,000 cheque to help support a marine mammal protection agency. Eventually, Callie learns why:

> He had been a bomber pilot during World War II, he told [Callie], stationed at an airbase in the Aleutians. They used to fly out every day, looking for Japanese targets. Often, when they couldn't locate an enemy vessel, or the weather conditions turned bad, they would be forced to abort their mission and fly back

> to base, but landing with a full payload was dangerous, so they would discharge their bombs into the sea. From the cockpit of the plane, they could see the large shadows of whales, moving below the surface of the water. From so high up, the whales looked small. They used them for target practice. (117)

The use of whales as targets signals—here and elsewhere in Ozeki's text—the damage done by humans to nonhuman animals. Indeed, the focus on the lives of whales gains additional force through the foregrounding of the ecological violence of the European settlement of Whaletown, a name that (like "Jap Ranch") evokes figures no longer present, in this case the whales killed during the nineteenth-century trade in whale oil. But the scene also draws attention to how the man who handed Callie the cheque was stationed in the 1940s at a US airbase in the Aleutian Islands: another site of dispossession in which Indigenous Aleut people (but not white settlers) were forcibly removed, either to Japan or to the Alaska panhandle, to clear space for the militarization of these islands by Japan and the US.[8] In this way, Ozeki's text goes beyond simply offering a "promise of dialogue" in the novel's narrative present, instead pointing to the limits of which lives we, as variously positioned readers, can presume to know. By representing spaces marked by commercial and militarized violence and by the forced removal of Indigenous and other racialized subjects, it underlines overlapping forms of violence and exclusion that have enabled the novel's "community of engagement" to come into being.[9]

III.

One of the striking features of Ozeki's novel is the way it represents histories of dispossession by inventively juxtaposing what appear to be unrelated times and spaces, thereby challenging readers to reconsider some of the discourses of presumed remoteness identified earlier in this essay. In a memorable example, the novel describes Miyagi prefecture in Japan, where old Jiko's temple was located along the coast, as part of Tōhoku, "one of the last pieces of tribal land to be taken away from the indigenous Emishi, descendants of the Jōmon people, who had lived there from prehistoric times until they were defeated by the Japanese Imperial Army in the eighth century" (141).[10] The text then moves from this old invader-settler history to more recent developments in one site just south of Miyagi: Fukushima, described as "also part of the ancestral lands of the Emishi" but now prefectural home to the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station. The novel glosses "Fukushima" as "Happy Island," a designation given harshly ironic inflections in the banners displayed across the main streets of nearby towns:

Nuclear power is energy for a brighter future!
The correct understanding of nuclear power leads to a better life! (141)

As Ozeki's novel makes clear, the "brighter future" referred to on this banner abruptly vanishes for those whose homes were located near the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station. We learn, for example, that Akira and Kimi, the proprietors of Arigato Sushi in Campbell River, were effectively barred from returning to their hometown following the nuclear meltdown. As Kimi tells Ruth and Oliver, "Okuma City wasn't very special. . . . But it was our hometown. Now nobody can live there. Our friends, family, everybody had to evacuate. Walk out of their homes. Leave everything behind. Not even time to wash the dishes" (233-34).

When situated in the context of contemporary Japan, the evident sadness represented in this scene cannot simply be understood as an individual family's tragedy, even though the loss of one's home is indeed tragic. Nor can it be simply viewed as a time to offer assistance and charity, however urgently needed.[11] Instead, as critics such as Muto Ichiyo have underlined, understanding developments in Fukushima requires a broader view of "the nuclear regime" (171) and its genealogy. Muto acknowledges "the appallingly inept and irresponsible handling of the situation by the government leaders, bureaucrats, and owner of the reactors" (172). But he pushes beyond such contemporary failures of governance and management to track the imprint in Japan of what, in 1953, then-US President Dwight Eisenhower famously called "Atoms for Peace" (qtd. in Muto 179). The following year, Thomas Murray, representing the US Atomic Energy Commission, told members of the United Steelworkers Convention: "Now, while the memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki remains so vivid, construction of [a nuclear power plant] in a country like Japan would be a dramatic and Christian gesture which could lift all of us far above the recollection of the carnage of those cities" (qtd. in Muto 210 n2). Muto analyzes this attempted obfuscation of militarized violence to note that "by inverting the sense of victimizer into the sense of benefactor, the victimizer can forget, bury, and justify the carnage, thereby closing the channel through which the meaning of the act could have been called into question" (210 n2). In the aftermath of March 11, the complicity of the US government and the larger "nuclear industrial complex" (182-83) is in this respect unmistakable, despite prominent attempts to rehabilitate the image of US military activity in Japan through joint operations in 2011 dubbed "Operation Tomodachi," in which the US military was discursively positioned as a "friend."[12]

Intriguingly, Ozeki's text juxtaposes its representation of Fukushima as a "Happy Island" with a description of the island where Ruth and Oliver live in the novel's narrative present: a place that "was named for a famous Spanish conquistador [i.e., Cortez], who overthrew the Aztec empire" (141). Ruth notes that while Cortez "never made it up as far north as his eponymous isle, his men did, which is why the inlets and sounds of coastal British Columbia are scattered with the names of famous Spanish mass murderers" (141). But the killings were by no means restricted to the Spanish imperial project, as Ozeki's text then turns to the island's nickname, "the Island of the Dead" (142). While the possible meanings of this nickname are multiple and contested, one account refers back to "the smallpox epidemic of 1862 that killed off most of the indigenous Coast Salish population" (142)—a brutal, decisive moment in what historical geographer Cole Harris calls "a profound settlement discontinuity" (30) in what is now British Columbia.[13] Referring to the earlier smallpox epidemic of 1782, Harris asks why it has not become "part of the lore of modern British Columbia" (26), despite the fact that it had been identified quite precisely as early as 1910. Harris confronts the obfuscation of this history by stating that "the idea of disease-induced depopulation runs counter to the long-held conviction that Europeans brought enlightenment and civilization to savage peoples" (29). According to Harris, such accounts of damaged and lost lives "were not what modern British Columbians or other recent North Americans, proud of their achievements and intent on their futures, wanted to hear" (29).

A Tale helps to make stories related to this history audible, if only briefly, to those willing and able to listen. The brevity of its enunciation extends into the novel's fleeting representations of contemporary Coast Salish peoples' lives, which, as noted above, appear at one point in the twinkle of lights coming from the Klahoose reserve "on the far side of the cove" noticed by Ruth, tellingly, on her way home from the garbage dump (225). The significance of this small scene can be augmented by turning to the work of Australian cultural critic Ghassan Hage, who uses the term *colonial rubbishing* to try to account for complex feelings he experienced when he saw Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank. Hage responded to this experience by writing:

> How is this possible today? It is like a colonialism running amok with power. Walling people as they please, mistreating them as they please, building colonies high up on the hills and literally shitting on those living down the hill by letting their sewer come out outside the settlements for others to cope with. How heroic is it that the Palestinian people are still managing to squeeze a bit of life in the midst of this? (193-94)

Hage identifies the process of "rubbishing" people (demonstrated in this instance through the placement of sewers) as "a colonial technique" (197), one that cuts across various settler colonial sites. For Hage, "[e]xterminating people by 'rubbishing them' is always less dramatic than when it is done through massacres. It is more like dumping a truck that one has destroyed somewhere on one's property and letting it slowly rust, corrode and disintegrate" (197). Yet, in the face of various modes of "rubbishing" people, there remain subjects who continue to struggle—in Hage's account, "heroically" (198).

In *A Tale*, Ruth's glimpse of lights coming from the Klahoose reserve can hardly stand as an adequate marker of Indigenous agency in Canada understood as a settler colonial state, signalling once again the limits of which lives various readers of this text can presume to know. Readers of Ozeki's novel searching for expressions of "heroic" struggle in Canada need to turn elsewhere.

IV.

Perhaps the most overt representations of heroism in *A Tale* can be found in the stories of the two characters named Haruki, both related to Nao, who in distinct ways attempt to speak out against and confront forms of imperial violence. The character referred to in the novel as Haruki #1—Nao's father's uncle—stands as the most unambiguous example, as he rejects the violence of Japanese imperialism in Asia and the Pacific by aborting his mission as a kamikaze pilot in World War II. With his love of philosophy and literature, and his ability to write in what one reviewer dryly calls "a code language called French" (Jensen n. pag.), Haruki #1 and his principled acts of resistance have not always been viewed positively in the novel's initial critical reception.[14] The figure of Haruki #2—Nao's father—appears as a more complex character, as his evident love of computer programming conflicts with his concerns about the ways the US military will use his applications to further its imperial violence in the Middle East. Because of his refusal to stop asking questions about the military applications of his work, Haruki #2 loses his job in Silicon Valley, leading to his family's sudden departure from the US and their descent into precarity in Japan—a central element in the plot of Ozeki's novel. The quiet form of heroism in his life, mixed with moments of despair, along with his eventual determination to use his skills as a programmer in novel ways, make him one of Ozeki's most sympathetic characters, even as he is frequently overshadowed (at least in the eyes of Nao) by his legendary uncle and his

extraordinary grandmother Jiko. All of these figures, viewed from the perspective of Nao, can point us to what Anne Allison in her discussion of "precarious Japan" calls "a glimmer . . . of something new: different alliances and attachments, new forms of togetherness, DIY ways of (social) living and revaluing life" (18).[15]

But what makes *A Tale* an important text for critics is not only its representation of various heroic struggles against forms of Japanese and US imperialism as these struggles become legible through direct action or smaller quotidian acts. Instead, Ozeki's novel creates space for us to rethink how these anti-imperialist struggles are entangled with representations of Canada, a place that in Haruki #2's estimation is (in a memorable phrase appearing in Nao's diary) "like America only with health care and no guns" (42). In this highly circumscribed depiction, Canada is positioned as a "safe" place (44) appearing in contrast to—and later, in Montreal, as a potential refuge from (382)—Nao's harrowing experiences in Japan. But again Ozeki's novel offers us a chance to develop a more complex reading. Regarding Nao's accounts of bullying in the school system in Japan, Oliver responds with outrage before stating glumly that "it makes total sense," as "[w]e live in a bully culture. Politicians, corporations, the banks, the military. All bullies and crooks. They steal, they torture people, they make these insane rules and set the tone" (121). After further naming Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib, Oliver observes: "America's bad, but Canada's no better. People just going with the program, too scared to speak up. Look at the Tar Sands. Just like Tepco" (121).

Oliver's positioning of Canada as "no better" than the US—and, through his reference to the Tar Sands being "just like" the Tokyo Electric Power Company, the notorious (mis)manager of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, also evidently no better than Japan—provides an opportunity to renew forms of critical engagement with Canada in the imperial present.[16] While Ozeki's novel can contend that after the events of 9/11 "Canada had never felt safer" (272) for Ruth and Oliver, a more forceful response must push beyond such perceived feelings of safety to address how, in Julie McGonegal's account, "Canada has contributed to national and transnational racist discourses of the other, not only by participating in regimes of war in Afghanistan and elsewhere, but also by enacting legislation aimed at enhancing 'national security'" (74). As Enakshi Dua, Narda Razack, and Jody Nyasha Warner have pointed out, this legislation—including the Anti-Terrorism Act, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, and the Public Safety Act—has not only affected people of colour and would-

be asylum seekers to Canada; it has also been used to police Indigenous peoples, including those protesting land claims in British Columbia (6-7). For scholars committed to developing forms of Asian Canadian critique, a scrupulous engagement with Ozeki's novel must prise apart depictions of Canada as a presumed place of refuge, to ask instead how these laws and others have been mobilized to bolster imperial formations *and* a settler colonial regime.

v.

An unexpected outcome of the events of March 11, 2011, is the way that Japan physically shifted toward North America, moving an estimated eight feet closer (Samuels ix)—a point noted, in a similar manner, by Oliver in Ozeki's novel (202). Under such conditions of increasing proximity, what would it mean to follow Oliver's injunction to "[i]magine the Pacific" (13)? Clearly, critics who attempt to do so must acknowledge the vastness of this project and the many things we cannot know. Ozeki's novel appears at times to celebrate such uncertainty. The figure of Ruth, addressing the figure of Nao in the novel's Epilogue, picks up on the notion of "not-knowing" (a Zen Buddhist notion attributed to Jiko) to state: "I'd much rather *know*, but then again, not-knowing keeps all the possibilities open" (402). And, in one of its appendices, the novel again draws on elements of Zen Buddhism to refer to "the unbounded nature of not knowing" (409). But in addition to this apparent celebration, Ozeki's text also underlines that "[n]ot knowing is hard" (400), returning us to statistics about the devastation that occurred on and after March 11: "In the earthquake and the tsunami, 15,854 people died, but thousands more simply vanished, buried alive or sucked back out to sea by the outflow of the wave. Their bodies were never found. Nobody would ever know what happened to them" (400). At this difficult moment of *not knowing*, Ruth's reading of Nao's diary emerges as part of an extended attempt to imagine the lives of countless others who may, or may not, have survived.

When read in this way, *A Tale* directs our attention to what Ozeki has elsewhere referred to as *agnotology*, which she glosses as "the study of ignorance, how it is produced and maintained, what is lost and forgotten, and most importantly, why" (Foreword xvi). Asian Canadian critique attempting to work beyond the nation—understood as a mode of critique that tries to account for, in Miki's formulation, "subjects whose mobility is always inflected by networks of determinants and indeterminacies, both close to the skin and globally distant" (274)—has an obligation to address

such concerns. Doing so could enable us to ask (following Ozeki): "What drops—or is dropped—from the historical record? What has gone missing, and whose agenda do those gaps and holes serve?" (Foreword xvi). In Ozeki's novel, the figure of Ruth, mesmerized by images from Japan on her computer screen after the events of March 11, attempts to confront such "gaps" and "holes":

> The tidal wave, observed, collapses into tiny particles, each one containing a story:
> • a mobile phone, ringing deep inside a mountain of sludge and debris;
> • a ring of soldiers, bowing to a body they've flagged;
> • a medical worker clad in full radiation hazmat, wanding a bare-faced baby who is squirming in his mother's arms;
> • a line of toddlers, waiting quietly for their turn to be tested. (114)

In calling attention to this constellation of images as "a minuscule few representing the inconceivable many" (114), Ozeki's novel pushes us to consider how, and toward what ends, such lives might be imagined.

In his analysis of what he calls "the Fukushima problematic" after March 11, Sabu Kohso observes that "[c]apitalism and the state are seeking to sustain their modus operandi—or the way of the world—by discovering new ways of accumulation and control. Meanwhile, people are facing a point of divergence: either follow the way of the world or pry open the fissures" (53). In this essay, I have suggested that Ozeki's novel and the meanings that have so far accumulated around it offer possibilities for both. It is my hope that the reading I have put forward, following routes that are necessarily partial and always incomplete, can encourage critics attempting to develop forms of Asian Canadian critique to work toward the latter, "pry[ing] open the fissures" in Canada and Japan and beyond, while also acknowledging (as Kohso notes) that "[w]here the fissures lead us is unknown" (53). With this form of *not knowing*, critics responding to Asian Canadian texts representing lives within and beyond the nation can return to Spivak's work on the imagination and the need to "change how we construct objects for knowing" (4): not as objects of rescue, and not in locations depicted as remote, but as lives in scattered sites that have become interconnected in previously unimagined ways.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Earlier versions of this essay were presented at "Asian American Literature and Asia," Meiji University, 20 December 2014; as part of the Deng lecture series at the University of Macau, 24 April 2015; and on a panel on "Canadian Precarities" at ACCUTE, University

of Ottawa, 31 May 2015. I wish to thank the organizers of these events and members of the audience for their thoughtful questions and comments; Gayle Sato, Hideyuki Yamamoto, Szu Shen, and Andy Chih-ming Wang for generously passing along published and forthcoming materials related to Ozeki's novel; and Christine Kim, Christopher Lee, Laura Moss, and the anonymous readers at *Canadian Literature* for their helpful feedback. Support from the Ministry of Science and Technology in Taiwan (MOST 103-2420-H-002-002-2R and MOST 104-2410-H-002-125-MY3) along with institutional support from the Institute of European and American Studies at Academia Sinica enabled me to research and write this paper and is gratefully acknowledged.

NOTES

1 These numbers are drawn from Gill, Steger, and Slater (6; 13). Their account is based on 2013 data compiled by the National Police Agency of Japan; the numbers of people evacuated are based on data provided by the Fukushima prefectural government.
2 See, for example, Ahn, who focuses on the topic of environmental contamination from the release of radioactive materials from the Fukushima Daiichi site while also acknowledging that "[t]he full impact of the Fukushima nuclear disaster on Japanese society goes far beyond matters directly related to what happened within the nuclear power plant itself" (87).
3 For a brief discussion of films produced after March 11, see Schilling; on photography, see Tran. For a selection of writing (including fiction, non-fiction, and manga) translated into English, see Luke and Karashima; for a discussion of "post-3/11 literature" focusing on two writers from Fukushima, see Kimoto. For a generative discussion of teaching literature in Japan after the events of March 11, see Sato. For ethnography, see Allison's stunning account of what she calls "precarious Japan," especially 180-206. For recent examples of critical reflection, see the essays collected in "Dossier: Crisis of the Everyday/Everyday Crisis: Across Time in Japan" in *boundary 2* 42.3 (2015).
4 *A Tale for the Time Being* has received numerous awards including the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize for Fiction, the Association for Asian American Studies Book Award for Creative Writing in Prose, and the Sunburst Award for Excellence in Canadian Literature of the Fantastic; it was also shortlisted for the 2013 Man Booker Prize.
5 At the time of writing, this trailer was available at https://vimeo.com/60688567.
6 On the topic of "remoteness" and how it might be rethought in relation to capitalism, environmental activism, and injury, see Fitz-Henry.
7 The novel's use of the term *reservation*, more commonly used in the US, linguistically signals through Ozeki's narration that the character Ruth is new to Canada, where the term *reserve* is more commonly used.
8 See Kohlhoff for an account of the forced relocation of Aleut people (euphemistically named an "evacuation") up to the moment of US government redress in 1988—a settlement that provided an astonishingly paltry $12,000 USD to eligible individuals "as damages for human suffering" (186).
9 Here I wish to acknowledge a growing body of critical work engaging with the points of intersection and tension between Indigeneity and diaspora. See, for example, Kim and McCall; McCall; Lee; and Coleman. For critical work attempting to reframe understandings of settler colonialism beyond a white settler/Indigenous binary, see Wong; and Day.
10 See McCormack for an account of the waves of migration to what is now known as Japan and how "[t]he archipelago was profoundly transformed as a result" (4).

11 See, for example, Comfort and Okada's assertion that "[n]uclear engineers [in the US], many familiar with the design of the Fukushima Daiichi reactors that failed in this event, were eager to offer assistance, if needed" (259). Nuclear engineers in the US were "familiar" with the reactors because they were designed by General Electric (GE). Comfort and Okada's emphasis on feelings of "great concern, empathy, and dread" and the forms of charity provided by "[o]rdinary American citizens" (259) sidesteps the complicity of the US government and US corporations such as GE in promoting the use of nuclear power in Japan and elsewhere.

12 For a detailed analysis of "Operation Tomodachi" and its implications at the policy level in Japan, see Samuels, especially 20-23 and 80-109.

13 For Harris' account of the history of smallpox in what is now British Columbia, see 3-30, especially his observation that "[w]hen smallpox broke out in Victoria in 1862 and nervous [British] officials sent Natives [sic] home, a mechanism was at hand as never before for the diffusion of smallpox throughout the length and breadth of the Northwest Coast" (27).

14 See, for example, Marchand.

15 In the aftermath of March 11, such new social arrangements can be seen in the work of the Wa Wa Project, which has, through its newsletters, exhibitions, and other activities, focused on efforts to rebuild and regenerate communities in Tōhoku; see www.wawa.or.jp.

16 An important body of scholarship has begun to address this topic. See, for example, the essays collected in Klassen and Albo discussing the role of Canada as "empire's ally" in the war in Afghanistan; Klassen's account of Canada's foreign policy as "a class-based effort at *joining empire*" (6); and McCready's examination of the militarization of Canadian culture.

WORKS CITED

Ahn, Joonhong. "Environmental Contamination and Decontamination after Fukushima Daiichi Accident." *Reflections on the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Accident: Toward Social-Scientific Literacy and Engineering Resilience*. Ed. Joonhong Ahn et al. Heidelberg: Springer, 2015. 85-104. Print.

Allison, Anne. *Precarious Japan*. Durham: Duke UP, 2013. Print.

Beauregard, Guy. "Interwoven Temporalities: Reading Madeleine Thien's *Dogs at the Perimeter*." *Studies in Canadian Literature* 39.2 (2014): 169-89. Print.

Boyce, Joel. "Engrossing New Novel Captures Nature of Loss." Rev. of *A Tale for the Time Being*, by Ruth Ozeki. *Winnipeg Free Press*. 16 Mar. 2013. Web. 9 Oct. 2014.

Coleman, Daniel. "Indigenous Place and Diaspora Space: Of Literalism and Abstraction." *Settler Colonial Studies* 6.1 (2016): 61-76. Print.

Comfort, Louise, and Aya Okada. "Coping with Catastrophe: 'Black Swan' in Northeastern Japan, March 11, 2011." *Disaster Resiliency: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. Ed. Naim Kapucu et al. New York: Routledge, 2013. 258-70. Print.

Connelly, Sherryl. Rev. of *A Tale for the Time Being*, by Ruth Ozeki. *New York Daily News*. 3 Mar. 2013. Web. 9 Oct. 2014.

Davis, Lawrence-Minh Bùi. Rev. of *A Tale for the Time Being*, by Ruth Ozeki. *Asian American Literary Review* 5.2 (2014): n. pag. Web. 11 May 2015.

Day, Iyko. *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism*. Durham: Duke UP, 2016. Print.

Donaldson, Emily. Rev. of *A Tale for the Time Being*, by Ruth Ozeki. *Quill & Quire*. 1 May 2013. Web. 9 Oct. 2014.

"Dossier: Crisis of the Everyday/Everyday Crisis: Across Time in Japan." Spec. section of *boundary 2* 42.3 (2015): 19-199. Print.
Dua, Enakshi, Narda Razack, and Jody Nyasha Warner. "Race, Racism, and Empire: Reflections on Canada." *Social Justice* 32.4 (2005): 1-10. Print.
Fitz-Henry, Erin. "Rethinking 'Remoteness': The Space-Time of Corporate Causation." *Responsibility*. Ed. Ghassan Hage and Robyn Eckersley. Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 2012. 174-86. Print.
Gill, Tom, Brigitte Steger, and David H. Slater. "The 3.11 Disasters." *Japan Copes with Calamity.* 2nd ed. Ed. Tom Gill et al. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2015. 3-23. Print.
Grassi, Laurie. Rev. of *A Tale for the Time Being*, by Ruth Ozeki. *Chatelaine* 9 Mar. 2013. Web. 9 Oct. 2014.
Hage, Ghassan. *Alter-Politics: Critical Anthropology and the Radical Imagination*. Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 2015. Print.
Harris, Cole. *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change*. Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 1997. Print.
Jensen, Liz. Rev. of *A Tale for the Time Being*, by Ruth Ozeki. *The Guardian* 15 Mar. 2013. Web. 9 Oct. 2014.
Johnstone, Doug. Rev. of *A Tale for the Time Being*, by Ruth Ozeki. *The Independent* 9 Mar. 2013. Web. 9 Oct. 2014.
Kim, Christine, and Sophie McCall. Introduction. *Cultural Grammars of Nation, Diaspora, and Indigeneity in Canada*. Ed. Christine Kim, Sophie McCall, and Melina Baum Singer. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2012. 1-18. Print.
Kim, Jodi. *Ends of Empire: Asian American Critique and the Cold War*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2010. Print.
Kimoto, Takeshi. "Post-3/11 Literature: Two Writers from Fukushima." *World Literature Today* 86.1 (2012): 14-18. Print.
Klassen, Jerome. *Joining Empire: The Political Economy of the New Canadian Foreign Policy*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2014. Print.
Klassen, Jerome, and Greg Albo, eds. *Empire's Ally: Canada and the War in Afghanistan*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2013. Print.
Kohlhoff, Dean. *When the Wind Was a River: Aleut Evacuation in World War II*. Seattle: U of Washington P; Anchorage: Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association, 1995. Print.
Kohso, Sabu. "Constellations of the Fukushima Problematic: Socialization, Capitalism, and Struggle." *boundary 2* 42.3 (2015): 37-54. Print.
Kosaka, Kris. "Ozeki's Work Reflects Her Complex Identity." *Japan Times*. 23 Nov. 2013. Web. 9 Oct. 2014.
Lee, Christopher. "Asian Canadian Critical Practice as Commemoration." *Cultural Grammars of Nation, Diaspora, and Indigeneity in Canada*. Ed. Christine Kim, Sophie McCall, and Melina Baum Singer. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2012. 119-33. Print.
Luke, Elmer, and David Karashima, eds. *March Was Made of Yarn: Reflections on the Japanese Earthquake, Tsunami, and Nuclear Meltdown*. New York: Vintage, 2012. Print.
Marchand, Philip. Rev. of *A Tale for the Time Being*, by Ruth Ozeki. *National Post*. 22 Mar. 2013. Web. 9 Oct. 2014.
Matsunaga, Kyoko. "Before and After the Quake: Ruth L. Ozeki's Global Narrative in the Nuclear Age." *AALA Journal* [Kobe U, Japan] 20 (2014): 84-96. Print.
McCall, Sophie. "Diaspora and Nation in Métis Writing." *Cultural Grammars of Nation, Diaspora, and Indigeneity in Canada*. Ed. Christine Kim, Sophie McCall, and Melina Baum Singer. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2012. 21-41. Print.

McCormack, Gavan. Introduction. *Multicultural Japan: Palaeolithic to Postmodern*. Ed. Donald Denoon et al. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. 1-15. Print.
McCready, A. L. *Yellow Ribbons: The Militarization of National Identity in Canada*. Halifax: Fernwood, 2013. Print.
McGonegal, Julie. "The Politics of Redress in Post-9/11 Canada." *Joy Kogawa: Essays on Her Works*. Ed. Sheena Wilson. Toronto: Guernica, 2011. 71-99. Print.
Miki, Roy. *In Flux: Transnational Shifts in Asian Canadian Writing*. Edmonton: NeWest, 2011. Print.
Moore, Mary Ann. Rev. of *A Tale for the Time Being*, by Ruth Ozeki. *Herizons* 27.3 (2014): 37-38. Print.
Muto Ichiyo. "The Buildup of a Nuclear Armament Capability and the Postwar Statehood of Japan: Fukushima and the Genealogy of Nuclear Bombs and Power Plants." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 14.2 (2013): 171-212. Print.
Ozeki, Ruth. *A Tale for the Time Being*. New York: Viking, 2013. Print.
—. Foreword. *No-No Boy*. By John Okada. Seattle: U of Washington P, 2014. vii-xviii. Print.
Samuels, Richard J. *3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2013. Print.
Sato, Gayle K. "Lunchbox-Toolbox: GKS1350021 and Nuclear Engineers." *Reflections on the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Accident: Toward Social-Scientific Literacy and Engineering Resilience*. Ed. Joonhong Ahn et al. Heidelberg: Springer, 2015. 413-34. Print.
Schilling, Mark. "In the Cinematic Wake of the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster." *Japan Times*. 4 Mar. 2015. Web. 15 Mar. 2015.
Slater, David H. "Urgent Ethnography." *Japan Copes with Calamity.* 2nd ed. Ed. Tom Gill et al. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2015. 25-49. Print.
Smith, Wendy. Rev. of *A Tale for the Time Being*, by Ruth Ozeki. *Washington Post.* 10 Mar. 2013. Web. 9 Oct. 2014.
Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Readings*. London: Seagull, 2014. Print.
Tran, John L. "The Problems and Pleasure of Publishing the Horrors of the 3/11 Tsunami." *Japan Times*. 7 Mar. 2015. Web. 15 Mar. 2015.
Wong, Rita. "Decolonizasian: Reading Asian and First Nations Relations in Literature." *Canadian Literature* 199 (2008): 158-80. Print.

John Reibetanz

Lotte Reiniger's Magic Shadows*

You couldn't call them scissors in her hands   if the clashed
swords of scissors slash and shear   her blades whispered through a void
of thick black paper   their strokings calling up paddlers

and plodders   gallopers and swoopers   spelling lions
from mane-shaped cursive sweeps   Baghdad minarets from strips
of lacy trim   and Cinderella's poverty from

a ragged hem   her art not merely deft fingerwork
but transmigration of souls   her own into stone rounds
of tracery or the muscular vertical of

an eagle taking wing   and the beholder's into
a genesis that turned tapered shadows to rosy
flesh of thigh and flank   grey stripes to sunlight   and the gap

between pose and pose to limbs in action   while she fled
the Nazis' impenetrable shade   the stick-figures
pushed into ovens   the metal silhouettes of tanks

treading Aladdin's sands   her most moving creations
weightless not with absence but with the magical flights
of bodies wholly grounded in the passage of light.

* Lotte Reiniger (1899-1981) invented silhouette animation, cutting out shadow figures and sets for silent films (*The Adventures of Prince Achmed*, *The Magic Flute*) and for her many short features based on Grimms' fairy tales.

Helen Hok-Sze Leung

Asia/Canada Reframed
Perspectives from a Transpacific Film Location

In *The Interview* (2014), the controversial political comedy that sparked the hacking scandal at Sony Pictures, Seth Rogen and James Franco's characters confer next to a giant statue of the late North Korean leader Kim Jong-il and his children. In *Finding Mr. Right* (2013), one of the all-time highest-grossing domestic films in China, Chinese star Tang Wei swaggers into Seattle airport showing off her character's flashy designer bling. In *Everything Will Be* (2014), a documentary funded by the National Film Board of Canada, director Julia Kwan's unassuming camera follows the inhabitants of Vancouver's Chinatown with quiet grace as they go about their daily business. In *Lunch With Charles* (2001), the first official Hong Kong-Canada coproduction and Leo Award winner, Hong Kong star Theresa Lee and Vancouver actor Nicholas Lea drive across British Columbia's spectacular wilderness, their characters bickering and bonding with each other on a road trip to Banff.

At first sight, this montage appears to comprise scenes that are randomly selected from films that have very little in common: they were financed by investors or state bodies from different countries, made in markedly different genres and aesthetic styles, and marketed to distinct audiences. Viewers who are Vancouver residents, however, would quickly recognize that these films were all shot in their city. As a location, Vancouver is used very differently by each film: it is skillfully disguised as Pyongyang for *The Interview*, casually passed as Seattle in *Finding Mr. Right*, lovingly evoked through a changing neighbourhood in *Everything Will Be*, and creatively deployed as a contrast to its surrounding wilderness in *Lunch With Charles*. Vancouver's prolific character as a film location is well documented. Writer Michael Turner's two-part moving-image series *On Location 1* and *On Location 2*, which compiles titles and scenes from Vancouver-made films, highlights the city's versatility

as a location.[1] The Vancouver edition of the *World Film Location* series, edited by Rachel Walls, details a history of Vancouver-made films dating back to the 1950s while highlighting the exponential growth of the industry in the past two decades. There is, however, a distinctive trait in the montage of recent films I open with here, which signals a newer development that has not yet inspired much discussion. All of the films mentioned above facilitate flows and exchanges between Asia and Canada, whether through the employment of Vancouver's Asian Canadian actors to produce images of Asia for Hollywood, the provision of Canadian resources such as location sites and a creative labour force for Chinese investments and consumption, the documentation on screen of how Asian migration impacts a neighbourhood in a Canadian city, or the collaboration of industry talents between Hong Kong and Vancouver through state-sanctioned audiovisual coproduction treaty provisions.[2]

As examples of cinematic transactions across the Asia/Canada axis through Vancouver as a film location, these films signal the need for a new transnational framework to approach Asian Canadian filmmaking practices. Within the established terms of reference in current articulations of Asian Canadian cinema, only one amongst the aforementioned films—*Everything Will Be*—counts as an Asian Canadian film. It is the only film in the group that is made by an Asian Canadian director and that features content about Asian Canadian experiences. It is a publicly funded documentary with a non-commercial aesthetic that aligns the film more closely with Asian Canadian cultural activism. The notion of Asian Canadian cinema as defined within these parameters performs important critical functions but it also has some significant limitations. In his schematic genealogy of the ongoing transformation of Asian Canadian as a signifier, Roy Miki posits four pivotal moments in the history of Asian Canadian cultural politics, beginning with: the cultural homogeneity enacted through national agencies such as the Canada Council and the National Film Board that results in racialized exclusion; followed by the multiculturalism debates from which critiques of exclusion and concerns for social justice emerge; to the ascendency of the discourse of globalization, neoliberalism and the commodification of culture; and more recently, the "uncertain and unpredictable" transnational flows that occur under ongoing processes of "highly indeterminate and volatile globalization" (265-66). The current definition of Asian Canadian cinema is most effective in highlighting concerns from the first two—arguably national—moments. However, to analyze concerns arising from the latter two moments, especially the unpredictable impact of globalization, a

more expansive framework is needed to accentuate the many transnational aspects of Asian Canadian filmmaking.

In this article, I examine how Asian Canadian filmmaking has been defined in primarily authorial terms, and as part of a broader Asian Canadian cultural activism. I consider some of the limits of this approach and explore recent transnational analyses in film studies to reframe Asian Canadian filmmaking. As a case study, I examine filmmaking practices in the transpacific city of Vancouver. The focus on a location reveals how global, regional, and local forces across the Asia/Canada axis produce a distinctive filmmaking culture that is not defined by authorship. I also propose the study of film location as a possible methodology for Asian Canadian cultural critique. While the current framework for Asian Canadian cultural critique has focused on the history of anti-racist activism, the emergence of diasporic identity and community formation, as well as resistant art and cultural productions, there are concurrently critical interrogations of "Asian Canadian" as a coherent signifier, examining its internal contradictions, its history of ruptures, and the generative potential of these complexities. For example, in tracing the emergence of Asian Canadian identity, Chris Lee notes the foundational "instability" of this identity while also calling attention to how "extraordinarily generative" such instability is as a catalyst for "a flourishing body of work by critics, activists, and artists" (31-32). In her study of the formation of Asian Canadian literature, Larissa Lai characterizes the designation "Asian Canadian" as "porous" (5), a signifier that is "not a consistent category, nor one that develops in a generally progressive manner, but rather one that does different kinds of social, political, and literary labour depending on context and historical moment" (33). Roy Miki goes even further to suggest that "Asian Canadian functions in a kind of virtual mode with always-provisional references to socially constituted groups and . . . has no essential reason to be" (266). He argues it might "sever its connection to Canadian to become Asian" or "come to signify Canadian alone without the Asian qualifier" but would nonetheless "remain the floating signifier it has always been" (266). In a spirit similar to these interrogations, I tap into the generative potential of destabilizing what "Asian Canadian" signifies in filmmaking by examining what has been left out in the current critical discourse and expanding its capacity for transnational analyses.

Asian Canadian Filmmaking Outside the Frame

In "Tracking Shots: Mapping the Asian Canadian Filmscape," Alice Shih notes the *absence* of Asian Canadian filmmaking until the 1960s, the fact of

which is a powerful critique of the cultural homogeneity of Canadian cinema and its long history of racialized exclusion. Shih's main goals in the article are to account for the "seventy-year gap between the introduction of film in Canada and the first examples of Asian Canadian filmmaking," and to ensure the "continued production, dissemination, and visibility" (38) of Asian Canadian cinema. Drawing a close parallel between the history of Asian Canadian filmmaking and that of diasporic identity formation, she locates the nascent moment of Asian Canadian filmmaking in the late 1960s and early 1970s, pointing to television documentary work by Adrienne Clarkson and Jesse Nishihata, and to Keith Locke's early experimental feature films as "pioneering" works.[3] Shih describes the 1980s and 1990s as a "planting and germinating period" (41), producing works that reflected different generations of migrant experience:

> These films were usually made by struggling first-generation Asian immigrants, or roots-searching second- and third-generation Asians. Other second- and third-generation Asian filmmakers who had completely assimilated into mainstream society produced works that did not present visible Asian content at all. Stories that went beyond such dominant concerns as racial discrimination, immigration, and issues of identity to explore other problems and issues and themes gradually emerged. (41-42)

While Shih notes the diversity of voices and styles of these films, she also views their non-commercial and experimental style as a shared trait that results from the filmmakers' Asian background: "Yet their stories are always personally significant, uniquely Canadian with an Asian flavour; and never genre pieces" (42).

The history of this "filmscape" thus follows a developmental narrative: beginning with a minority group's exclusion from both participation and representation in national filmmaking, followed by an emergent diasporic consciousness that leads to more inclusive representations of migrant experiences, culminating into Asian Canadian filmmakers' participation in the national conversation "beyond" minority concerns. This narrative also aligns Asian Canadian filmmaking with non-mainstream aesthetics ("never genre pieces") and activist goals on the one hand, while associating mainstream culture with assimilation and "non-visible" Asian content on the other.

Shih's account is similar in spirit to Xiaoping Li's broader mapping of Asian Canadian cultural activism in *Voices Rising*. Li documents the emergence of Asian Canadian identity through the production of, and participation in, cultural practices, of which filmmaking is discussed as an important part. Li understands Asian Canadian identity as a consciously constructed category

and a product of resistant politics. It aims at reclaiming subjectivities that have been erased or marginalized by racism while projecting a new identity that is neither English nor French into mainstream Canadian society (26). Li regards cultural activism to be an essential part of this narrative of resistance and empowerment. In her account, Asian Canadian cultural production, including filmmaking, forms part of a larger social movement that works towards community building and social change.

Both Shih's and Li's narratives provide important documentation of how hitherto marginal voices negotiate institutional, social, and cultural exclusion. They also highlight the inextricable relation between filmmaking, migrant experience, and resistant aesthetics. However, both accounts risk reproducing what Larissa Lai, in the context of Asian Canadian literature, has cautioned as a "linear and heroic history" that overlooks ruptures and contradictions (1). Further, they promulgate a primarily authorial understanding of filmmaking. Asian Canadian films are defined by the diasporic identities of their directors, whose migrant experience and oppositional consciousness are perceived to be organically linked to the content of their films, which presumably must articulate "the Asian Canadian experience." Such an approach regards film as primarily an aesthetic text and overlooks—even implicitly devalues—filmmaking's "industrial" aspects, which are by nature collective, frequently transnational, and inextricable from commercial concerns. Most film productions—even the lowest-budget independent features—involve multiple sources of financing; material resources such as locations and equipment; below-the-line labour from gaffers and camera operators to drivers and caterers; as well as all levels of creative labour, including actors, editors, and the post-production crew. To approach Asian Canadian filmmaking as primarily the expression of a director's cultural activism and resistant consciousness glosses over less readily recognized forms of Asian Canadian cultural labour as well as other forms of flows and exchanges across Asia and Canada that are mediated through filmmaking practices. It weakens the capacity for Asian Canadian as a term of analysis to explore the effects of globalization, the unpredictability of its various transnational pathways, and the volatile—and not always simply oppositional—relations between resistance and consumption, commercial interests and cultural investments, global homogenization and local specificity.

For instance, going back to the examples I raised at the beginning of the article, *The Interview* and *Finding Mr. Right* are made by US and Chinese filmmakers, respectively, but they rely significantly on Asian Canadian

resources and creative labour to produce transnationally circulated images of Asia and Asians. While these images may not be politically oppositional, and the economic conditions under which they are produced often involve inequality and exploitation, such film productions also provide ample economic and creative opportunities for Asian Canadian cultural workers at the locations of production. Paul Bae, a Vancouver-based writer and actor who plays one of Kim Jong-un's uncles in *The Interview*, recalls how the film "did wonders for Vancouver's tiny Korean acting community" (qtd. in O'Keefe n. pag.). Similarly, while *Finding Mr. Right* was made for the mainstream Chinese market, the film was serviced by line producers Shan Tan and Michael Parker, whose Vancouver-based production company, Holiday Pictures, has long maintained a balance between providing location services for Asian films and producing local independent films, including the works of Asian Canadian filmmakers such as Julia Kwan and Desiree Lim.[4] *Lunch With Charles* provides an even more complicated example. The film is directed by Michael Parker, who is not Asian Canadian but whose involvement in Holiday Pictures has facilitated collaborations between Asian and Canadian film projects for decades. The film itself was enabled by a state-negotiated audiovisual coproduction treaty that brought together investments as well as acting, writing, and producing talents from the entertainment cultures of Hong Kong and Vancouver. Quite aside from its content (which does tell the story of the adventures of two Hong Kong immigrants during a road trip in the British Columbia interior), then, the film also facilitates and enacts Asian Canadian encounters at various levels of its own production. Thus, even though these films would not fit within the Asian Canadian filmmaking traditions mapped out by Shih and Li in 2007, the flows and exchanges they facilitate across Asia and Canada provide a useful point of departure to develop a transnational understanding of "Asian Canadian" filmmaking that is broader in scope and more heterogeneous in style, content, and political significance.

Transnational Shifts in Film Studies

In film studies, there has been a shift towards transnational critical frameworks, and scholars have already begun to speak of a "transnational turn" (Khoo, Smaill, and Yue 12). The shift has been further accentuated by the establishment of the journal *Transnational Cinemas* in 2010, and by major events such as the Transnational Cinema/Media Studies Conference held in Abu Dhabi in 2014. Amongst the burgeoning range of approaches,

Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim highlight three main lines of inquiry that deploy transnational frameworks in film analyses. First, the transnational is harnessed as a critique of the notion of "national cinema" and analytical frameworks that take national parameters for granted. Such critiques tend to focus away from the film as text to address issues around production, distribution, and reception (9). Second, the transnational is interpreted primarily as a regional formation that shares cultural, linguistic, political, or other affinities (9). Third, the transnational is explored through diaspora, exilic, and postcolonial formations, with a focus on issues of racism and colonial histories as well as resistance and oppositional politics (9-10). Wary of transnational analyses that homogenize differences or gloss over influences exerted by or through the nation-state, Higbee and Lim advocate a "critical transnationalism" that remains alert to both the complexity of transnational practices and the persistence of national forces (17-18). They point out the importance of specifying where in the filmmaking process transnational movement occurs, as well as ways in which transnational exchanges are in negotiation with national forces, "from cultural policy to financial sources, from the multiculturalism of difference to how it reconfigures the nation's image of itself" (18). Furthermore, they point out the importance of approaching the transnational not only as boundary-crossing between nations and national cinemas, but also as flows and exchanges across regional, translocal, or other emergent forms of clusters and networks (18). As I will explore in detail through my case study of Vancouver, Higbee and Lim's insistence on specifying how transnational, national, and local forces impact on particular aspects of the filmmaking process as well as the attention they bring to emergent forms of clusters and networks in filmmaking are crucial for developing a more complex picture of Asian Canadian filmmaking.

Another transnational inquiry in film studies that is especially relevant to examining Asian Canadian filmmaking is a recent study of transnational Australian cinema by Olivia Khoo, Belinda Smaill, and Audrey Yue, which provides a cogent example of how a "critical transnationalism" reframes the study of diasporic cinema. Similar to the author-centred designation of Asian Canadian cinema discussed earlier, Asian Australian cinema has also typically been defined as "a body of films directed by filmmakers of Asian descent who are identified through diasporic ties to Australia" (1). With the broader aim of reframing Australian cinema in transnational terms, Khoo, Smaill, and Yue argue that "foregrounding the connections and engagements

between Australia and Asia as these have shifted over time" is a necessary requirement (14). They thus view films by Asian diasporic filmmakers not as discrete forms of cultural production but as part of a larger transnational filmscape that also includes "Australian films featuring images of Asia and Asians, films produced by Australians working in Asia's film industries or addressed at Asian audiences, as well as Asian films that utilize Australian resources, including locations and personnel" (1). This wider framing of Asian Australian cinema approaches filmmaking from all levels of its production, distribution, and reception. It pays attention to "different forms of encounters" in the cinema: "between individuals, populations, communities"; or "between audiences and texts" (2). Transnational flows across Asia and Australia are thus examined not only in the authorship, content, and style of the films, but also much more broadly in economic dynamics and trade policies that affect financing and coproduction possibilities, migration policies and national security concerns that affect how images of Asia are negotiated on screen and received off screen, and creative industry policies that affect the development of film-related resources and creative labour in cities and regions.

In studies of Asian Canadian cinema, comparisons are often made with the Asian American context. In Shih's article, the discussion of early Asian Canadian cinema is largely a comparative portrait with Asian American cinema, which, she notes, predates its Canadian counterpart by many years despite roughly contemporaneous patterns of Chinese settlement (38). There are many close interconnections between Asian American and Asian Canadian cultural production, as well as between the two countries' histories of Asian migrant and diasporic identity formation. However, with regard to the film industry, Canada and Australia are closer to each other than to the US, whose film industry has historically exerted a hegemonic influence globally through Hollywood. By contrast, Canada and Australia occupy the position of "junior partners," a term from coproduction studies that Audrey Yue uses to describe Australia's marginal relation to the rising hegemony of China's film industry (187). It is a term that is applicable also to both Australia's and Canada's relation to Hollywood. As junior partners, the film industries in both Australia and Canada provide services and resources for Hollywood while also striving to lessen their dependence through cultivating alternative partnerships with film industries in Asia. The expanded framework being developed for examining Asian Australian cinema is therefore useful for illuminating the transnational trajectories of Asian Canadian filmmaking in junior partner relation to both Hollywood and Asian film industries.

Drawing from these transnational approaches, I propose an alternative framework for Asian Canadian filmmaking that takes as its point of departure not the diasporic identity of filmmakers but rather the pathways of mobility across the Asia/Canada axis facilitated by a film location. While I use Vancouver as my case study, it is not the only location that facilitates these transnational flows. Other thriving filmmaking cities such as Toronto, Edmonton, and Calgary would provide comparable yet also distinctive examples. Whether it is Toronto's established relation with Bollywood as a site of both production and consumption (Longfellow 85-104) or the little known role of the North West Centre (the regional office of the National Film Board in Edmonton) in fostering a thriving group of Asian Albertan documentary filmmakers (Ouchi 173-85), or Calgary's recent investment in a brand new film production facility to compete for foreign productions ("$28M Calgary" n. pag.), a focus on location provides an opportunity to study how a confluence of global, regional, and local factors produce distinctive filmmaking practices across the Asia/Canada axis. One of Vancouver's distinctive characteristics as a film location is the symbiotic relation between its marginal position vis-à-vis Central Canada, its proximity to the US west coast, and its transpacific ties to Asia.

The recent emergence of transpacific studies provides an analytical model to examine with more specificity the transnational forces that are at work within the regional imaginary of the Pacific. Variously imagined as the Pacific Basin, the Pacific Rim, and Asia Pacific, the region as a "space of interaction" has continued to facilitate "relationships of conquest, commerce, conversion, and collaboration" amongst peoples in the region (Nguyen and Hoskins 2). The term *transpacific* refers not to an area or region but to what Viet Thanh Nguyen and Janet Hoskins articulate as a "contact zone" across which peoples, cultures, capital, and ideas travel, and which may result in "the possibility of collaborations, alliances, and friendships between subjugated, minoritized, and marginalized peoples who might fashion a counter-hegemony to the hegemony of the United States, China, Japan, and other regional powers" (3). Vancouver's development into a transpacific contact zone results from its migration history, which represents a culmination of what historian Henry Yu calls Canada's "national reorientation towards an engagement with the Pacific rather than the Atlantic world" (1011). The 2011 Census shows that 40% of Metro Vancouver residents are foreign-born, amongst whom two out of three are originally from Asia (Metro Vancouver 1). In a recent report prepared for Citizenship and Immigration Canada,

geographer Daniel Hiebert projects that by 2031, 59% of the population of Metro Vancouver will be predominantly Chinese, South Asians, Filipinos, Koreans, and West Asians (n. pag.). These rapidly intensifying migrant ties to Asia reposition Vancouver's remoteness from the nation's political, financial, and cultural centres toward the city's proximity, in travel distance and time zones as well as social and economic ties, to Asia. As a film location, Vancouver has already successfully leveraged its proximity to the US west coast as a competitive advantage vis-à-vis the much more established film production sites of Montreal and Toronto. It has, moreover, done so by promoting a thriving location service industry while simultaneously maintaining a local independent film scene that is both constrained *and* enabled by the former. Just as Vancouver has succeeded as a flourishing hub for Hollywood productions, it is now aspiring to become the same for the growing film industries in Asia. At the same time, a distinctive west coast film culture persists as part of the city's vibrant counter-culture scene. Through this triangulated prism, we are able to see Asian Canadian filmmaking from a perspective that highlights its transnational character.

From Hollywood North to the Vancouver Asian

Since the globalization of Hollywood's production practices during the 1970s (see Miller et al.), the model of runaway productions—the making of US films and television shows outside of the country—has created massive demands for "location industries" all over the world. Vancouver was one of the earliest and most successful cities at capitalizing on this transnational production culture. Dubbed "Hollywood North," Vancouver's model of location service has become a template for other cities to emulate (Tinic 2). In Mike Gasher's study of the history of British Columbia's film industry, he points out that provincial policies have traditionally approached culture industries as more "industry" than "culture" (24), to the extent that the film industry's production model actually resembles traditional resource extraction. It is highly dependent on foreign investment and primarily responsible for producing raw materials (scenery and below-the-line labour) that are processed by out-of-province producers. The final product (Hollywood films and television shows) is then imported back and consumed in Canada (Gasher 44). However, far from being simply an exploited victim under Hollywood's production imperialism, the service sector of the film industry has also *enabled* the existence of a local cinema. Due to the concentration of Canada's film industries in Ontario and Quebec, and the failure of national film strategies

during the 1970s-1980s to support regional development (Gasher 66-67), there was a lack of cultural infrastructure and support for developing creative talents in Vancouver prior to the location industry boom. The prominent role of Vancouver's film production as a Hollywood satellite industry, in conjunction with success in related creative sectors such as video games and digital media, has brought about urban revitalization (Hutton and Tung 139-60), the convergence and clustering of diverse creative industries (Barnes and Coe 251-77), and the concentration of a highly skilled creative workforce at all levels of film production and post-production. Serra Tinic observes that Vancouver's success as a location city for Hollywood is double-edged: "It absorbs labor and resources while simultaneously creating opportunities for local producers to fund and distribute their own programs independently" (13). In other words, the very labour, resources, and location sites that are developed for Hollywood have also nurtured a parallel scene of local productions that has persisted both in spite of *and* because of Hollywood's hegemonic presence.

The industry's heavy dependence on Hollywood, however, renders it vulnerable to competition from other cities nationally and globally. It also remains susceptible to external factors such as the vagaries of the exchange rate and protectionist US domestic policies, both of which have threatened to undermine Vancouver's competitive advantage. Following trends in other sectors, the film industry has sought diversification by cultivating relations with Asia, especially China, which has a relatively untapped and expanding source of film financing and markets. Stephanie DeBoer has identified the emergence of a new pan-Asian coproduction culture—dubbed "Asiawood" by *Newsweek* as early as 2001 ("The Birth" n. pag.)—that can rival Hollywood. By positioning itself as Asiawood's "gateway" to North America, Vancouver aspires to replicate its unequal but thriving relation to Hollywood vis-à-vis this emergent film region in Asia. China's rising dominance as a film production centre is producing a still-evolving set of new dynamics, both regionally in Asia and globally in competition with Hollywood. DeBoer's study portrays China in a complex role in this developing regional network (153). As DeBoer suggests, China provides both an essential source of investments and a viable market, without which no Asian film could be globally competitive. She notes, however, that it is also feared as an expansionist force akin to Hollywood that is poised to destroy local and regional cultural expressions (153). In Chinese-language film criticism, the emergence of a new term *Huallywood* (which puns on the Chinese word *hua,* denoting "Chinese") underlies the industry's aspiration for Hollywood-like economic and cultural hegemony as well

as the inevitably intertwined nature of two global powers (Fu, Indelicato, and Qiu 48-53). Despite this unequal power dynamic between China and its Asian coproduction partners, DeBoer argues that the very collaborative nature of coproduction offers possibilities for alternative images, narratives, and networks to emerge (181-82). In Audrey Yue's study of China-Australia coproductions, she finds that in spite of Australia's "junior partner" role, the transnational nature of coproductions has led to "competing national logics" (189) that result not only in "post-identity interrogation" in the content of Australian films, but also in new partnership networks, an internationalization of Asian Australian talent, and the emergence of a cluster of special effects industries in South Australia (200).

In Canada, there are three options for collaborating with foreign partners: official coproductions that are governed by existent audiovisual coproduction treaties, unofficial co-ventures, and the provision of production services. While there are official agreements in place with many Asian countries including China, Japan, Singapore, and India, the number of official Asia-Canada coproductions in British Columbia is relatively low.[5] Outside of official coproductions, however, there are many other types of initiatives that cultivate Asia-Canada partnership possibilities. Some efforts aim for an expansion of markets for the location services the city is already providing for Hollywood. Eastern Gate Productions, for example, was set up by producers with longstanding experience working with Hollywood productions who now specialize in providing Chinese productions with the same full package of "end-to-end" services. As previously mentioned, Holiday Pictures has been providing location services for Asian productions since the 1990s. Its most high-profile work includes the Jackie Chan vehicle *Rumble in the Bronx* in 1995 and the Chinese box-office hit *Finding Mr. Right* in 2013. As a company that also produces local independent films, Holiday Pictures is a micro example of the double-edged effect that Tinic attributes to Vancouver's film industry in general. The company provides local resources and labour for mainstream transnational productions. Economic benefits from those productions in turn provide the company with opportunities to nurture and distribute local films.[6] In a different way but with similar aspirations, Vancouver Film School (VFS)'s joint venture with the University of Shanghai represents an attempt to secure new financing and markets for Vancouver's creative labour force. At the new facility in Shanghai, which was opened in 2014, VFS provides the majority of the teaching staff, and plays a significant role in building the infrastructure and training a skilled

workforce for the nascent film industry in Shanghai. Aside from providing location services and exporting technical and creative expertise, there are also efforts to secure Chinese financing directly for Canadian films. For example, the China Canada Gateway For Film Script Competition, launched at the Whistler Film Festival in 2012, aims to match pitches by Canadian filmmakers with Chinese production companies that are interested in financing North American films. The increased participation of Canadian filmmakers in Asian industry events such as the Hong Kong International Film and TV Market (FILMART) and the Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) show similar efforts to look for alternative sources of funding in Asia.

Overall, these initiatives aim at both expanding the service sector to Asian film industries as well as securing new financing and markets for local film productions, even if the former would inevitably be disproportionately much larger in scale than the latter. As much as "industry" is often pitched against "culture" and "mainstream" against "independent," these two sides of Vancouver's film industry are symbiotic rather than antagonistic. Film journalist David Spaner even sees this "polarization" between the service industry sector and the stubborn permanence of an independent film culture as a distinct character of the city, in the same way that the urbanity of downtown Vancouver is minutes' drive way from the wilderness, or that an internationally celebrated punk scene thrives within a culturally middlebrow city (16).

Su-Anne Yeo's sketch of the "Vancouver Asian," which she articulates as part of a "west coast film culture" (114), also, in my view, highlights this double-edged or polarized character. Yeo portrays an Asian Canadian presence in Vancouver's film culture that is characterized by its transnational affinities and its difference from Toronto and Montreal. One example is the distinct documentary style of Vancouver's Asian Canadian filmmakers. Yeo points out that while visible minorities were historically encouraged to document rather than fictionalize their lives and that, as a legacy of John Grierson (the first commissioner of the National Film Commission), documentary realism is a dominant national style, Vancouver's filmmakers are under far less pressure to conform to these conventions because of the city's relative isolation from the established cultural institutions concentrated in Toronto and Montreal (115-17). From Yeo's perspective, the experimental and hybrid style of Ann Marie Fleming's or Karen Lee's documentary works, for instance, stem at least in part from the freedom afforded by their location in a film city that has historically been snubbed and marginalized by the nation's purported cultural centres.[7] Interpreted thus, I would

argue that these works may well have more affinity with the punk-inspired experimental aesthetics of Vancouver filmmakers such as Larry Kent and Lynne Stopkewich than with the films of Asian Canadian filmmakers from Toronto or Montreal.

Vancouver's location also prompts Yeo to consider cultural workers other than film directors. She points to a sizeable group of working actors of Asian descent who are active across the transpacific cluster of Vancouver, Los Angeles, and various Asian film industries (120). This phenomenon has also been documented in Michael Parker's film *Hong Kong Express* (2005), which follows a group of Hong Kong actresses, including Theresa Lee and Christy Chung, whose professional trajectories move across this regional cluster during the 1990s. Andrew Ooi, a film producer and manager whose Vancouver-based company Echelon Talent Management specializes in managing these mobile careers, predicts that such movement will be even more common in the future (Seno n. pag.). As transpacific co-ventures proliferate, there will be an increasingly diverse group of cultural workers, from actors and producers to various production and post-production crews, who will traverse similar trajectories across the transpacific cluster.

Furthermore, there is a similar "Vancouver Asian" character to the city's film festival culture. Both the Vancouver International Film Festival (VIFF) and the Vancouver Queer Film Festival (VQFF), the city's two biggest film festivals, are renowned for their respective histories of Asian film programming. The "Dragons and Tigers" program at VIFF was started in 1985 and is credited with presenting the "largest annual exhibition of Pacific Asian films outside Asia" (VIFF n. pag.). It provides a significant transpacific venue for filmmakers, film scholars and critics, and industry professionals in the region to forge connections and collaborations. VQFF's "Spotlight on Asia" or "Focus on Asia" programming has been a regular feature at the festival for over a decade.[8] A diverse range of queer Asian films, including mainstream Asian feature films with queer themes, experimental videos by queer video artists in Asia, and documentaries on queer Asian lives are regularly screened in the festival.

In sum, conceiving of a place-based "Vancouver Asian" film culture, as distinct from an author-centred definition of Asian Canadian cinema, calls our attention to a confluence of local and global factors, which include the city's migration history, its distance from central Canada's cultural institutions, its proximity to Hollywood, its countercultural lineage, its mobile industry careers across the Pacific west coast and Asia, as well as its

diverse film festival culture and film-going demographic. It expands our interpretation of what "counts" as Asian Canadian cultural work, highlights regional specificity, and reveals the complex character of transnational flows.

Location as Method

These global/local conduits of filmmaking in Vancouver also complicate our understanding of the relation between complicity and resistance. They show that being positioned within an unequal relationship as a "junior partner" to hegemonic production regimes—be they centred in Hollywood or in Beijing—can result in unpredictable possibilities for local developments. Tinic has argued that Vancouver, as one of the so-called "second-tier cities," is able to be simultaneously the most creative and the most entrepreneurial by extracting resources from the "first-tier" global cities that it services (17). As a film location, Vancouver has had to eradicate its own identity by playing other places, from Pyongyang to Seattle and every other place in between. The city is marketed by the British Columbia Film Commission as a generic "no place" or a versatile "any place" that offers "a worlds of looks" and "sceneries from nine different climate zones" (1). At the same time, this service industry has also nurtured a creative workforce that has the skills, aspirations, and opportunities to (re)produce the city in a different light. While there have been discussions about the cultural ramifications of Vancouver as a film location from diverse perspectives, such as Colin Brown's historical account (Walls 6-7), Kamala Todd's critique from an Indigenous viewpoint (Walls 8-9), and Lindsay Steenberg's analysis of the city's role on crime television (Walls 92-3), there is perhaps no better embodiment of the issue than Tony Zhou's 2015 short film *Vancouver Never Plays Itself*. The film is a skillfully edited and wittily narrated montage of Vancouver's various roles as a location (including scenes from both Hollywood and Asian films such as *The Interview*, *Fifty Shades of Grey*, *Underworld, Finding Mr. Right*, *Rumble in the Bronx*, and many others). As Zhou laments the service industry's ruthless erasure of his hometown on screen, he also showcases the technical expertise and creative labour that make such erasure possible. Demonstrating the skillful use of the establishing shot, the placing of props, the manipulation of lighting and camera angles, post-production visual effects, and versatile editing, the film is unwittingly also demonstrating the filmmaking expertise that has been nurtured and developed by the service industry.

At the end of the short film, Zhou's narration pays homage to the "local movement of films and television shows where Vancouver does play itself."

It connects the filmmaker's experiences "as a child of immigrants who mostly explored the city on foot" with the need for Vancouver to play itself, from different angles and as setting rather than location. The lovingly made film gets to the heart of the conundrum of Vancouver as a transpacific film location: it is at once exploitative and productive. The economic benefits as well as the technical and creative expertise that result from the production of location service, in combination with the service industry's inherent cultural exploitation of the city and the concomitant anxiety it induces, make a film like Zhou's possible. While Zhou's film would obviously be cited as an example of Asian Canadian filmmaking because of its filmmaker's diasporic identity, it is in my view more productively understood as an example of a "Vancouver Asian" film culture. Much more than simply the expression of a filmmaker's migrant experience, the film embodies the entangled transnational and local trajectories of a film location, the price exacted on it by globalization, as well as the possibilities and reflections of home and identity that are nurtured in its wake.

Transnational methodologies in film studies provide ample possibilities for expanding the critical framework of Asian Canadian filmmaking. My focus on Vancouver as a film location provides one possible approach to consider the flows and exchanges across the transpacific axis as well as the unpredictable dynamics of a city's participation in a globalized regime of film production. As both an art form and an industry, film is especially suited to transnational analyses that examine a broad range of issues from policy to aesthetics. As globalization and transnational forces have ever more intense impact on literary and other artistic productions, insights from film studies are also timely and relevant to Asian Canadian cultural critique in general.

NOTES

1 Michael Turner made two short films, respectively entitled *On Location 1: Elvy Del Bianco's Annotated Film Collection* and *On Location 2: Four Double Bills*, for the exhibition *WE: Vancouver – 12 Manifestos for the* City, presented at the Vancouver Art Gallery from February 12 to May 1, 2011. The first film is composed of synopses and title sequences of 167 films shot in Vancouver, while the second film edits together exterior scenes from eight well-known Vancouver-made feature films.

2 Audiovisual coproduction treaties refer to the agreements that govern the terms of coproductions, defined and administered by Telefilm Canada as "joint film and television productions that are shared between two or more countries." For details of existent international treaties, see: https://www.telefilm.ca/en/coproductions/coproductions/agreements.

3 While Adrienne Clarkson did not make her first feature-length film until *Artemisia* in 1992, she played a prominent role in the production of television documentary programs that were broadcast on the CBC during the 1970s, including *Take Thirty* and *The Fifth Estate*. Jessica Nishihata's *The Inquiry Film: A Report on the Mackenzie Pipeline Inquiry* (1977) won a Canadian Film Award for Best Documentary, while Keith Locke's *Flights of Frenzy* (1969) and *Everything Everywhere Again Alive* (1975) were notable works in the experimental genre.
4 Holiday Pictures produced Julia Kwan's award-winning first feature *Eve and the Fire Horse* (2005) and Desiree Lim's queer comedy *Floored By Love*, which was first broadcast on CHUM television as part of the *Eight Stories About Love* anthology series (2005).
5 Detailed figures for the annual number of coproductions in each region are available from the Telefilm Canada coproduction directory: https://www.telefilm.ca/en/coproductions/coproduction-directories/coproduction-directories.
6 For a list of the company's productions, see http://www.holidaypictures.ca/Holiday_Pictures/Productions.html.
7 See, for example, the documentary feature *The Magical Life of Long Tak Sam* (2003) by Ann Marie Fleming and the experimental biography *Comrade Dad* (2006) by Karen Lee.
8 Wayne Yung has spoken about the festival through his personal experience as a gay Asian Canadian filmmaker and the festival's "pro-active strategy to diversify at the organization level" (Chang 262). For examples of the festival's Asian programming, see the "South Asian Spotlight" program in 2004, the "Spotlight on Asia" series in 2005, the "Focus on Asian Voices" program in 2009, and the "Focus on India" program in 2013 (VQFF n. pag.).

WORKS CITED

"$28M Calgary Film Centre Celebrates Grand Opening." *CBC News Calgary* 19 May 2016. Web. 29 May 2016.

Barnes, Trevor, and Neil M. Coe. "Vancouver as Media Cluster: The Cases of Video Games and Film/TV." *Media Clusters: Spatial Agglomeration and Content Capabilities*. Ed. Charlie Karlsson and Robert G. Picard. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2011. 251-77. Print.

British Columbia Film Commission. *A World of Looks*. Vancouver: BC Film Commission, 2012. Print.

Chang, Elaine, ed. *Reel Asian: Asian Canada on Screen*. Toronto: Coach House, 2007. Print.

Comrade Dad. Dir. Karen Lee. Moving Images Distribution, 2005. Video.

DeBoer, Stephanie. *Coproducing Asia: Locating Japanese-Chinese Regional Film and Media*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2014. Print.

Everything Will Be. Dir. Julia Kwan. National Film Board of Canada, 2014. Film.

Finding Mr. Right [*Beijing yu shang Xiyatu*]. Dir. Xiaolu Xue. Edko Films, 2013. Film.

Fu, Yongchun, Maria Elena Indelicato, and Zitong Qiu. "Research Notes Towards a Definition of Huallywood." *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 10.1 (2016): 48-53. Print.

Gasher, Mike. *Hollywood North: The Feature Film Industry in British Columbia*. Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 2002. Print.

Hiebert, Daniel. *A New Residential Order? The Social Geography of Visible Minority and Religious Groups in Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver in 2031*. Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012. Web. 9 May 2016.

Higbee, Will, and Song Hwee Lim. "Concepts of Transnational Cinema: Towards a Critical Transnationalism in Film Studies." *Transnational Cinemas* 1.1 (2010): 7-21. Print.

Hong Kong Express. Dir. Michael Parker. Holiday Pictures, 2005. Film.

Hutton, Thomas A., and Vincent Wing Sun Tung. "Cultural Production in the Transnational City: A Study of New Media in Vancouver." *Creativity, Innovation and the Cultural Economy*. Ed. Andy C. Pratt and Paul Jeffcutt. New York: Routledge, 2009. 139-60. Print.

The Interview. Dir. Evan Goldbery and Seth Rogen. Sony Pictures, 2014. Film.

Khoo, Olivia, Belinda Smaill, and Audrey Yue. "Reframing Australian Cinema: Transnationalism, Ethics, and Asian Australian Cinema." *Transnational Australian Cinema: Ethics in the Asian Diasporas*. Ed. Khoo et al. Boulder: Lexington, 2013. 1-23. Print.

Lai, Larissa. *Slanting I, Imagining We: Asian Canadian Literary Production in the 1980s and 1990s*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2014. Print.

Lee, Christopher. "Enacting the Asian Canadian." *Canadian Literature* 199 (Winter 2008): 28-44. Print.

Li, Xiaoping. *Voices Rising: Asian Canadian Cultural Activism*. Vancouver: U of British Columbia P 2007. Print.

Longfellow, Brenda. "Bollywood/Toronto: Transational Spectatorship." *Public* 29 (2004): 85-104. Print.

Lunch With Charles. Dir. Michael Parker. Telefilm Canada, 2001. Film.

The Magical Life of Long Tak Sam. Dir. Ann Marie Fleming. National Film Board of Canada, 2003. Film.

Metro Vancouver. "2011 National Household Survey Bulletin #6: Immigration and Cultural Diversity." *Census Bulletins*. May 2013. Web. 15 May 2016.

Miki, Roy. *In Flux: Transnational Shifts in Asian Canadian Writing*. Edmonton: NeWest, 2011. Print.

Miller, Toby, Nitin Govil, John McMurria, Richard Maxwell, and Ting Wang. *Global Hollywood 2*. London: British Film Institute, 2005. Print.

Nguyen, Viet Thanh, and Janet Hoskins. "Introduction: Transpacific Studies: Critical Perspectives on an Emerging Field." *Transpacific Studies: Framing an Emerging Field*. Ed. Nguyen and Janet Hoskins. Honolulu: U of Hawai'i P, 2014. 1-38. Print.

O'Keefe, Derek. "An Interview With *The Interview*'s Paul Bae." *Ricochet*. 19 Dec. 2014. Web. 5 Dec. 2015.

On Location 1: Elvy Del Bianco's Annotated Film Collection. Dir. Michael Turner. Video Out, 2011. Film.

On Location 2: Four Double Bills. Dir. Michael Turner. Video Out, 2011. Film.

Ouchi, Mieko. "Albertasia: Asian Canadian Films on the Prairies." *Reel Asian: Asian Canada on Screen*. Ed. Elaine Chang. Toronto: Coach House, 2007. 173-85. Print.

Seno, Alexandra. "Vancouver Film Producer Promotes Asian Talent." *The Globe and Mail* 27 Oct. 2011. Web. 3 May 2016.

Shih, Alice. "Tracking Shots: Mapping The Asian Canadian Filmscape." *Reel Asian: Asian Canada on Screen*. Ed. Elaine Chang. Toronto: Coach House, 2007. 37-47. Print.

Spaner, David. *Dreaming in the Rain: How Vancouver Became Hollywood North by Northwest*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp, 2003. Print.

Telefilm Canada. "Audio Visual Coproduction Treaties and MOUs." 8 Sept. 2012. Web. 13 Aug. 2016.

"The Birth of Asiawood." *Newsweek* 20 May 2001. Web. 21 May 2016.

Tinic, Serra. "Hollywood Elsewhere: The Runaway Locations Industry and Transnational Production Cultures." *The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies*. Wiley Online Library, 2011. Web. 10 Dec. 2015.

Vancouver International Film Festival (VIFF). *Dragons and Tigers Film Series*. October 2015. Web. 15 Aug. 2016.

Vancouver Never Plays Itself. Dir. Tony Zhou. 2015. Web. 1 Jan. 2016.
Vancouver Queer Film Festival (VQFF). *Guide Archive*. Web. 15 Aug. 2016.
Walls, Rachel, ed. *World Film Locations: Vancouver*. London: Intellect, 2013. Print.
Yeo, Su-Anne. "Vancouver Asian: West Coast Film Cultures, On the Rim and At the End of the Line." *Reel Asian: Asian Canada on Screen*. Ed. Elaine Chang. Toronto: Coach House, 2007. 112-25. Print.
Yu, Henry. "Global Migrants and the New Pacific Canada." *International Journal* 64.4 (2009): 1011-26. Print.
Yue, Audrey. "Contemporary Sinophone Cinema: Australia-China Co-Productions." *Sinophone Cinemas*. Ed. Yue and Olivia Khoo. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. 185-202. Print.

Race, Feeling, and Money in Asian North American Texts

Iyko Day
Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism. Duke UP $24.95

Christine Kim
The Minor Intimacies of Race: Asian Publics in North America. U of Illinois P $30.00

Reviewed by Eleanor Ty

Published in 2016, both Iyko Day's and Christine Kim's books begin with an anecdote about the Bank of Canada's attempt, in 2011, to feature an Asian-looking female scientist on a $100 bill. The image was eventually replaced by a Caucasian-looking woman peering through a microscope because focus groups, which previewed the design, responded negatively to the woman's Asian appearance. People felt that she "did not represent Canada." Day and Kim both quote Phil Yu, the blogger for *Angry Asian Man*, who concludes that the incident is "race-bending on a banknote."

Iyko Day uses the intersections of race and capital in this controversy to highlight her book's focus "on the interplay of Asian racialization, capitalism, and settler colonialism." *Alien Capital* points out that the "upward economic mobility of Asians in North America" has led to the perception that Asian Americans are the "new Jews," with similar characteristics of "inscrutability, perpetual foreignness, transnational mobility, and flexibility." Focusing on Asian American and Asian Canadian literature and visual culture, Day argues that the works she discusses "present a genealogy of settler colonialism that magnifies a key logic of romantic anticapitalism." Following Marx, Day distinguishes between the concrete and abstract realms of society: "what is real, sensory, or 'thingly' is the tree in your backyard, the dusty work boots by the door," while the "unnatural, nonthingly, or intangible is capital accumulation, surplus-value, and money," all of which form the abstract realm. Romantic anticapitalism "*glorifies* the concrete dimension while casting as evil the abstract domination of capitalism" even though commodities all comprise both dimensions.

Just as Jews were identified with money and abstract capital, Asians personified "the abstract dimensions of capitalism through *labor time*," a mode of efficiency "which threatened the concrete, qualitative sphere of white labor's social reproduction." According to Day, settler colonialism reinforces the triangulation of Indigenous, alien (which includes African slaves and Asian migrants), and settler (mostly European) positions through a "fundamental misperception of capitalism as an opposition between a concrete natural world and a destructively abstract, value-driven one that is personified as Asian." While "practices of segregation, disenfranchisement, exclusion, exploitation, police brutality, detention and imprisonment are some of the ways that the settler state . . . maintains control over an internalized alien population," the "logic of elimination is driven to eradicate an Indigenous population."

Day's four chapters look at how Asian North American writers and artists, including Richard Fung, Maxine Hong Kingston, Tseng Kwong Chi, Jin-me Yoon, Ken Lum, and Karen Yamashita, reconfigure situations of settlement and labour, such as the building of the transcontinental railway, the romantic representation of North American landscape, and multiculturalism, in order to expose the racialization of labour and the politics of whiteness. While the works Day chooses to study are familiar ones to Asian North Americanists, she demonstrates her points about how capital matters by highlighting passages less oft cited. For example, in her discussion of Japanese internment, she highlights passages in Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* and Rea Tajiri's film *History and Memory* that make connections between Jewish and Japanese people in North America. In *Obasan*, Aunt Emily thinks about the way Hitler has been shiploading people into Poland or Germany to work for nothing when she talks of the hatred against people of Japanese origins. Tajiri remembers that Japanese Americans were interned in "relocation centers" rather than concentration camps. Day argues provocatively that what "Japanese internment and the Holocaust share is a romantic anticapitalist logic." Both groups were removed because they were associated with the abstract dimension of capitalism. Day does not spend too much time in rehearsing the thematics or aesthetics of the works she studies; rather, she emphasizes this central thesis forcefully in each of the chapters.

For Christine Kim, the $100 bill story highlights "how the politics of multicultural recognition obfuscates racialized feeling," or how multicultural feeling does not actually permeate the nation even though multicultural rhetoric does. Like Day, Kim analyzes literature (e.g., by Joy Kogawa, Souvankham Thammavongsa) and different art forms (bioboxes), but she also examines the politics of an infamous magazine article and a video made by a student at UCLA. Kim argues that feelings matter and that feeling is core to the construction of "minor publics." Unlike communities,

> publics remain in existence only as long as their participants are engaged in dialogue. . . . Minor publics, such as Asian Canadian ones, are more ephemeral than a dominant public because their conditions of possibility require that they repeatedly reconstitute themselves instead of simply continuing or redirecting ongoing conversations in order to respond to particular issues.

Kim is less interested in reading minor publics in opposition to a dominant public; instead, she notes that "they emerge out of a desire for social intimacy" and are "produced by a desire for collective belonging and emotional recognition."

Canada's national magazine *Maclean's* featured an article in 2010 titled "Too Asian," which claimed that students shied away from attending universities that had too many Asian students because Asian students, too focused on marks, would make the universities too competitive. Kim pairs this example with a video made by then-UCLA student Alexandra Wallace called "Asians in the Library" (2011), where Wallace complains about the rudeness of Asian students and their hordes of relatives. Kim sees these two incidents that focus on post-secondary education as reworkings of "all-too familiar panics about Yellow Peril." Reading these incidents, "we unravel the dominant public's investments in the sometimes cohesive, sometimes conflicting logics of nationalism and global capitalism and see how they influence the limits of public feeling." Discussions about these two topics "veered beyond the limits of our socially scripted dialogues about race," revealing "how the spectre of Asian publics haunts the dominant public and influences how it speaks."

One of the most successful chapters for me is Chapter 3, on the art of David

Khang and the novel *The Foreign Student* by Susan Choi, because it focuses on the minor (Korea) within the minor (Asian Canadian/American). On Khang's work, Kim writes, "these art projects query whether it is possible to care about minor lives that exist outside imperialist narratives of loss, and if so, what might come of such feelings." Using film critic Alison Landsberg's theory of prosthetic memory, Walter Benjamin's work on aura and photography, and affect theories to read these works, Kim writes of Khang's art: "What *Mom's Crutch* and *Wrong Places* throw into relief is how imperialist structures of forgetting are structures of feeling that normalize a host of violences and encourage various forms of neglect. Perhaps, then, what is necessary in order to realize intimacies between postcolonial subjects is for a structure of remembering to shape global economies of caring." In Susan Choi's novel, the romance of a foreign student and an American woman places an immigrant's memories about the Korean War within the black and white racial landscape of the American South in the 1950s. The novel's structure suggests that "the histories of South Korea and the American South might be read as parallel ones given the civil wars both feature, and that these narratives finally collide through Chang and Katherine's relationship." Kim notes that "the tensions between these characters and racial formations remind us that to imagine future relations of alliance without interrogating the imperial structures that produce the terms of such encounters is dangerous."

These two scholarly books expand and broaden the canon of Asian North American literature in their discussions of a variety of cultural texts and artistic forms. Their very different and original theoretical approaches to the field—Marxist materialist critique in Day's *Alien Capital*, and affect theory in Kim's *The Minor Intimacies of Race*—enable us to understand the complexities of racialization beyond colonial/victims, black/white, dominant/minor binaries. Both are articulate, intelligent additions to Canadian theory and criticism.

Face Value

Louis Carmain; Rhonda Mullins, trans.
Guano. Coach House $19.95

Paul Yee
A Superior Man. Arsenal Pulp $21.95

Reviewed by Stephanie L. Lu

These two books are both works of historical fiction, taking us to moments in the nineteenth century when the violence of labour exploitation, resource extraction, and colonialism left impacts that are still felt today. Yee, an accomplished archivist and children's author, sets his first book for adults along the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1881-1885, showing us narrow "throat[s] of rock where the river rushe[s] in a breathless gulp toward the coast, the ocean, and China"; tunnels as "black as midnight mud," where each aching hammer-blow "rebound[s] with a shudder" and the air is "acrid" with the smell of explosives; and crowded cookhouses, where men smoke and gamble, "the cook splashe[s] food into a wok and rake[s] it with a metal scoop," and "the helper chop[s] meat cake, a meditating monk drumming with two cleavers." Carmain's award-winning first novel, recently translated from the French by Rhonda Mullins, takes us to warm nights on the Chincha Islands of Peru in 1862-1866, "filled with chirping and the lapping of waves," and into the consciousness of a Spanish sailor, who—after falling in love with a Peruvian woman—experiences the naval conflict as a dreamlike dance, in which ships "square off against each other . . . salute . . . [and] eventually disperse and fill with smoke," twirling like "floating cauliflowers." Both of these stories are concerned with value, in all senses of the word:

economic worth, national honour, personal dignity, and the value the individual heart places on love.

Yee mines the ironic potential of words such as "superior man" and "vermin" in order to describe the painful paradox experienced by early Chinese migrants to Canada: valued as economic units for their labour, yet marginalized and despised as material beings. The first-person narrator, Yang Hok, dreams of one day returning to his village with gold earrings for his grandmother and younger sister, so that Grandmother will make "old-fire soups" for him again and "scrap[e] wax from [his] ears." But his first paycheque amounts to only $6.73 for twenty-six days of deadly, backbreaking work, two-thirds of the promised wages having been deducted for food and other necessities. He fears that he will be "fragrant"—dead—before he can ever earn enough money to be honourable. In despair, the men bring their loneliness to the brothel, rowdy "like schoolboys at end of term." As Yang Hok witnesses the "vermin"—former "coolies" too poor to return to China—nap in back alleys and "scuttle" for shelter in Victoria's Chinatown; as he participates in makeshift ceremonies for men who died without any relatives nearby to properly bury them; as he remembers that the ones who did make it back to China "never talked about life abroad," instead "squat[ting] in the market" and joining "the tail end of conversations," he convinces himself that his fate will be different. Before his youth is over, he will return with honour and establish a family. His honour is tested in a different way than he imagines, however, when a forgotten lover appears with a half-Chinese, half-Native child that she claims was fathered by him. Yang Hok's journey to return the child to the mother's community over the course of the book leads him deep into the question of what it means to be a "superior man."

Carmain's novel takes its title from a scene in which Simón, the young Spanish sailor, goes to his admiral for help in understanding why Spain is bothering to occupy the Chincha Islands. The admiral responds by taking him to a fountain whose water has stopped flowing. He runs his finger along its dusty border; instantly, the finger turns grey as though it had "rotted." He commands Simón to smell it. Unable to smell anything, Simón asks: "What is it?" It is shit. *Guano*—the excrement of seabirds, prized for its high economic value as a fertilizer, but completely without personal value. Throughout the book, the bodies of ordinary people are compared to those of seabirds, mere organic matter in the minds of higher-ups, valuable only in terms of money and national honour. Isabelle II's minions are described in a way that is almost absurdist, "wearing frogged uniforms with épaulettes so broad they tempt the pigeons, the men all cinched and strapped in, making either chests or paunches more prominent, depending on the regimen." But for Simón, the seabirds are beautiful, so beautiful they are unreachable. Sometimes he sees the face of his Peruvian lover "between two waves, a sort of apparition floating on the surface of the water with hair of algae. Talk to me, sing. But she moved silently, her image broke apart, disappeared in a waltz of sails. . . . Perhaps it was just a seagull."

It is difficult to make art out of the experiences of bachelors whose daily lives were so marked by dirt, drudgery, and death, yet this is what both Yee and Carmain manage to do. Yee renders the Chinese cuss words of Yang Hok's vocabulary in a way that is poetic, even humorous. "Turtle-head boss" and "oily mouth" are a few delightful examples. Carmain's technique is just as effective: by focusing on the romantic musings of a boy who truly has a poetic soul, he is able to show us the violence of war through the rainbow refractions of a dream.

Imagining the Pacific

Ruth Ozeki
A Tale for the Time Being. Viking $30.00

Tim Wynne-Jones
The Emperor of Any Place. Candlewick $23.99

Reviewed by Guy Beauregard

In his work on "reading literature in a global age," David Palumbo-Liu urges us to "think of how literature engenders a space for imagining *our relation to others* and thinking through why and how that relation exists, historically, politically, ideologically." He suggests that "[r]eading with this in mind would attempt to ascertain how and why our relationship to others is not natural or immutable, but rather the result of a number of complex and often contradictory forces, some that draw us closer, others that drive us apart." Palumbo-Liu's work helps to clarify the stakes involved in reading the two novels under review, an endeavour that is worthwhile not simply due to his brief cameo appearances as a character named "P-L" in Ozeki's novel. When read together, these novels raise compelling questions about the act of reading, the work of the imagination, and—following Palumbo-Liu—the ways we might be connected to, and act in relation to, others.

Self-identified as a "Caucasian-Japanese-American-naturalized-Canadian," Ruth Ozeki and her oeuvre (including films and two earlier novels) have not to date typically been read as "Canadian." Her Man Booker Prize-shortlisted novel *A Tale for the Time Being* makes it difficult not to do so by situating its narrative present on an island off the coast of British Columbia. The characters in this community—including a writer named Ruth, her partner Oliver, and a wide cast of neighbours—find their lives transformed after Ruth finds a package on the beach containing a diary and other materials that might have crossed the Pacific after the devastating 2011 earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown in Japan.

After this discovery, Oliver invites Ruth to "[i]magine the Pacific." The novel encourages us to do so too in a variety of ways, most obviously through the act of reading a diary written by a Japanese girl named Nao along with other texts and objects found on the beach. Nao's diary—which appears in a cloth-covered edition of Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* that had been "retooled . . . into something altogether new"—is especially compelling for Ruth, leading her to ponder "how best to read this improbable text." Ruth follows how Nao tenaciously navigates brutalities in the Japanese school system after her father's loss of employment in California and her family's ignominious return to Japan. In her newly precarious life, Nao learns more about her family, including her engaging great-grandmother Jiko, who along with fellow Buddhist nun Muji could well have emerged from a Hiromi Goto novel. Jiko's principled stand against Japanese imperialism finds echoes in the acts of resistance performed by her son, referred to as "Haruki #1," and later her grandson (Nao's father), referred to as "Haruki #2." One of this ambitious novel's many strengths is its insistence that this imperial past is not past, a point sharply underlined in a conversation between Ruth and her mother (then living with Alzheimer's) while watching the news:

> "Who are we at war with?"
> "Iraq, Mom."
> "Really? But I thought that war was over."
> "No, Mom. It's never over. America has always been at war with Iraq."
> "Oh, that's terrible!" Her mom leaned forward and peered at the screen.
> Days pass, and weeks. Months pass, and then years.
> "Now, who did you say we are at war with?"

Multiple Governor General's Award-winner Tim Wynne-Jones' novel *The Emperor of Any Place* shares some uncanny

similarities with Ozeki's text, perhaps most prominently its inclusion of a manuscript dating back to World War II, which has somehow "float[ed] up onto the shore of 123 Any Place," the name wryly given to the novel's suburban setting in Don Mills, Ontario. Like Ozeki's novel, Wynne-Jones' text includes an array of footnotes, here provided by a character named Derwood Kraft, an American flight lieutenant who had survived a crash on an island in the Marianas, where he developed an improbable friendship with a Japanese soldier named Isamu Ōshiro. Wynne-Jones mobilizes his considerable writerly skills to tell this story-in-a-story, sympathetically portraying Ōshiro as an Okinawan who "had grown up under the scarcely concealed intolerance of the Japanese toward [his] people" but who had nevertheless found himself, after settling in Saipan, part of the Japanese imperial army. Interspersed into this account are Kraft's recollections of their harrowing yet intimate time together, negotiating their many differences while also jointly contending with a vivid range of child ghosts, critters with red eyes, and a terrifying monster that Ōshiro dubbed Tengu.

The arrival of this manuscript into the hands of the novel's likeable young protagonist Evan, who becomes engrossed in its mysteries, enables him to mourn the loss of his rock-and-roll-loving father while also eventually arriving at a form of reconciliation with his estranged grandfather, the villainous Griff, who as an American marine was and is entangled in Ōshiro's and Kraft's story. But how might this story be read and potentially passed along? To be sure, the meanings generated by future retellings (including a stalled graphic novel by fictitious writer Benny Yamada) remain undetermined. But the version we do have stages Ōshiro's and Kraft's encounter on a "desert island," one described as "strange and impossible." It is not quite an empty meeting ground, given how it is populated by a range of fantastic creatures. But this encounter—however vividly and sympathetically portrayed—raises unsettling questions about the novel's use of the Marianas, one that faithfully follows the contours of what Chamorro scholar Keith Camacho has identified as conventional military historiography in depicting these islands as a site in the American-Japanese war. In telling the story of an Okinawan and an American, Wynne-Jones' novel acknowledges the displacement of Pacific Islanders and the impact of US and Japanese militarism in the Pacific but leaves aside questions of Indigenous agency in the Mariana archipelago. Readers seeking markers of such agency—which remain critically important in attempts to imagine lives in the Pacific as well as in Canada—must in this case look elsewhere, while perhaps also awaiting Yamada's unfinished text.

Flowing Across Borders

Oana Avasilichioaei
Limbinal. Talonbooks $19.95

Sarah de Leeuw
Skeena. Caitlin $18.00

Rita Wong and Cindy Mochizuki
perpetual. Nightwood $18.95

Reviewed by Kit Dobson

Oana Avasilichioaei, Sarah de Leeuw, and Rita Wong and Cindy Mochizuki have all penned new texts that focus on the structure of the border, and, in all three books, the border zones that water creates and invites us to consider. *Limbinal*, *Skeena*, and *perpetual* offer considerable grounds for comparison for their treatment of aqueous liminal zones that variously threaten, haunt, and sustain us. Their poetic responses are resonant and welcome us to pause and consider things anew.

Oana Avasilichioaei's *Limbinal* is her fifth book of poetry, in addition to the five

volumes that she has translated. *Limbinal* combines her practices of translation and composition: the section of the book titled "Ancillary" consists of Avasilichioaei's translations of Paul Celan's Romanian poems, while the remainder of the volume can be more immediately identified as "her" work. However, *Limbinal* is a text that is very much concerned with boundaries and borders—and how unstable these tend to be. Each section of the text is concerned with placement in one way or another: with titles like "Bound," "Partitions," "Line Drawings," "Itinerant Sideline," and "Peripheries"; with photographic images that erupt into the text; and with linguistic sliding between English, French, and Romanian. This disruptive text is constantly on the move. Look, for instance, at the bold opening of the text:

> Border, you terrify. Border, you must
> dictate your own
> dismantling or we will perish. Purge.
> Border, are you listening?
> Are you empire?

Her interrogation of borders points toward their hegemony, the ways in which lines of demarcation govern our bodies and our beings. And yet, these are always in flux: the border is constantly interrogated. The text goes on to ask: "Border, are you listening? Are you hungry?" "Border, are you watching?" "Border, are you enraged? Are you bored? Are you longing for the fiction of enlightenment?" "Border, are you nervous? Nerves? Nodes? Are you a call to network?" "Border, are you primitive? Are you primed for capital, economics, policy?" Across this questioning and beyond, we watch the poetic voice in the act of "defecting" to spaces in which words become unbordered: as the volume progresses, Avasilichioaei works with font density and size, text placement, page margins, and gutter spaces, working playfully, yet seriously, across the borders that the book itself establishes. These interrogations bring us to consider water in the section entitled "Thresholds," a section that takes place aboard a ship. Water continues to guide and dictate the flows of the text in and out of its polyvocal, multilingual work.

Sarah de Leeuw's *Skeena*, in turn, is a collage-driven text. It is de Leeuw's sixth literary work, in addition to her academic writing. It is a soaring, epic telling of the Skeena River in northern British Columbia, running from its headwaters to the Pacific Ocean. De Leeuw documents the river across its history, working with Indigenous knowledges of the place and with texts from the colonial encounter, white settlement, and the present, including, for instance, recent scientific studies of the river. Across all of this material, we see the river in its unruly nature, washing away roads and pipelines laid along the shoreline as it pushes against the voices of settlers that would contain or constrain it. Poems throughout the volume give the river its own voice, as in "Tributaries":

> Before we had names
> time was ice
> being gone me
> becoming ice.
>
> Invertebrates nuzzling my bowels.
>
> Light slipping to dark slipping to light
> and then to dark: rutting moose.

The insertion of the river's voice allows de Leeuw to work with the longer memory of the Skeena, well before the settlers arrived, and allows her to break, moreover, from the anthropocentric challenge that the documentary collage otherwise risks imposing. The poet can, as a result, engage in the following interrogation, in the poem "Raven":

> Is it true
> great big black bird
>
> that nothing in this world
>
> surprises you anymore?
>
> Nothing
>
> shocks or stuns or stops you

in your winging turning tracks?

Certainly nothing
not even a river like me
compares to your work.

Of making the world.

The book flows along the length of the Skeena, the final piece, "Pacific," opening with the simple line "you are my ending." As the book eddies downstream, readers witness both the physical and the social geography of the Skeena. The juxtaposition of texts and voices demonstrates an awareness of the contingency of life on the waterway, of its fragility, as well as its versatility and strength, and of its renewal when the waters collide with the ocean.

Finally, Rita Wong and Cindy Mochizuki's collaborative *perpetual* offers dire warnings about the state of today's waters. It is a book primarily concerned with waterways in and around Vancouver; it is Wong's fifth book, including her other 2015 book, *undercurrent*, and her first in collaboration with Mochizuki: Wong provides the text, while Mochizuki provides illustrations. As an interrogation of waterways in the land that both contributors live on, this book is a gesture toward taking full responsibility for the ways in which our bodies are rendered complicit by the spaces we inhabit. *perpetual* documents not only the lost waterways of Vancouver, but also a healing walk recently held in Fort McMurray in an effort to draw attention to the plight of the Athabasca watershed. As the text notes, "we each have a role to play in keeping water and spirit healthy"; Wong and Mochizuki demonstrate the ways in which their own engagements strive toward such ethical and spiritual health.

Across *Limbinal*, *Skeena*, and *perpetual*, we read established, accomplished poets experiment with, document, and plead for the complexity of the borderlines, the waterways, and the linguistic acts of creation necessary to life and beyond. With differing levels of depth, complexity, and delivery, Oana Avasilichioaei, Sarah de Leeuw, and Rita Wong and Cindy Mochizuki deliver texts that prompt interrogation, conversation, and action.

Play on Three Spaces

Sachiko Murakami
Get Me Out of Here. Talonbooks $16.95

Bren Simmers
Hastings-Sunrise. Nightwood $18.95

Aaron Tucker
punchlines. Mansfield $17.00

Reviewed by Laura Ritland

An urban neighbourhood, the airport, and the Internet situate these three poetry collections' common interest in space and place. All three also employ "play" with poetic form to comment on or contest the dominant economic and social forces shaping these contemporary spaces.

Composed of short lyric poems interspersed with word-maps and notes on seasonal changes like those of naturalists, Bren Simmers' *Hastings-Sunrise* records the "phenology" of a Vancouver neighbourhood: seasonal and local events are described as, and compared to, animal and botanical life. Bees echo human industry. Human romance participates in the same energy that choreographs the chickadees' and juncos' courtships. Simmers tracks the natural rhythms of her local community to suggest a form of resistance—"growing roots, pushing back"—to the commercial forces raising house prices and eroding the neighbourhood's formerly diverse economic and social character. Gentrification also raises a more immediate concern for the speaker and her partner who, in a city of unaffordable housing prices, face perpetually leasing property or moving towns: "Can we make a home without a house?" the speaker asks. Her celebration of local acts of reclamation suggests how this might be possible at least

on a communal level: a neighbourhood lending library, yarn graffiti, and a shared urban garden show this community laying claim to its territory. Simmers further personalizes space through playful acts of map-making. "Map of Neighbourhood Swings" is a literal map of x's and o's marking "tree swings" and "swing sets." "Map of Open Doors" marks open doorways that are "(a)" attended or "( )" unattended. Representations of such spaces suggest a more private, experiential understanding of a community. This local focus also accompanies the speaker's explorations of her self and inner space: poems reflect on how to "hold space / for self" in a new marriage or meditate on the psychic need for the "four walls" that enable her to dream, write, and love.

Sachiko Murakami's *Get Me Out of Here* also celebrates resistance to the hegemonic control of space. However, her ironic and subversive play with form suggests that her restless critique extends even to the methods by which writers describe and depict their subjects. In establishing the process for writing this collection, Murakami called for airport travellers to respond *in situ* to the question "Why is it so difficult to stay present in the moment?" Her resulting poems riff off, respond to, and reuse travellers' one-line responses to expose and deconstruct the societal rules (gendered, economic, racialized) that determine human subjectivity and power relationships in airport spaces. Poems beginning with lines like "Fatima joins me in the life-sized corridor" reveal Murakami's razor-sharp attention to the ways in which certain subjects in the airport are more "real," "life-like," or legitimated in their agency than others. Her depiction of airport surveillance systems reveals the policing of differences, behaviours, and even (half-jokingly) semiotics: "Collin [an airport traveller] arises from the symbolic into the real where the weapons of the real are no joke." Passengers' literal and metaphorical baggage are examined with dehumanizing scrutiny "as though excess would allow itself to be measured" and "the mass of what we carry could be calculated." In a sense, legitimating this "excess" and "mass" is Murakami's mission: she voices the inner desires and private longings of passengers to indicate what escapes, hides, or suffers from this surveilled space. Fear, anger, passion, joy, and sadness distinguish human subjects from objectified products of the airport. At the same time, she is also suspicious of any technology (or poetry) that "opens up the self / and its ultrasonic evidence," and this scrutiny about mediation seems to involve an examination and re-evaluation of poetic structures. Her eclectic use of anagrams, onomatopoeia, experiments in grammar, and the visual placement of words on the page both bespeaks an interest in form and draws attention to the "rules" of these forms. Frequently, she breaks, varies upon, or adapts these rules to suggest a challenge to totalizing structures and to invite humorous, creative play.

Whereas Murakami touches on how digital spaces fuse with material spaces, Aaron Tucker's *punchlines* amplifies this dynamic. Framed narratively as a couple's road trip from British Columbia's west coast to San Francisco and back, this long poem reads as a series of journal entries meditating on the relationships between physical and digital experience, self and other, human and machine, language and code, mind and body. As with Murakami and Simmers, humour and play inform the collection's overarching intent: each poem begins with an "input" or title in the form of a nonsensical "joke" or literary allusion ("Do Avatars Dream of Electric Sheep?") and results in an "output" or poem making use of computer algorithms and computer code ("||" replaces "or" and "+" replaces "and"). The effect suggests a jokey affection for our digital culture and a synthesis between digital and human life such that "we agree our conversations our

languages / are inseparable from code." Metaphors comparing landscape to code, dialect to "local area networks," or thought processes to "hyperlinks" similarly insist on a continuity between human beings, their physical environments, and their computer systems. Tucker is conscious of the more negative implications of technological life, such as disembodiment ("we are a cough without a body") and the globalization of Internet culture ("this viral spreading leaves all objects inbetween"). Yet the collection seems largely interested in exploring the nature of digital life rather than criticizing it. Consciousness, for example, becomes interestingly plural in this space: "there is a sense of being multiple, always"; and the reoccurrence of dream sequences in the collection suggests digital activity may reflect a kind of unconscious, associative neural process.

"What would life be without art?"

Michel Marc Bouchard; Linda Gaboriau, trans.
The Divine: A Play for Sarah Bernhardt.
Talonbooks $16.95

Beth Graham
The Gravitational Pull of Bernice Trimble.
Playwrights Canada $16.95

David Yee
carried away on the crest of a wave.
Playwrights Canada $16.95

Reviewed by Shelley Scott

The Gravitational Pull of Bernice Trimble is written as a continuous, unfolding story told by Iris Trimble, unattached office temp and middle child. Iris speaks directly to the audience as she sets a timer, prepares a casserole, and explains the theatrical "rules"—that, for example, when salt and pepper shakers appear we are in her mother's kitchen, and when they are put away we are back at Iris'. The play slides charmingly in and out of time periods and theatrical realism, beginning with a sequence in which both Iris and her mother Bernice appear to share the same kitchen but are actually in two different time periods or, in a later example, when Iris and her older sister Sarah give voice to what they are actually thinking about each other. The three female characters are joined by Iris' younger brother, Peter, and the "gravitational pull" of the title comes from Bernice's announcement that she is suffering from Alzheimer's disease. The family is called together, a year after Bernice's husband's death, so that Bernice can share her bad news with her three adult children. First produced by Obsidian and Factory at the Factory Theatre in Toronto in 2013, the play was produced again in Edmonton the next year by Theatre Network at the Roxy. Edmonton is home for Beth Graham, who was previously best known as a co-creator of *The Drowning Girls*. At the end of *The Gravitational Pull of Bernice Trimble* the audience learns that the timer, the cooking, and even the salt and pepper shakers have been tools to help Iris pass the time before she is due to drive to her mother's home and "discover" her body: Bernice has decided to end her life before Alzheimer's takes away her dignity, and she has convinced Iris to be the child who helps with her plan. Graham has chosen a very gentle way to talk about a very difficult subject, and one can imagine that a skilful production of this play would carry a real emotional impact. *The Gravitational Pull of Bernice Trimble* was a finalist for the Governor General's Literary Award, but lost to David Yee's play, *carried away on the crest of a wave.*

The published text of *carried away on the crest of a wave* begins with a foreword by eminent Asian American playwright David Henry Hwang and a preface by Yee in which he describes his play as having "an anthological structure: it's several short plays in a single container." Each of the nine segments is intended to relate to the overarching theme of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. The play premiered at the Tarragon Theatre

in Toronto in spring of 2013, directed by Nina Lee Aquino, with a cast of seven actors playing eighteen characters. An American production later that year at the Hub Theatre in Virginia reduced the cast to six. The locations of the nine scenes range from Australia, Malaysia, India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand to North America, and even to an absurdist hole in the ground through which two men are falling. Most of the plays feature at least two male characters, with fewer females: a poetic scientist, a six-year-old girl, a Thai prostitute, and an Asian American woman who has lost her entire family and abducted a small child in the chaotic aftermath of the tsunami. Each small play is a unique and well-polished gem, and the connections between them range from almost inconsequential—a man in one scene reacts to hearing a racist song introduced in another—to blatant. The penultimate lines of the play are "Because we are all connected. And we are, none of us, alone," a message that audiences might have been trusted to receive through the production rather than the text. The playwright employs a number of theatrical images, such as a weeping statue, an overflowing bathtub, and a gathering storm, and further imaginative design choices should be enough to tie the scenes together.

The Divine: A Play for Sarah Bernhardt might be called a play for Jackie Maxwell, who commissioned, directed, and dramaturged it for the Shaw Festival's 2015 season, and to whom the text is co-dedicated; or perhaps even a play for Fiona Reid, George Bernard Shaw's celebrated actor who starred as Sarah Bernhardt. Certainly the context of the Shaw Festival is evident in the large cast (five women and six men) and sprawling, ambitious action, and Bouchard acknowledges that Shaw was an inspiration for *The Divine* because he "denounced the ravages of capitalism and the hypocrisy of the religious hierarchy." The time is December 1905, the various locations are "evoked in the dormitory of the prestigious Grand Seminary" in Quebec City, and the premise is the historical fact of Bernhardt on tour. The all-male environment that transforms into different places brings to mind the prison setting of Bouchard's play *Lilies*, while the encounter between a young seminarian inspired by a visiting actress is reminiscent of the priest and the painter in his *The Madonna Painter*. Here, young Michaud writes a play for The Divine Sarah, drawing on the life of his friend Talbot, who is offered a deal and must make an impossible choice forced upon him by desperate poverty: in order to save his younger brother from being a child labourer, he must deny the sexual abuse he and generations of boys have endured.

The Gravitational Pull of Bernice Trimble and *carried away on the crest of a wave* use the medium of theatre to allow audiences to contemplate devastations—disease, natural disasters—over which we have no power but a compassionate response. In *The Divine*, Bouchard has his characters use theatre to expose experiences of poverty, abuse, and injustice. Bouchard's text begins with a quote from Sarah Bernhardt and works it into the play: "What would life be without art? Eating, drinking, sleeping, praying, and dying. Why go on living?" All three plays, each in its own way, could be seen as a response to her question.

Voices of the (in)visible

Rashmi Luther, Vanaja Dhruvarajan, Ikram Jama, Yumi Kotani, Monia Mazigh, Peruvemba S. Jaya, and Lucya Spencer, eds.
Resilience and Triumph: Immigrant Women Tell Their Stories. Second Story $24.95

Reviewed by Ziyan Yang

Resilience and Triumph provides a collection of personal stories of over fifty racialized women who came to live in Canada during the last five decades. From international

students in their twenties to retirees in their seventies, the narrators, from various cultural communities (with a focus leaning towards Indian and South Asian diasporas), verbalize their life journey as "the Other," their negotiation for a coherent identity through numerous parameters such as race, gender, class, religion, and culture—notions which are constantly questioned and redefined through their narration of migration.

With an emphasis on "the role of women as reproducers of culture and nation," the book aims at preserving the stories of women considered as "visible minority," and gives voice to those "physically visible" but "socially invisible" women who have often been ignored and muted in mainstream writing during the second-wave feminist movement in Canada. These women's stories, in a variety of forms (essays, fiction, poetry, letters, etc.), are grouped in five thematic categories, each representing one aspect of their self-discovery journeys shaped by a mixture of cultural, social, and historical contexts.

The first section, "Arrival: Losses and Gains," recounts the first stage of migration: the process of acculturation in which the immigrant redefines her cultural identity, torn between memories of her home country and the new reality of her adoptive country. The second section, "Integration or Assimilation? A Process of Negotiation and Settlement," examines experiences of settlement and integration of immigrant women, their successes as well as some systematic challenges encountered, including racism, sexism, language, and accent. In the third section, "Identity: Women's Journeys to Becoming and Belonging," three generations of racialized women reflect on their quest for belonging and identity, a perpetual negotiation between multiple communities and heritages. The fourth section, "Exploring Feminisms," questions singular and linear conceptions of Western/white feminism by presenting stories in which racialized women relate their personal life experiences to the principles and ideals of this Western-centred discourse. If the term feminism evokes among these women a commitment to equality, justice, solidarity, and tolerance—not only on gender issues but also on those related to race, culture, religion, and social status—this commitment is carried out in the stories of the concluding section, "Activism: Shaping Our World." The accounts of racialized women's engagement in community activism in this section demonstrate efforts to correct prejudicial and discriminatory policies and practices against marginalized people, such as racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia, among others.

Despite the very different cultural, social, and historical backgrounds of the stories, certain similarities are revealed in the experiences of migration narrated by these racialized women: constant tensions between their contradictory worlds, barriers to integration due to their difference and "visibility," and reconciliation with their hyphenated identity, for example. Their voices not only document the evolution of "Canada's political, economic, social, and cultural landscapes" regarding immigration, but also offer alternative expressions of feminism and a plural feminist narration in liminal spaces at the intersection of race, culture, language, gender, and class.

The Seeing Dice and the Anxious Diary: An Experiential Essay

Elizabeth Bachinsky
I Don't Feel So Good. BookThug $16.00

Reviewed by Natalee Caple

Elizabeth Bachinsky's book of procedural poetry, *I Don't Feel So Good,* seems from the title onward to confront sublimated cultural expectations around gender and genre, and to embrace nausea and anxiety as aesthetic

values to be appreciated as they relate to reversals of the vision act. *I Don't Feel So Good* is a work that Bachinsky produced by operating on her own diaries, diaries kept for twenty-six years from the time that she was ten years old. To produce the book, Bachinsky selected passages from her diaries by rolling a die. The passages are rearranged in the book, denuded of their original context in the order that the dice "saw fit." Thus, the book itself represents a collapse of the distance between the public and the private as well as a collapse of the distance between historical and new.

Procedural writing (sometimes called constraint-based writing) is writing created by the application of laws—it is a form of writing popularized in the twentieth century by an organization of poets, mathematicians, and professors known as Oulipo. Oulipo is short for *Ouvroir de littérature potentielle*; roughly translated: "workshop of potential literature." This loose gathering of mainly French-speaking male writers and mathematicians was founded in 1960 by Raymond Queneau and François Le Lionnais.

Bachinsky's book represents a feminist challenge to the canon of procedural writing as well as to the depersonalizing process of chance-based literature. Why do we gender genres at all? In part it is a sublimated impulse left over from post-industrial-revolution European ideology around the gendering of spaces, the linking of forms to either public or private social spheres. And so, if procedural writing can be considered a masculinist form (as opposed to just a form popularly associated with male writers) it is because it is public. And it is public because it emphasizes non-human processes, machinic arrangements—the throw of a die, in this case—something that happens outside of the writer that the writer is only one witness for. As a public form, procedural writing emphasizes governmental authority, not only because of the authority of the founders of Oulipo, cemented by historic membership, but also because there are laws to how it must be done. This emphasis on the de-personalization of the arrangement of works creates an interesting tension between the writer's ability to express personal experience and the writer's ability to express public affiliation.

The "I" of the writer becomes a "We" through the machining of art (presumed to be an expression of self at least on some level). This We is public and it displaces the public I (which strangely begins to seem like a private self) embedded in romantic notions around the artist as isolated genius that emerged through modernism. The We-ness of procedural writing should work against the gendering of the genre. It should make impossible a reductive male gaze. So, it is as a challenge to the reductive male gaze that Bachinsky uses her own diaries as the body on which the die operates. However, instead of becoming enjoined with the Oulipean We, Bachinsky draws attention to her own subjective response to Oulipean contradictions. The mismatch of the diary and the die functions as a feminist remix of the genre, queering the I when it multiplies her subject position, and makes a somewhat uncomfortable leap to assert her I as both object and subject, material and machine.

Because there is an ever-present Bachinsky in the text, who multiplies as she changes over time, the *personalizing* of the procedural form is unavoidable. In making it so, Bachinsky draws attention to the artist behind the curtain in every procedural work, laying bare the trust of the reader who believed in the objective procedure for re-examination.

Bachinsky's remix also enables a contemporary examination of some basic differences between public procedure and private confession embodied by genre work. Procedural writing celebrates the surprises that can be generated by machinic activity.

Procedural writing values innovation, emphasizes form, and interrogates originality. Procedural writing is typically represented by its practitioners as contemporary and, as such, appears to value the new.

The diary, by contrast, is a very old form, understood to have been a place for personal, private, confessional explorations of self by anyone who knows how to read and write. It is messy and human—it is a form that values the freedom of the inner self and does *not* value originality, at least not in the same way. The value of the diary does not lie in its artistry; instead, the diary asserts an irreducible value to every human life, asserts a right to reflect in private on one's inner life and to attempt a kind of honesty that goes unchallenged, perhaps even unseen.

When Bachinsky applies procedural technique to a private archive she effectively takes the two approaches to writing to be inverse forms and puts them together to see what will happen. One wonders, which one will emerge as the dominant visible form? Will one form break the other, and, if so, what will that look like? How does the intersection of the lyric and the experimental, the free-form personal diary, and the structural laws of the procedural poem, change both forms?

The object that made the book becomes the central metaphor of *I Don't Feel So Good.* The seeing die operating on the anxious diary produces proxies for two subject positions that parallel two literary genres. The diary and die stand in for person and procedure, aligning these with lyric and experimental traditions. At the same time, because diary and diarist are separated by the flensing of the diaries, Bachinsky, as diarist and as procedural author, multiplies the sites and limits of how We/readers (and here Bachinsky is part of the We) relate to the Bachinsky of the text. This enables or activates a very unusual reading of the author in that it highlights the author in the text, revealing a curated self, and the curation of the self is itself influenced by many different kinds of movement, including the interaction of contemporary and historical art movements over time.

Thinking about time here is also interesting. Bachinsky curates her presentation of self first in her diaries. A diary is, of course, a form that represents continuities and disjunctions in the self that occur across a span of time. A diary, which may seem like a dated form because of its historical longevity (and the anxiety produced by the capturing for witness of one's many younger selves), is always about discourse between the past, present, and future. So, here, in *I Don't Feel So Good*, Bachinsky's curated self is re-curated in a way that at first seems almost cruel: the life of Bachinsky as child, adolescent, beginning author, and adult cultural worker is reduced to fifty-six pages of unassigned blurbs. The white space isolating these blurbs and the lines that separate each moment from the next highlight absences that cannot be filled by the reader—we can't know what made Bachinsky say, at one time: "The darkest moment: the end of the second act. Marked by falling action, pastoral reflective moments. Protag is in deep shit and there is no possible way we can get out of this darkness." But, because the text is understood to have been operated on, to have been expansive, and to have been part of a response to something outside the text, we can't help but speculate. Speculation becomes a value central to reading and imagining the potential meanings of the text. Or, is this another making of a We?

We fill in meaning when we speculate, while remaining aware of the limits of what we can know (what we can know about Bachinsky, but also the lost context of any text's production). The arrangement of the text, which seemed reductive, becomes expansive under the speculum of speculation—which is to say that when readers engage in parsing the poems

into something that they can receive they expand the text, they imagine the gaps that all texts contain, the books that the book could have been.

And now I am thinking about the word "received." On the back of the book the word is used in a way that implies something greater than reader reception: "not so much written as received" is the description given of the author's activity (or lack of) during the unseen production of the text. Well, that word, "received," conjures a sense of the paranormal, even clairvoyance, to the arrangement of the diary entries by the die that "saw fit." This extra valance of the weird highlights (or creates) anxiety around what is known by whom about the body embodied in Bachinsky's diaries—and so it also works to pressure the limits of what this new arrangement can represent. What the die saw remains elided since the details of the transaction are never fully described.

Bachinsky begins to seem like she may be the protagonist who is in deep shit, and perhaps the nausea around her condition is the value that propels the second act of the book. Certainly the line "Protag is in deep shit" appears around the right physical place. Is this just an accident? The tension between what is random (the throw of the dice) and what is machined (the application of the procedure) seems to feed at this point into a kind of anxiety aesthetic. Because we know that there is more than what we see—more text, more context, more procedure—the procedural reduction, far from demonstrating the randomness of meaning, actually engages the personal imaginary of the reader who becomes a third curator identifying with the I (making it a We) that is Bachinsky. In doing so, the reader's own subject position becomes folded in, becomes part of the receiving of the text, once again making gendered reductions of the text slippery, if not totally impossible. This, of course, highlights that it is always true that a reader curates a self for the author shared with, muddied by, invested in their own subjectivity. This makes clear that Bachinsky was never represented in any stable way in any text. In fact, no author can be. As well, the author referenced on the cover of this, or any book, actually represents other people as well, other cultural workers: an editor, a proofreader, a designer . . . . The author's name is a kind of front for a complex of social, historical, economic, aesthetic interactions. So, the reduced woman of the flensed diaries can only be reduced so far until the reduction lays bare a rather remarkable complexity.

Looking now at how the diary works on procedural poetry, it seems as if the diary exposes the limits of randomness and the failure of laws to account for the restlessness of shared imaginaries. The dice, after all, has only a limited number of sides. The diaries can be read many ways. The issue of authenticity raised by the aura of the diary genre ends up provoking some doubt as to the authenticity of what can be revealed by procedure.

Let's say we believe perfectly that the uncanny connections between parts that seem so meta-like—"What is a 'poetic' response anyway? A book called *I don't feel so good*," and "What *would* be different if there were no monster stories?" "His is the language of exclusion: it says to the reader 'you may enter' or 'you may not'"—are just that, just uncanny coincidences throughout the book. Still, the whole book is not random. Is the title random? Is the design? Will it be marketed randomly? Sold at random prices? This book, every book, is curated for meaning—to reach a certain audience, for example, or to be received critically, to register as a certain kind of cultural object, to promote an aesthetic.

The die that could see is an illusion. The writer, the editor, and the reader find potential in text and mobilize that potential for new thinking. The aura of the superiority of intellect over emotion does not hold

up. Instead, Bachinsky's project performs a neat reveal: the confessional aspects of the text, the sense of a voice, the trace of a real person, haunt the pages. The spell of two genres at war breaks.

And Bachinsky, who has multiplied her position, including the reader, addressing traditional and experimental audiences together (thereby including them in her We), reveals that collapsing the distance between the personal and the procedural does more than deposit private content into a public form. It actually models a kind of writing that can assert complex subjectivity, can entertain multiple values, can refute the boundaries of its own framework, and can invite further intersections across broader communities. The public and the private are demonstrated to be deeply interpolated, irreversibly involved.

The title, *I Don't Feel So Good*, which, in the beginning, seemed sort of funny, maybe self-deprecating, turns out to be a warning about the personal somatic nausea produced by slicing apart one's inner life and denuding it of context. Perhaps it is even a warning about submission to objectification in the broader world. The context of dates, of complete narratives, of a coherent self, which is made into a literary object in the diary, becomes a point of return and an invitation to play. Upon completing the book and experiencing the nausea, Bachinsky herself seems to mean something more and to have more intentions than initially displayed. Bachinsky—as a woman writer, as a diarist, as a procedural poet, as a feminist, as a tattooed person who goes to plays and has a mother and a father and reads Richard Ford, lived in the North, and used to be an arrogant student—doesn't feel like *being* so good.

Elizabeth Bachinsky doesn't want her diary read. Doesn't want to give up what is personal or enable a stable reading of her subjectivity. Instead, by using her diary material in a procedural text she asserts that she has a complex subjectivity; but it does not belong to her readers, and it will not undergo the circumscription of gendered genre orthodoxies.

Tales from a New Frontier

Jordan Abel
Un/inhabited. Talonbooks $24.95

Reviewed by Christina Turner

In a recent essay entitled "Epistemologies of Respect: A Poetics of Indigenous/Asian Relation," Larissa Lai ponders how to proceed in returning the world to balance at "this late hour," under "these imperfect conditions"—this hour being the time of global capitalism, its imperfect conditions the fact of living and working on occupied land. While Lai is interested primarily in respectful relations between Indigenous and other minoritized peoples in Canada, her questions are nevertheless crucial for any poet working toward a decolonizing poetics. Such a turn to balance cannot be a return, Lai emphasizes, because it "appears that backtracking is not possible. The colonial moment is still with us in the present. There is no romantic return." A decolonizing poetics must dispense with the fantasy of the pre-contact blank slate. The poet begins from a place of messiness, imperfection, contamination.

Nisga'a poet Jordan Abel is similarly suspicious of the idea of a romantic return to a precolonial past. This suspicion shows itself foremost in his selection of base materials for his work. Abel leans toward texts that we now tend to view as outdated (and inaccurate) portraits of Indigenous peoples, works that have not aged well and yet were vastly influential in their time. His first book of poetry, *The Place of Scraps*, carved up Marius Barbeau's *Totem Poles* to craft a journey from the tributaries of the Pacific Northwest coast to the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and back again. Abel

is unwilling to condemn Barbeau's work entirely. Instead, he approaches *Totem Poles* with a wary respect even as he cuts it up and rewrites it.

Abel's first book is dedicated "to the Indigenous Peoples of North America," signalling the activist and recuperative work he aspires to do through his poetry. His new work, *Un/inhabited*, bears the same dedication. Abel's source text here is a compilation of ninety-one novels written in the Western pulp genre, first published in the early twentieth century and now available online through Project Gutenberg. Where Abel's territory in *The Place of Scraps* was the Pacific Northwest, in *Un/inhabited* it is simultaneously the fictional landscapes of the American West and the new "frontier" of the digital commons.

The governing symbol of *The Place of Scraps* was the totem pole—how these objects have been misread and appropriated, and how they can be reclaimed. In *Un/inhabited*, Abel takes an analogously symbolic interest in the map—how maps orient one in a new landscape, and how they are used to lay claim to land. This is a compelling and difficult text, one whose political resonance is made all the more evident by the ambiguities that pervade it.

The foundation for *Un/inhabited* is a body of pulp Westerns published in the early twentieth century. They emerged only a few years after the American census bureau declared, in 1890, the frontier officially "closed," likewise marking, as Frederick Jackson Turner wrote, the "closing of a great historic movement." Turner saw the frontier as integral to the development of American consciousness, and so the novels that constitute Abel's corpus evince a certain nostalgia for the West as a space of pure potential. As L. C. Mitchell writes in *Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film*, the "west in the Western matters less as verifiable topography than as space removed from cultural coercion, lying beyond ideology (and therefore, of course, the most ideological of terrains)." These books romanticize the landscapes of the American West. They are also deeply invested in what Daniel Francis has termed the "Imaginary Indian," which is less a portrayal of actual Indigenous peoples and more a construct of what white people wanted to believe about Indigenous peoples. Abel cites these stereotypes with *Un/inhabited*'s collage cover image, in which snipped-up images of two Indigenous people, bearing the label "red man," are superimposed on an image of a cowboy pointing a shotgun into the middle distance.

The tropes of Western fiction (and later film) have provided a rich ground for satire by contemporary Indigenous artists. Think, for example, of Thomas King's riotous send-up of B Westerns in *Green Grass, Running Water*, or Miss Chief Eagle Testickle's dalliances with cowboys in the paintings of Kent Monkman. Like King and Monkman, Abel mounts a (sometimes wry) challenge to the representation of Indigenous peoples in Westerns, but his poetic practice is also in line with other recent works of experimental poetry, like Rachel Zolf's *Janey's Arcadia* (2014) and M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!* (2008), that use the techniques of concrete and found poetry to mine and expose the way colonialism's physical and ideological violence is legitimized through text. In these works, as in Abel's, the text which is the source of violence is also the wellspring of resistance, anger, reclamation, and hope.

To create *Un/inhabited*, Abel first copied and pasted the text of ninety-one out-of-copyright novels into a single, 10,000-page Word document. He then cut up and altered the base text in myriad ways to construct the book's three chapters. For the first, "Pioneering," Abel used Ctrl+F to search the master document for terms relating to land, territory, and property. He then copied and pasted the sentences containing a specific

term into a new, compiled document. Finally, he deleted the relevant term from the sentence in which it was found, leaving only blank space behind. What results are nine poems, titled according to the missing search terms that organize them: "Uninhabited," "Settler," "Treaty," and so on. Abel performs a triple violence on the novel as individual entity: first by compiling the novels into the one document, second by ripping sentences from their contexts within the novels, and third by removing key contextualizing words from sentences and replacing them with silence.

"Pioneering" reveals foremost the way that words—and words built upon words, to eventually create context, experience, ideology—shape our understanding of the world. Words, sentences, and literature can act like a map helping the reader to navigate a new territory. "Pioneering" points this out and undoes it. The deleted words in "Pioneering" mean that attempts to establish direction, to orient oneself within the text, are quickly frustrated. But the deleted words remain as an echo and a reminder, calling us to fill in the blanks and orient ourselves as we read. The result is that each sentence unit carries a double meaning defined by both absence and presence, like the landscape that "appeared to be a dry, forest." We are invited to consider how the meaning of the sentence changes based on the ghostly presence of an ideologically freighted word. The Western pulp novel's investment in constructing a certain kind of masculinity is also made evident by the contextual words that surround the deleted terms, like "the sturdy, the man intent on building a home and establishing a fireside," a description that becomes a kind of longhand for "settler" in the absence of that term.

Un/inhabited's second chapter, "Cartography," turns to concrete poetry to explore the relationship between aerial mapping and text. For this portion of the book Abel restored the deleted words to his compiled sentences, laid them out across the page, and superimposed map-shapes on top of them. Meaning is interrupted in a different way here: while the deleted words have been restored, the white shapes that creep across the page make it impossible to make sense of the compiled source sentences. Instead, "Cartography" invites a kind of distant reading, the small print contrasted with abstract land forms demanding that you flip through the book to observe how Abel's mapped territory shifts and changes. The map-shapes, which ooze over and eventually shatter the text beneath them, seem, at first, to suggest a kind of erasure. But if this is a process of reclaiming, it is an ambiguous one. Rather, the map-shapes seem to represent a coastal zone, an interstitial space between land and water, absence and presence, past and present. In the final pages of "Cartography" the map-logic crumbles. Abel has filled these pages with fading, shattered words overlaid with blank spots, so it's unclear whether something is being superimposed or whether the words themselves are decomposing and new meaning is being generated from what remains.

In the curatorial essay that appends *Un/inhabited,* Kathleen Ritter characterizes the final chapter, "Extraction," as a "visual representation of the way [Abel] searched, collected and extracted text in the initial pages of the book." Here, Abel has returned to his source text and copied large sections. This includes paratextual information from Project Gutenberg, including a somewhat tongue-in-cheek exhortation that "you may do practically ANYTHING with public domain ebooks." If "Cartography" is interested in mapping from above, then "Extraction" looks at mapping from below, or sideways. Initially, superimposed strips of transparent white vertical blocks muddle the base text. Halfway through the chapter, solid white vertical columns appear, fully erasing the source text underneath. The resulting images resemble geological core samples (as Tracy

Stefanucci notes in the book's afterword). There seems to be a kind of tension here in between the two forms of text alteration: whereas the transparent overlay creates a palimpsest-like effect, suggesting that new meaning can be generated from the tired old body of Western fiction, the white columns obliterate both text and meaning.

Like the one before, this chapter also encourages a kind of distant reading practice, and as the book is flipped through, the white columns multiply and become wider, until all that remains on the final page is blankness. The environmental analogy here is somewhat obvious: the source texts have been drilled, stripped, and blasted, until all that remains is a barren textual landscape. What renders this section intriguing is, again, Abel's reliance on ambiguity: who is doing the stripping, the mining here? Are we meant to read this as an analogy for the way the reading process extracts meaning from the text? The blank space that remains at the end of *Un/inhabited* evokes both the promise of renewal—of a tearing-down to build up again—and its impossibility.

Maps help us orient ourselves in a landscape. They are also never neutral objects. As Mitchell points out, the Western genre takes as its content the labile space of the frontier West for the very reason that this space could be shaped according to specific ideas—of masculinity, of civilization, of savagery. This genre provided a conceptual language for the experience of settlement. Abel undoes this language through the experience of reading that *Un/inhabited* creates. One cannot simply float—through either text or land—in this book, from the jarring reading experience that defines "Pioneering" to the gradual process of erasure that characterizes "Extraction." Eradication is not an option—we have to work, the book seems to imply, with the imperfect conditions and materials that we find ourselves with. We might now recognize the harmful stereotypes that Western pulp fiction relied upon, but to dismiss this genre entirely would be to ignore the profound influence it has—and continues to have—on culture.

Un/inhabited is rounded out by Ritter's essay, "Ctrl+F: Reterritorializing the Canon," as well as an index. While Ritter's essay might be helpful in anchoring the reader through the occasionally overwhelming experience of encountering Abel's work for the first time, to me what is most interesting about *Un/inhabited* is the ambiguity that complicates the more obvious metaphors linking text with land and reading with resource extraction. The book's index is an example of this. It lists landforms rather than names, some of which (desert, gully) can be traced to an actual page, some of which (fjord, nunatak) cannot. If an index is ordinarily meant to provide a map to the reader to specific places in a text, then this index is a send-up of that task. Just as maps are never neutral, the terms with which we name parts of a landscape are also always inflected. Throughout *Un/inhabited* Abel undoes the cognitive mapping provided by genres like the Western pulp novel. As the incomplete index, blank spaces, and faded word-carvings of *Un/inhabited* illustrate, if the poet provides us with a map to navigate this new territory, it is a self-consciously incomplete one.

Gods, Dogs, and Feral Girls

André Alexis
Fifteen Dogs. Coach House $17.95

Pauline Holdstock
The Hunter and the Wild Girl. Goose Lane $32.95

Reviewed by Hilary Turner

Two Greek gods walk into a bar. This is not the beginning of a joke, but the premise of André Alexis' brilliant novel, *Fifteen Dogs*. Ensconced in the legendary Wheat Sheaf tavern in the heart of old Toronto, Apollo and Hermes wager that another species,

if given human intelligence, will be more tortured than humanity itself, each member doomed to an unhappy death. Language, as the shaper of our form of consciousness, is thus the first creation of the fifteen dogs in a nearby shelter who are suddenly and miraculously granted the self-awareness and rational powers of humans. It is both amusing and tragic to observe how the canine mind registers its characteristic outlook (its sensations and desires so deeply conditioned by *smell*) in words and sentences. Amusing because Alexis is so very good at finding linguistic analogues for doggy experiences, and tragic because language is power, and power exercised through speech is an alien and disruptive presence in the hierarchical and tribal world of dogs.

Fifteen Dogs is a philosophical work. It studies the foundations of society, the relationship between the individual and the collective, the nature of leadership, the tension between ends and means. But it is also a study in character: it traces the disparate ways in which individual dogs adapt (or fail to adapt) to the change that has come upon them. Between Atticus, physically the most imposing of the dogs, and Prince, a mongrel who discovers the aesthetic pleasures of language, a primal struggle between pragmatism and poetry plays itself out. Like many leaders, Atticus fears creativity. It is he who decrees that the dogs shall continue to live as dogs, to avoid language, to shun introspection, to maintain the old ways. Established in a remote corner of High Park, the pack attempts to sustain itself without human aid. But the collective cannot function as it used to: the possession of language undermines blind obedience, and order can only be maintained through violence. Under the dictatorship of Atticus, the dogs are "forced to perform a version of dogness convincing enough to please other dogs who had, to an extent, forgotten what dogness was. Were *any* of them actually barking or growling in the old way?"

In Homeric fashion, Alexis also portrays the response of the Olympian gods to the mischievous wager of two of their own. Eight separate interventions are called for, most of them to restore the balance of natural justice that has been so badly upset. Alexis suggests that the gods do care for mortals: they wish to prevent suffering; but they cannot protect us from death. One by one, the dogs die, each in a state of pain, sorrow, or outright misery—until only Prince, the poet, remains. As death approaches, much more than the outcome of the bet depends on his state of mind. What degree of awareness is compatible with happiness? Is language an artifact or a tool? Can poetry save us from inner darkness? With an insight that is arguably more Christian than Greek, Prince (now blind and deaf) dies in a state of wonder and gratitude, affirming the beauty of language. "He had not explored all of its depths, but he had seen them. And so it occurred to Prince that he had been given a great gift. More: it was a gift that could not be destroyed. Somewhere, within some other being, his beautiful language existed as a possibility, perhaps as a seed. It would flower again."

The contrary proposition—that a human might refuse the benefits of language, might prefer to inhabit a bestial form of consciousness—is considered in Pauline Holdstock's moving and inventive novel, *The Hunter and the Wild Girl*. Set in a remote region in Languedoc at an indeterminate point in the early twentieth century, the story is that of an *enfant sauvage* who comes into fleeting contact with the inhabitants of a small village. She cannot communicate in words, nor does she wish to; in something like a Rousseauvian state of uncorrupted consciousness, she sustains herself in the landscape, living wholly on the provisions of nature. To those who know of her existence, and have understood the implications of her rejection of civilized

life, the girl becomes mythical, a blank screen onto which they project their desires. A village boy muses: "He has seen her, and now she is gone, an exotic to be hunted, to be outwitted, and at last to be entrapped." A scientist remarks: "She is the original innocent. You know what that means for science. A human child developing in the wild, free of influence, free of society."

The girl's feral disposition is compared to the misanthropic outlook of Peyre Rouff. The one out of instinctual fear, the other in bitter knowledge of the human tendency to inflict emotional pain, both Peyre and the nameless girl have chosen solitude and exile. He was a hunter, is now a recluse, an initially benevolent man who has had the undeserved misfortune to kill his own beloved son. After a chance encounter in which he is able to help the girl, Peyre too develops a proprietary interest in her. Their paths cross in more than one sense, however. As Peyre inches grudgingly toward the recovery of his broken connection with humanity, the girl moves fiercely in the opposite direction. When at last she is tracked by dogs, captured, and incarcerated, these events compel Peyre to intercede on her behalf. His sacrificial bid to free her ironically wins him a new role in the social order.

Though they approach the matter from opposite directions, these novels probe the interwoven strands of consciousness, language, and social organization. Alexis and Holdstock equally recognize the burdens and the compensations of interactions in language, the ways in which those who can speak both create and destroy their own happiness.

Objects versus Subjects

Thomas Allen and Jennifer Blair, eds.
Material Cultures in Canada.
Wilfrid Laurier UP $42.99

Jack Lohman
Museums at the Crossroads? Essays on Cultural Institutions in a Time of Change.
Royal BC Museum $19.95

Reviewed by Alicia Fahey

Material Cultures in Canada is a diverse collection of essays that traverse the fields of literature, art, politics, culture, the environment, affect, and globalization. These (seemingly) disparate interests find common ground under the umbrella of new materialism, a framework that is as wide-ranging as the essays in this collection. In fact, problems of definition are a primary preoccupation of the editors' introduction: is materialism a field or approach? Is it a method of analysis or object of analysis? In each of the essays, fruitful paradoxes and contradictions abound as the authors wrestle with a profusion of recurring binaries, including: subject and object, individual and collective, human and non-human, identity and autonomy, science and humanities, private and public. The Canadian focus is equally complex: Jody Berland's contextualization of the beaver beyond its restrictive status as national icon and Alison Calder's reading of Mary Maxim sweaters as objects that "participate in and create a nationalist rhetoric that both celebrates and effaces its appropriation of Aboriginal and ethnic cultural markers" are both explicit in their nationalist orientation, whereas Michael Epp's and Mark Simpson's essays are initiated by American objects and culture, even though both authors connect their objects to Canadian contexts. Shelley Boyd's exposition of the imperial history of geraniums is another transnational example of the multiple border-crossings operating in this text.

Despite the fact that these essays deliberately and explicitly participate in resisting definition and the insularity of disciplinary constraints, editors Thomas Allen and Jennifer Blair still try to impose some semblance of order on the collection. Their history of major developments in material studies, which identifies Arjun Appadurai's *The Social Life of Things* (1986) and Bill Brown's special issue of *Critical Inquiry* (2001) as crucial junctures in the field, is a helpful narrative for newcomers to material studies and also facilitates connections among the chapters. Indeed, Appadurai and Brown dominate the critical frameworks of many of the essays, with supporting roles played by Bruno Latour, Susan Stewart, Jane Bennett, Timothy Morton, W. J. T. Mitchell, and Henri Lefebvre.

The sixteen essays in the collection are divided into three sections: "Materialities" features beavers, Anne Carson's *Nox*, sweaters, geraniums, and a belt; "Immaterialities" consists of a playlist, smiles, calendars, ice, and water; and "Materials of and for Spaces" contains comics, sculptural miniatures, historic plaques, waxen objects, and urban poetry. Each essay is as delightfully unpredictable and unique as the objects they consider. Unfortunately, the organization of the essays into these vague categories (even the editors identify them as "arbitrary") undermines their heterogeneity. Even if the categories were imposed to emphasize these contradictions, a more appropriate way to represent the "oscillating field" of new materialism would be to abandon these restrictions altogether. Many—if not all—of the chapters vacillate between the arbitrary categories. Tanis MacDonald's discussion of mourning intersects with Epp's reading of smiles as emotional labour in Section II, as well as Jessa Alston-O'Connor's exploration of memory and nostalgia in Section III. Likewise, the authors' shared interest in textuality in Section III connects with chapters by Susan Birkwell, MacDonald, and Epp in other sections. Perhaps one could argue there is something about the materiality of the book-as-object that demands these linear categorizations, even if they are somewhat cumbersome.

Whereas *Material Cultures in Canada* gives precedence to objects, *Museums at the Crossroads?* champions the subject. Lohman's book consists of a short preface in which he makes clear his agenda to undermine the hegemony of "things" that dominates traditional museum practices. In other words, the objective is to focus on how "museum objects represent points of contact with the groups of people who made or encountered them." Lohman elaborates on this agenda in the twenty-seven papers (ranging from four to twelve pages in length) that follow the preface, each beginning with a brief description of the context in which the paper was originally delivered. Composed as oral presentations, the essays in this compilation collectively adopt an accessible, anecdotal voice that is inspirational and, at times, bordering on idealistic. And yet, the international scope and contextual breadth of the papers testify to Lohman's impressive career, including his roles as chairman of the National Museum in Warsaw, director of the Museum of London, chief executive officer of the Iziko Museums of Cape Town, and his current positions as chief executive officer of the Royal BC Museum and professor in museum design at the Bergen National Academy of Arts in Norway. Lohman's idealism is sustained by his professional experience and by the multitude of concrete examples he provides for implementing change in museum practices.

Museums at the Crossroads? is organized thematically, and each paper draws on recurring themes such as architecture, archives and oral histories, museum-as-story, collaboration, digitization and technology, and globalization. Despite ample gestures to multimedia and

multidisciplinary approaches—archives, art, music, dance, literature (several CanLit references), newspapers, photography, and film—the thematic imperative becomes somewhat repetitive. Repetition, in this case, is not redundant; instead, it emphasizes Lohman's passion, his dedication, and—most importantly—his message, which is to move towards "intangible culture" as opposed to artifacts, subjects instead of objects, in order to establish a "living connection" with the past. For Lohman, the museum is a humanist enterprise.

One of the most insightful observations made in this book (there are many) lies in Lohman's commentary on research. He argues that "we are [possibly] not rigorous enough in museums and archives about setting new research agendas. We react to collections rather than create them." Underlying all of Lohman's papers is an anxiety regarding the decline of the museum, but if *Museums at the Crossroads?* is read as a how-to manual or field guide for museum directors, then the future looks promising.

A Tangled Web

Sandy Marie Bonny
Yes, and Back Again. Thistledown $19.95

Charlotte Mendel
a hero. Inanna $22.95

Alexis von Konigslow
The Capacity for Infinite Happiness. Wolsak and Wynn $22.00

Reviewed by Dorothy F. Lane

If there is a theme that reverberates through all three of these recent novels, it is that human relationships, personalities, places, and political and social issues are far from straightforward or static. On the contrary, they are, like the map of family sketched by the young narrator of Alexis von Konigslow's *The Capacity for Infinite Happiness*, "sticky like spiderwebs" or "disintegrated like images in a kaleidoscope." Both characters and readers seek clarity and order in the unravelling of stories that cross locations and generations, historical events and diverse people. However, it is that web of ambiguity, and the disentangling and reconstitution of secrets—"the things that are hidden"—that impel these absorbing books. Math becomes an instrument both of solution and of infinite complexity.

In Nova Scotia writer Charlotte Mendel's *a hero*, the captivating gender-fluid child, Mazin, enjoys reviewing his cousin's photographic archive, and prefers his studies in mathematics over other subjects; in his view, every problem should have a solution. In attempting to arrive at a definition of heroism during the turmoil of the Arab Spring, he makes a list of the qualities he associates with a hero; however, as the narrative weaves through the perspectives of family members, and their responses to the protests, increasingly more people can be defined as heroic. This is Mendel's second novel, rooted in her experiences living in the Middle East, and focusing on the Al-Fakoury family: Mohammed, the authoritative and apparently conservative self-declared head of the family; his wife Fatima; sister and brother-in-law Rana and Hamid; and brother-in-law Ahmed, who chooses to take an active position in the protests. In this remarkably sensitive and intricate book, even the children of the family are carefully developed. The novel motivates its reader to question biases and easy answers, building sympathy for each perspective as the stories of family members unfold and connect.

Mendel thus challenges dogmatism—religious and political—throughout the book. In a recent interview with Lindsay Jones, she noted that a woman struggling to feed her family and maintain a home for her children can be as heroic as a protester with a placard: "that person is giving over their entire soul for the protection and safety of other people . . . what could be more heroic

than that?" Indeed, if the novel has a weakness, it is the ongoing analysis of heroism that seems too explicit in places, especially as secrets involving family members are unveiled. The strongest element is its probing of the web of power within the home, just as significant as the revolution outside its doors.

Sandy Bonny, a Saskatoon-based writer, takes on a personal and intimate glimpse of missing and murdered Indigenous women in her first novel, *Yes, and Back Again*. Like Mendel, the connective tissue for Bonny is the house and family—this time in Saskatoon—which becomes a site for both historical and contemporary narratives that are inevitably linked. Alternating between two time periods and families—separated by several generations—this novel engages with multiple fictional genres, including murder mystery and ghost story, so that the reader is drawn to question whether this house is haunted, if only metaphorically, by the family of Cecelia (Celia) Mazer, whose grandfather built it. We learn that Celia's own mother came from the Red River Métis community, and at some point in Celia's early childhood simply disappeared. Other female members of the family died of tuberculosis and other infectious diseases, as they live in relative poverty and isolation. In the contemporary narrative, Neil Cameron and his partner Tanis take possession of the house, and Neil—who teaches mathematics at a local high school—gets caught up in the mysterious disappearance of two female students in his class. Tanis, meanwhile, hunts through the house and attic finding icons of the past which both fascinate and confuse her; she also develops a relationship with the little girl who plays in the alley between her home and the neighbouring apartment block.

Like Mendel's book, Bonny's both incorporates official narratives—in the latter, replicated textual artifacts—and questions what they hide. Historical papers, news releases, and social media comments only increase the intrigue surrounding the home, the missing girls, the missing mother in the past, and the gaps in documentation. Similarly, Alexis von Konigslow's novel links two plotlines centred on 1933 and 2003; the thread of connection is the festival of Passover, and a lodge outside Kingston, Ontario, that served as a refuge for persecuted Jews. The narrator of the 2003 line, Emily, is a graduate student in mathematics developing her thesis as a study of family connectivity. She visits the lodge to learn more about these connections, but finds more mysteries through missing letters and an initially implausible association with Harpo Marx, the narrator of the 1933 line. What begins as a fairly simple family tree, like Mazin's list of heroic characteristics, becomes increasingly intricate as Emily works and reworks the web. The 1933 story focuses on the Marx brothers' repeated visits to the lodge during a period of social activity and community among Jewish North Americans. Harpo becomes meditative and introspective, often leaving his more extroverted brothers to go down to the dock, where he meets Ayala and her daughter Blima, whom the reader recognizes as Emily's grandmother in the 2003 narrative. Like Bonny's novel, this story slips between fantastic, supernatural, and factual/historical connections. The tangible artifact of missing letters becomes the seed of Harpo's new idea for a movie, but it also holds a mystery that complicates even as it unravels through Eastern Europe before World War II.

The retelling of the Passover story becomes another link, reminding the reader—as the characters—that "God gave us selective memory . . . the ability to remember things any way we want… And with that comes the capacity for infinite happiness." While the reader may not initially feel a fascination or link with Harpo Marx—and other reviewers have

noted their ignorance or even disinterest upon picking up the book—the dexterity of von Konigslow's storytelling produces a narrative that will not easily be forgotten. In fact, the way all three novels underscore, whet, and feed our fascination with family history, relationship, place, and secrecy—drawing on the curiosity of both characters and readers, collaborators in the construction of meaning—marks an extraordinary power in the works of these Canadian writers. Math, the subject of solution, dissolution, and reconstitution, becomes a feature intertwining all three books in surprising ways.

Poétique d'un amour impossible

Emmanuel Bouchard
La même blessure. Septentrion 19,95 $

Jennifer Tremblay
Blues nègre dans une chambre rose. VLB 14,99 $

Compte rendu par Liza Bolen

En littérature, le thème de l'amour impossible n'annonce rien de nouveau. Combien de fois a-t-on lu les récits déchirants de ceux qui, hélas, ne pouvaient être ensemble? Combien de fois a-t-on espéré que les protagonistes puissent, enfin, se retrouver et s'aimer? La pléthore de textes consacrés à l'impossibilité de l'amour pourrait porter à croire que ce sujet est épuisé, et qu'il a été abordé de tous les angles possibles. Mais en tournant les pages de *Blues nègre dans une chambre rose* et de *La même blessure*, on se rend vite compte que cela n'est pas tout à fait le cas.

Le récit de Tremblay débute dans un monastère. Installée dans une petite chambre rose pâle, la narratrice nous décrit l'environnement étrange qui l'entoure. Dès ces premières pages, on comprend que cette même narratrice, une jeune musicienne, a choisi de passer quelque temps au monastère afin de se vider de la pesanteur d'une relation aussi passionnelle qu'impossible avec Bobo Ako, un célèbre musicien de blues. À travers ses souvenirs, elle revisite tous les détails qui l'ont profondément marqués, tous les espoirs et toutes les déceptions qui ont ponctué cette relation complexe :

> Je rêvais d'être une femme qui ne pense pas à toi. Je me disais que personne ne sait que je suis ici, dans cette montagne, dans ce manteau fuchsia, personne ne pense à moi, personne ne veut de moi, je suis libre, libre, libre, seule, seule, seule. Tu vois, les idées noires se mêlaient aux idées heureuses, et ça faisait tout un tapage dans ma tête.

Dans un style fluide, guidé par les sens, Jennifer Tremblay peint des images chargées de couleur, de musique et d'émotion. Divisé en trois cahiers, directement adressés à Bobo Ako (« *tu* »), *Blues nègre dans une chambre rose* va au-delà de l'histoire de la rupture et raconte avec une magnifique lucidité le véritable deuil qui survient après l'amour, et les tourments d'une femme qui repense à un homme pour qui elle éprouvait des sentiments intenses et inconditionnels.

Le titre du roman d'Emmanuel Bouchard, *La même blessure*, se prête particulièrement bien à ce thème. En effet, la *blessure*, ou surtout, la douleur qui émane de ce texte est parallèle à celle qui est décrite par Jennifer Tremblay dans *Blues nègre dans une chambre rose*. Emmanuel Bouchard, lui aussi, peint le portrait d'un amour impossible, cette fois entre la belle et fragile Rose, et son beau-frère Antoine Beaupré. Dès le début du récit, l'attirance, voire la fascination d'Antoine envers Rose, la femme de son frère Thomas, est apparente. Toutefois, ses désirs deviennent particulièrement troubles lorsque Thomas meurt dans un terrible accident, et qu'Antoine lui promet qu'il veillera sur Rose. La relation qui se développe entre Antoine et Rose est donc extrêmement complexe, et est tissée de douleur, de

deuil et de frustrations. Les pulsions et les désirs d'Antoine remettront donc en question certains des idéaux qui entourent la notion de promesse, et feront de cet homme un être profondément tourmenté :

> Antoine guette les gestes de Rose, scrute chacun de ses silences pour y trouver un signe, l'indice des vœux qu'elle partage peut-être avec lui. Comme elle, il revient à l'enfance, encouragé par le moindre sourire, fabriquant des scénarios sur un mot aimable ; Rose n'a qu'à pencher la tête sur son épaule pour qu'il se voie au pied de son lit. Antoine retrouve la foi naïve des badineries : quand Rose lui fait un compliment, qu'elle se montre attentionnée, il voit le chemin s'ouvrir devant eux. Tout pourrait être si facile.

Bien que ces éléments du récit pourraient suffire pour captiver le lecteur, il est à souligner que ce roman est ancré dans le Québec ouvrier des années de Duplessis, une époque rigidement gouvernée par la religion et ses tabous, ainsi que par la hiérarchie des classes sociale (ce qui permet d'ailleurs d'intéressants jeux de style et de narration de la part de l'auteur). Ce portrait réaliste du Québec des années 1940 à 1960 contribue donc à souligner les difficultés des personnages du récit, et permet à Emmanuel Bouchard de proposer un rare portrait de la vie de ceux qui ont vécu cette époque.

Sans jamais tomber dans la facilité ou dans le cliché, ces deux auteurs illustrent les pensées, les espoirs et les désirs les plus intimes de personnages confrontés à des situations difficiles, dans des contextes hors du commun. En jouant avec la poésie des mots, des sens, des expressions et même de la musique, Jennifer Tremblay et Emmanuel Bouchard prouvent qu'il y a encore beaucoup de chemins à explorer pour arriver à comprendre et à expliquer ce sentiment infiniment intime et chavirant qu'est la constatation de l'impossibilité de l'amour.

Tales from the Heart of the Arctic

Stephen R. Bown
White Eskimo: Knud Rasmussen's Fearless Journey into the Heart of the Arctic. Douglas & McIntyre $34.95

Rachel Qitsualik-Tinsley and Sean Qitsualik-Tinsley; Emily Fiegenschuh and Patricia Ann Lewis-MacDougall, illus.
How Things Came to Be: Inuit Stories of Creation. Inhabit Media $16.95

Reviewed by Robin McGrath

The Greenlandic ethnographer Knud Rasmussen was one of the single most important scholars ever to examine the literature and culture of Canadian Inuit, investigating the original source of their circumpolar culture and language, collecting and preserving a treasure house of oral stories and poetry, and cushioning the impact of contact between the relatively isolated people of Arctic Canada and the rest of the world. Yet Rasmussen and his work are little known outside the walls of academe almost a century after his extraordinary intellectual and physical accomplishments in Canada.

Stephen R. Bown, author of *The Last Viking: The Life of Roald Amundsen*, became interested in Rasmussen, who was a contemporary of Amundsen's, and was surprised to find there was no full-scale biography of the man available in English. In turning to Danish texts, Bown "was shocked to discover that the Danish biographies are very much concerned with Rasmussen as a Danish public figure and national hero." Rasmussen's celebrity rather than his literary accomplishments were the focus of most of the works. As a result, Bown determined that *White Eskimo: Knud Rasmussen's Fearless Journey into the Heart of the Arctic*, by contrast, would revolve around Rasmussen's "Greenlandic-Inuit world rather than his Danish world, because

that was, and is, the source of Rasmussen's professional acclaim as well as his personal cultural background."

Contrary to popular belief, Rasmussen was not half Inuit. He was of one-eighth Inuit heritage, but more important than blood ties, he spoke and wrote fluent Greenlandic, as well as excellent Danish and very passable English. Greenlandic was the language of the household in which he was raised, even when the family lived in Denmark. Linguistically gifted as well as socially charismatic and physically robust, Rasmussen was ideally positioned to participate in the flurry of Arctic exploration that erupted in the early twentieth century.

Where Rasmussen differed from other explorers was his focus on cultural rather than geographic exploration. He used no recording devices, instead memorizing the songs and legends through repeated hearing and repetition before writing them down, and he was non-judgmental when gathering magic charms and incantations, always accepting the information or the artifact in the spirit in which it was offered. Most important, he had a gift for translation and a compelling literary style.

One interesting aspect of Bown's biography of Rasmussen is explained in his "Note on Sources." Bown neither spoke nor read Danish, so he devised a system of digitizing texts, translating them to English using various forms of software, and then consulting a native Danish and English speaker for assistance with sections he wished to quote. His success in this regard may be challenged by Danish speakers, of which this reviewer is not one, but if computer translation has, indeed, reached the level of sophistication suggested by Bown's work, then we can expect some quite extraordinary progress in previously obscure academic areas in the coming years. In the meantime, Bown's biography is an insightful, charming, and thoughtful contribution to Canada's literary history.

How Things Came to Be: Inuit Stories of Creation, by Rachel Qitsualik-Tinsley and Sean Qitsualik-Tinsley, contains nine traditional Inuit legends, most if not all of which were first recorded by Knud Rasmussen during his Fifth Thule Expedition. The Qitsualik-Tinsley versions, however, are not as stark as the Rasmussen tales, which generally do not include context or cultural explanations. For example, when the Qitsualik-Tinsleys tell the story of Nuliajuk, whose father throws her from his boat in an attempt to save himself, the authors call a parent harming his child "the worst of all crimes" because "such betrayals wound the world." Elaborations like this are not to be found in Rasmussen's transcripts.

While such explanations are helpful to those not immersed in Inuit culture, there is a certain amount of softening of the stories also. The well-known tale of how the sun and the moon took possession of the sky normally includes or suggests the information that brother and sister, who are playing douse-the-lamp, have an incestuous relationship, but that complicating factor is entirely eliminated here. The Qitsualik-Tinsleys categorically insist that the boy had merely teased his sister during a game, which makes the motivation for their transformations rather weak. Some of the other stories have also had sexual or violent elements omitted.

An attempt to adapt the stories for children may also be responsible for the style in which the stories are written. Each relatively short story is replete with dozens of sentence fragments, making for a very staccato flow, while "and," "but," and "so" most frequently begin sentences rather that serve as coordinating conjunctions. This fragmenting style does not seem to be an attempt to mimic or reflect the linguistic structure of Inuktitut, nor is it evident in the authors' previous book, *Ajjiit: Dark Dream of the Ancient Arctic,* leaving this reviewer to think that it is a misguided attempt to

simplify complex sentence structures to suit a very young readership.

If this is the case, it doesn't work. Plain English with consistent grammar is more easily understood, even by very young English speakers. For example, the authors write of a shaman that "He had travelled to other worlds. To see the moon." Do they mean he travelled to other worlds to see the moon or that he travelled to other worlds and also travelled to see the moon? Another deviation from conventional English is in the use of capitalization. Capitalizing Sun, Moon, Land, and Sky personifies those entities, but when Strong, Strength, and End are also capitalized, in combination with dozens of single-word sentences, it feels overdone.

How Things Came to Be was first published in Inuktitut in 2008 but was revised to appeal particularly to children aged six to eight. Given the target readership, the bowdlerization of the tales is understandable, but the decision to break the sentences up into fragments is puzzling, particularly given the agglutinative nature of the original language.

Strangers and Strange Lands

Valerie Burton and Jean Guthrie, eds.
Changing Places: Feminist Essays on Empathy and Relocation. Inanna $29.95

Vici Johnstone, ed.
This Place a Stranger: Canadian Women Travelling Alone. Caitlin $24.95

Reviewed by Alana Fletcher

In their introduction to the 2014 edited collection *Changing Places*, editors Valerie Burton and Jean Guthrie note that the text is intended primarily for use in Women's and Gender Studies classrooms. Bringing together contributions from eleven women of varied disciplines and career stages on topics ranging from motherhood and infertility to addiction treatment to university life, the collection indeed provides a valuable resource for students of Women's and Gender Studies, especially upper-year undergraduate students seeking models of gendered analyses of various cultural phenomena. Standout essays include Jill Allison's sensitive exploration of the way infertility is negotiated in largely family-centric, Catholic Ireland, including such coping tools as funerary masses for unconceived children, and Pauline Greenhill's novel analysis of Newfoundland folk songs for their imaginative inhabitations of transgender identity.

The collection's pedagogical commitment, the editors continue in the introduction, prompts their adoption of "empathy as a practical and theoretical proposition" that holds the topically-varied essays together under the umbrella of deciphering "how evolving disciplinary practices overlap with knowing the world empathetically." Most of the introduction, apart from the chapter descriptions, focuses on defining and troubling definitions of empathy, affect, and emotion, along with their naturalizations as feminine traits. The essays themselves, however, engage little with empathy; several do not mention the concept at all, while others appear to have tacked this keyword on as an afterthought (as in the isolated statement in Greenhill's essay that imagination is "a necessary precursor to empathy," or in Christine Overall's observation when discussing gender oppression in universities that oppressive institutions lack empathy). This is more a general collection of feminist essays about the ongoing need for feminism, equal opportunity action, and gender troubling—especially within the university—than a collection about feminist perspectives on and engagements of empathy; this near-mislabelling, though, does not discount the value of the essays gathered here, which provide a prime example of both the strength of today's Canadian feminist scholarship and

its necessity. The straightforward style the editors have imposed on each essay makes complex problems easily understandable (while at times also resulting in too-abrupt transitions or too little support for claims), and the issues discussed are universal despite the collection's preoccupation with Newfoundland (a function of its emergence from the Memorial University of Newfoundland's Women's Studies Speakers' Series). Some typographical errors are likely the result of a lack of resources at Inanna Publications, a small independent press.

This Place a Stranger, editor Vici Johnstone writes in the introduction, was born from a comment she received on one of her many solitary journeys—that women who travel on their own are very brave. Brave indeed, Johnstone suggests, but not for the more explicit reasons her interlocutor likely had in mind: "When we travel alone," she elaborates, "without a familiar companion to reflect back to us a familiar self, we are strangers—to ourselves and to those around us . . . such experiences can change us, reveal us, open a world of understanding." The many autobiographical stories collected in *This Place a Stranger*—twenty-three in total, from women of diverse cultural backgrounds and varying stages of life—describe this opening to new worlds and the experiences that follow. Often introspective, sometimes horrifying, and at times very funny, the women's stories collected here paint an affecting portrait of the way women come to know themselves through encountering the unknown. Themes of love, family, and work—especially writing, for obvious autobiographical reasons—are prominent throughout the stories contained here, with travels often prompted by the desire to get away to write, by fieldwork or volunteering, or by attempts to reunite with an old lover. Standout contributions include Lori Garrison's "Lonesome Thelma," a touching and relatable tale of a ragged twenty-one-year-old hiking away unrequited love, finding unexpected comfort in the arms of a beautiful older woman; the wryly hopeful "Protection to Go," in which author Karen J. Lee describes a trip before a trip, to the condom section of the drugstore in advance of reuniting with an old flame in Kenya; and "Travel Blows the Mind," Trysh Ashby-Rolls' tale of youthful malaise in Europe that takes a jarring (and possibly triggering) turn into forcible confinement and physical and sexual abuse. *This Place a Stranger* is one of the most enjoyable collections I have read for some time; the range of topics, places, and autobiographical avatars collected here should make it of interest to all those—women and men alike—with a passion for travel or an interest in autobiography.

From Pollock to Karasik: Forty-five Years of Canadian Theatre

Donna Coates, ed.
Sharon Pollock: First Woman of Canadian Theatre. U of Calgary P $34.95

Daniel Karasik
Little Death: A Play. BookThug $17.00

Reviewed by Sarah MacKenzie

Fredericton's Sharon Mary Chalmers Pollock's career has spanned four decades, her politically charged dramas garnering national and international acclaim. Donna Coates' new collection, *Sharon Pollock: First Woman of Canadian Theatre*, brings together a range of scholars, critics, and performers to celebrate the life and work of Canada's best-known female playwright. Detailing not only the substance and influence of the playwright's dramatic work, but also the many roles filled by Pollock—actor, director, administrator, critic, teacher, and cultural activist—the eclectic mix of essays imparts the multifaceted nature of Pollock's contribution to Canadian theatre. The

collection also includes a new play, *Sharon's Tongue*—concerning Pollock herself, written and produced by playwright/actor Lindsay Burns, actors Laura Parken and Grant Linneberg, and Pamela Halstead of the Playing with Pollock Collective—along with the unpublished transcripts from seventeen episodes of Pollock's radio show, *Pollock on Plays*, which round out the book nicely.

While Pollock's first play, *A Compulsory Option*, premiered in 1972, her career took off with the 1973 piece, *Walsh*, which received positive audience and critical reception. It is thus fitting that *First Woman* opens with an essay by Pollock scholar Jerry Wasserman, examining the relationship between Officer James Walsh of the North West Mounted Police and Sioux Chief Sitting Bull. Wasserman, who came to Canada as a "draft-dodger," discusses the Sioux struggle for sanctuary in Canada post-Little Bighorn (1877-1881). Wasserman contends that Pollock's treatment of Canada's national mythology dispels notions of "moral superiority."

Similarly, Cynthia Zimmerman, also a Pollock scholar, reconsiders one of the playwright's earlier pieces, the 1984 Governor General's Award-winning play, *Doc*. Zimmerman takes a controversial stance on the play, contesting the commonly held critical perspective and suggesting that, while sympathies tend to lie with the parents (Chalmers and his wife), such sentiments should rather be reserved for Catherine, the daughter, torn between her hostile parents. Zimmerman uses examples from two different productions of the play (1984 and 2010) to show the extent to which choices made by directors can alter audiences' interpretations of the play.

Tanya Schapp engages with Pollock's most recent play, *Man Out of Joint* (2007), which pertains to the rampant abuse of Guantanamo Bay inmates, while also addressing the controversies related to 9/11. Using trauma theory, Schapp examines how the play operates as a "trauma narrative," ensuring audience recognition of our shared national role in such tragic phenomena, while in tandem emphasizing Pollock's role in raising awareness concerning atrocities in Canadian history. Coates' essay, like Schaap's, points to Pollock's employment of large power structures as metaphors to demonstrate the intersectional nature of systemic oppression. Coates compares playwright Judith Thompson's and Pollock's respective depictions of "torture chicks." Coates argues that Thompson's play, about the moral bankruptcy of "Soldier"—a character derived from media representations of United States Army Reserve soldier Lynndie Rana England—removes focus from the (far more important) analysis of women's roles within masculinist power structures. Coates asserts that Pollock's play, to the contrary, is sensitive to the ramifications of gender-based exclusion.

The closing entries focus on Pollock's shaping of dramatic production processes, referred to by Coates as "the making of theatre." Martin Morrow revisits his years as a theatre reviewer at the *Calgary Herald*. Morrow describes his work at the Garry Theatre—the playhouse operated by Pollock and her son Kirk. He discusses the difficulties involved in keeping the theatre open and suggests that his lack of attention may have been a factor in the theatre's closure. The following piece, written by Kosovar playwright Jeton Neziraj, pertains to Neziraj's collaboration with Pollock. Discussing his company's choice to produce *Blood Relations* in Pristina in 2010, as well as the potential for future collaborative work, Neziraj explains that it was Pollock's commitment to live theatre in Kosovo that brought their friendship about.

In the final article, literary critic Sherrill Grace uses the construction of Canada's "national mythology" as a lens through which to examine the struggles faced by biographers. She disputes the commonly

accepted notion that biographies of politicians and military figures are more relevant to Canada's "life-story" than the narratives of artists and writers. Grace, demanding that the tales of artists are, in fact, necessary to understanding the "silenc[ing]" of minoritized groups and individuals, leaves readers with a positive message, indicating that such biographies are today purchased more often. Grace, moving the collection smoothly to a close, also describes Pollock's life after 2008. Grace's article is followed by *Sharon's Tongue*, which, as Coates promises in her introduction, "substantiates the kind of impact Pollock has had on the local theatre community." The play encourages audiences to consider the true value of Pollock's contributions to Canadian art. Bringing the collection full circle, the final entry, a series of Pollock's CBC radio reviews, conclusively demonstrates the playwright's ability to work successfully with a variety of artistic and entertainment mediums.

The second work under review, Dora Award-nominated Daniel Karasik's new play, *Little Death*, provides a fine complement to Coates' collection, given that the play, like so many of Pollock's eloquent works, makes for nearly as pleasurable a read as it does a viewing experience. The play, which won Karasik a place in London's prestigious Royal Court Theatre's young writers program, is a lyrical study of monogamy that truly reads like a poem. The play alternates surreal scenes in which protagonist Alex, ostensibly suffering from a terminal illness, meets women in various hotels and bars with scenes in which he and wife Brit engage in an ongoing dialogue concerning the impact of Alex's behavior on their relationship. Karasik's scenes, often described in brief—"*Hotel bar. Home*."—leave much to the imagination, an arguably positive aspect of the work that allows for directorial freedom. While it is impossible through text-based analysis to fully gauge Alex's interpretation of his own actions (or the actual severity/existence of his illness), the play presents an interesting, however surrealistic, dramatic analysis of the complexities of romantic relationships, monogamous and otherwise.

Telling Tales Untold

Rachel Cusk
Outline. HarperCollins Canada $19.99

Ghalib Islam
Fire in the Unnameable Country.
Penguin Canada $30.00

Reviewed by Niall McArdle

What makes a story? Is it the intricacy of the plot or the humanity of the characters, or the flair the writer employs with language to tell the tale? Is a narrative dependent on these to succeed? Is a story's power based on a combination of these elements, or are they ultimately irrelevant? These are questions that Rachel Cusk and Ghalib Islam tackle in two highly dissimilar novels that both question the very nature of narrative.

"I had come to believe more and more in the virtues of passivity," says the unnamed narrator of Rachel Cusk's clever, wry, strangely moving *Outline*, and she is true to her word. While others talk, she listens, saying little, and she seldom *does* anything. Students of creative writing are told never to use a passive protagonist; Cusk manages, however, to hold the reader's attention by employing a narrator who seemingly exists only to draw others into conversation. This is a smart ploy on Cusk's part in more ways than one: the narrator is visiting Athens to teach a writing course, and although it's fairly late into the novel before we see her actually teach, her entire journey is one long act of creativity. Gradually, she reveals more about herself to us, often unwittingly. *Outline* is more than an outline; it is a complex tale of lost love and regret in the guise of a simple and simply told story.

The narrative begins on a plane with the narrator chatting to her neighbour, a much-married wealthy man eager to relate the failures and disappointments of his life, and the narrator is immediately ready to edit his tales. After telling her about his first and second marriages, she is unconvinced by the telling:

> I remained dissatisfied by the story of his second marriage. It had lacked objectivity; it relied too heavily on extremes, and the moral properties it ascribed to those extremes were often incorrect. . . . The narrative invariably showed certain people—the narrator and his children—in a good light, while the wife was brought in only when it was required of her to damn herself further.

Everyone in *Outline* tells stories, and everyone draws conclusions from them. An old friend, Paniotis, reminds the narrator of their last meeting in London, at which he took a photo of her and her family, an act she found strange. "I remembered thinking it was an unusual thing to do, or at least a thing I would not have thought to do myself. It marked some difference between him and me, in that he was observing something while I, evidently, was entirely immersed in being it." A fellow teacher, Ryan, left Ireland for a glittering academic career in America, while his brother left to join the US Marines, a choice which leads to a psychiatric hospital, and yet "their parents took no more pride in Ryan's achievements than they accepted blame for Kevin's collapse. . . . What Ryan had learned from this is that your failures keep returning to you, while your successes are something you always have to convince yourself of." Another teacher, Anne (a playwright), is disillusioned by the "summing-up" she feels as she begins a new play, which makes writing it meaningless. The choice of Athens is no accident, of course, for it is the birthplace of the Western oral tradition. The voices in *Outline* make a Greek chorus that is not soon forgotten.

There is a chorus of voices in *Fire in the Unnameable Country*, a dazzling, dizzying first novel that for all its splendours ultimately cannot support its majestic narrative feats. The novel, part dystopian satire, part magic-realist fable, is a heady postmodernist mix that owes much to Joyce, Borges, Márquez, and Rushdie, but is entirely *sui generis*. Over several hundred pages in a blend of voices, it tells stories within stories, stories that are interrupted by other stories, and stories that are left unfinished.

The narrative voice belongs chiefly to the Hedayat, born on a magic flying carpet in the novel's unnameable country, a vaguely Muslim place rife with fundamentalists, occupied by the American army and considering joining the Eastern Bloc. The novel's locale—a Ruritanian stand-in for anywhere that has once been a colony or has felt the brush of US foreign policy—is a postcolonial satirist's dream, a place of magical happenings and terrorist atrocities, repressive governments, and a movie set atmosphere The land is a dictatorship involved in a seemingly endless series of conflicts, a place where citizens are subjected to the whims of a succession of leaders who collect the population's private hopes and fears in "thoughtreels" which are stored in a vast underground Archive. The Orwellian touches are just one of several influences on Islam; the largest shadow that looms over the novel belongs to Swift. The narrative switches from first- to third-person, often in the same sentence, and Islam's stylistic tics include punctuating sentences with strokes, as you would with lines of verse. Hedayat is a "glossolalist," a haphazard, catch-as-catch-can, speaking-in-tongues narrator:

> Glossolalia. What is glossolalia and what do they say of glossolalia. You may know it as panting keening raise-the-roof kind of God talk, but my automatic tongue was different. I didn't pray for glossolalia and I fasted because I was hungry, as

disobedient children do when they can't find what they want to eat.

His narration is akin to Leopold Bloom's stream of consciousness, and like Joyce's hero, he notices everything. The owl-like Hedayat often rotates his head one hundred and eighty degrees to take in and narrate his surroundings. There is much poetry in Islam's language, much of it beautiful, even in descriptions of horrific acts, such as a suicide bombing which results in "grey clotted plumage" filling a room. Alauddin, the magic carpet man, asks his passengers how high they wish to fly because "after a certain distance from the earth you feel no fear because it no longer seems real." *Fire in the Unnameable Country* has the same quality, and readers longing for something down-to-earth should look elsewhere.

Dark Tales

Martine Delvaux; David Homel, trans.
Bitter Rose. Linda Leith $14.95

Charles Demers
The Horrors: An A to Z of Funny Thoughts on Awful Things. Douglas & McIntyre $24.95

Reviewed by Maude Lapierre

When faced with horrifying or traumatizing events, an individual can choose either to repress or face them. Martine Delvaux's novel *Bitter Rose* and Charles Demers' collection of essays *The Horrors* employ these opposing approaches. Delvaux's narrative shows how the sinister that lurks in the mundane is inevitably concealed, while Demers' essays bring darkness to the foreground in order to analyze it and rob it of its power. While these two works share little in terms of form or style, both texts shed light on the unsettling way in which negative experiences can play a central role in identity formation.

In her novel, Delvaux creates a dark fairy tale out of the seemingly ordinary events that mark a child's growth and identity formation. Despite the fact that young girls around her disappear, Delvaux's unnamed protagonist maintains a certain distance from these traumatizing events by converting them into stories that she either hears or tells herself. The novel is composed of four sections that specify the young girl's location, and as she narrates her life, from childhood to adulthood, she defines her experiences from the onset as determined by the space she inhabits. Yet regardless of whether she lives in a city, village, or suburb, the narrator's world is shaped by the women around her; it is "a world where no one spoke of men, they were not a subject of conversation because they didn't really exist. . . . Life was lived among girls." As a result of living in a world without men, she understands them through fairy tales, where "the Princes were away, and one day they would suddenly appear after having fought a dragon." Even as the protagonist grows up, she still relies on such tales to capture life as she experiences it, a strategy that allows Delvaux to bring out the darker implications of her protagonist's environment. Much like *Bitter Rose*, fairy tales can be deceptively happy stories that conceal a harsh reality. Thus, when the protagonist's friendship with a local girl, Valence, falters, she imagines that "she'd evaporated into thin air, an ogre had kidnapped her." These references soon take on a more poignant quality once the disappearances cease to be fictional and start manifesting themselves literally in the protagonist's surroundings. Even though her family chooses to live in a village and, later on, in a suburb where "nothing ever happens," kidnappings and disappearances do occur frequently in this novel. *Bitter Rose* thereby shares another point of comparison with the fairy tales it evokes, as female characters are either in danger or burdened with restrictions. Indeed, stories of unwed mothers banned from their homes, of drunken husbands, kidnapped children, and bones found at

the bottom of a river abound in this novel. Those stories are combined with Delvaux's sparse and deadpan narration of everyday events to create the gendered bitterness evoked by the title, as the narrator must grow up in an environment where horrifying events secretly mark the lives of every woman around her. The protagonist therefore finds herself building her identity by "sticking together the mismatched pieces" of her life under the distant yet caring supervision of her mother. In the end, it seems like painful experiences must be either forgotten or repressed to allow the protagonist to make her own path into adulthood.

Demers' essay collection *The Horrors* takes a very different approach, as the author's explicit goal is, to quote the subtitle, to share "funny thoughts on awful things." Demers explains his decision to combine humour and pain by mentioning that in his family, a series of early traumatic losses "produced the rapid alternation between grief and laughter." At times intensely personal and at times more general, nearly all of the essays are grounded in Demers' own experiences, thereby demonstrating the extent to which coping with "awful things" is a part of the author's identity. The collection addresses the potential of humour to undermine "that which terrifies us and oppresses us, in either our political or our personal lives." As Demers states in his introduction, whether or not humour can be a subversive tool remains an open question; but in this collection of essays, humour certainly does defuse the tensions that mark attempts to discuss controversial or "touchy" subjects, such as the societal impacts of capitalism, imperialism, and settlerism. In these essays, humour operates as a strategy through which topics people seldom wish to address, like the fact that Canada is a "country built on genocide and dispossession," can be broached, if only to examine our reluctance to discuss them. In this way, Demers is able to bring uncomfortable truths to the foreground since they are presented as humorous asides. For instance, when he relates how he resembles Canada because he was born on July 1 "to an English-speaking mother and a Québécois father," he mentions that the "analogy isn't perfect, because my folks didn't steal the delivery room from an Indigenous family that was already using it." In the more personal essays, humour enables Demers to close the gap between his experiences and the members of his audience who may not be familiar with the topics he explores. While discussing his struggles with mental illness, his jokes help him represent his symptoms efficiently to people who may not know or understand them. The complex recovery process from depression is likened to economic recessions, and symptoms of obsessive-compulsive disorder are compared to Spiderman's behaviour. *The Horrors* therefore functions as a powerful collection of essays that unearths the sinister aspects of the things we may either take for granted or refuse to think about. While Demers' self-deprecating humour could not be further from Delvaux's sparse yet elegant prose, both of these works share a focus on the sinister and its role in identity formation.

Languages of Change

Tomson Highway
A Tale of Monstrous Extravagance: Imagining Multilingualism. U of Alberta P $10.95

Armand Garnet Ruffo
Norval Morrisseau: Man Changing into Thunderbird. Douglas & McIntyre $32.95

Reviewed by Sylvie Vranckx

Highway's *Tale of Monstrous Extravagance* and Ruffo's *Man Changing into Thunderbird* can both be regarded as Aboriginal Canadian life-writing. Although vastly different from each other and from seminal works like *Halfbreed*, Highway's part-autobiographical lecture and Ruffo's

Anishinaabe biography of the late Norval Morrisseau share an acknowledgement of specific landscapes, of the shaping influence of lineage and community(/ies), and of the history of the authors' respective Cree and Anishinaabe nations both before and after colonization. As founding figures of Aboriginal Renaissance movements (Indigenous Canadian theatre and the Woodland School of painting) from closely related nations, Highway and Morrisseau can both be viewed as preoccupied with bridge-building and cultural revitalization, integrating traditional arts and an array of Western influences to convey and transform the realities of present-day Native communities, with their interpenetrating patterns of continuity and discontinuity.

With typical verve and wit, Highway's contribution to the Henry Kreisel Lecture Series praises multilingualism in the broad sense, including the "universal language" of music. Basing himself on his own journey from his birth in a north-western Manitoba snow bank to his international career, Highway honours the many people who have influenced his life and works, from his part-Dene and part-Inuit relatives to a variety of modernist composers to his friends in the various places he has lived in or travelled to. He argues that speaking several languages provides access to a multiplicity of perspectives, cultures, and worldviews and describes linguistic skill as a cerebral muscle that gains particular strength if trained early. He exemplifies this by his upbringing as the third generation of a line of musicians and as one of "the privileged children of three Native languages [Cree, Dene, and Inuktituk] as distinct one from the other as English is from Arabic and Korean." He compares speaking only one language to living in a house with one window, always wearing the same grey coat and talking endlessly about oneself over dinner, and he demonstrates this through many examples as well as passages in Cree and French with some untranslated information. Conversely, he argues that "forcing your own *one* language down someone's throat is not entirely unlike breaking into his house and stealing his spirit." Since Highway regards learning someone else's language as an act of respect, admiration, and love, he describes unilingualism as harmful to relationships while speaking several languages can help bridge divides—starting with Canada's relationship with its original peoples and Quebec. The titular "monstrous extravagance" stems from the fact that Highway was able to learn several Aboriginal and European languages despite the apparent disadvantage of being born in a remote area in Dene territory, "so far north that Cree, rightly speaking, didn't even belong there." In didactic passages reminiscent of Highway's *Comparing Mythologies* (to which this book could be considered a companion piece), he characterizes Dene as an Earth-like language and Cree as inhabited by Weesageechak's laughter, then opposes the phallic, hierarchical worldview of European languages and religions to the yonic, circular values of Aboriginal ones. This leads him to further essentialisms about the latter group's gender fluidity and its embodiment in the Trickster—generalizations criticized recently in the collection of essays edited by Deanna Reder and Linda Morra, *Troubling Tricksters*—although they could be viewed as strategic to his celebration of Two-Spiritedness and his denunciation of violence against Aboriginal women. However, his relationship to Christianity is nuanced, as he surprisingly describes his experience in a residential school as positive and remembers with nostalgia chanting in the first European language he learned, Latin.

Norval Morrisseau (Copper Thunderbird), however, seems to have experienced Christian encroachment on northern Ontario as a significant source of conflict, turmoil, and loss, as evidenced by Ruffo's account of his life. Drawing on the experience of his own mother, who was born in the 1930s like

Morrisseau, Ruffo describes the painter's life as representative of a time of profound upheaval in Native Canadian societies. As an Anishinaabe poet and playwright, Ruffo eschews the "standard," Eurocentric biography to write a creative re-imagining of Morrisseau's life (in a similar vein as his poetic retelling of the life of Archie Belaney aka Grey Owl), encompassing the "mythic worldview" of Anishinaabe epistemology. Grounded in oral history and written with the painter's "shamanistic blessing," *Man Changing into Thunderbird* "tell[s] a story about Norval Morrisseau's life that is indelibly tied to his art" in a style vividly influenced by the painter's aesthetics. Accordingly, Ruffo's multilayered book abounds with literary devices and Anishinaabe metaphors, and he has also written a collection of ekphrastic poems based on Morrisseau's paintings (*The Thunderbird Poems*). Structured in four parts numbered in Anishinaabemowin, the biography contains poems about different phases of Morrisseau's personal and artistic development: it often reads like a *Künstlerroman* with transformation as its core image, reflecting both the Anishinaabe belief in transitoriness and Morrisseau's constant evolution as a self-taught artist. Thus, the book is titled after one of Morrisseau's masterpieces, a series of six panels based on the legend of a man who changed into a thunderbird. Indeed, Ruffo presents Morrisseau's life journey through the lens of several Anishinaabe teachings and the influence of his spirit helpers, the bear and the thunderbird. Morrisseau believed that he was a born artist fated to revive the past glories of the Great Ojibways, and he developed his art as a language conveying his grandfather's stories. Innovative, sophisticated, and always reinventing himself, he challenged primitivistic stereotypes. However, Ruffo—whom Morrisseau asked "not to leave out anything"—does not gloss over the callous, opportunistic way in which he often treated his patrons as perceived instruments of his destiny; two of them, Selwyn Dewdney and Jack Pollock, are included in the dedication along with Morrisseau himself. Ruffo's tribute also navigates the ironies, paradoxes, and controversies of a shaman-artist striving to heal his community and capable of great generosity, yet often letting his family starve while drinking their money away. For Ruffo, Morrisseau was a haunted man whose individual growth zigzagged between spectacular highs and lows, and his "Bildung" in the book could be seen as a quest for balance and belonging after a lifetime of excess. Accordingly, it contains many dream-like introspective passages investigating the sources of Morrisseau's creativity, power, and spiritual revelations; it is also framed as a reflection of an elderly Morrisseau on his life. Ultimately, Ruffo accomplished a daunting, monumental task with *Man Changing into Thunderbird*, which is certainly worth several readings.

All in all, both books are sophisticated and eloquent, as expected from such respected authors as Highway and Ruffo. Beyond their rootedness in specific Cree/Dene and Anishinaabe realities, they are powerful evocations of different aspects of the artistic process and of the idioms of, respectively, the musical and visual arts. Moreover, they are testaments to the resilience of many Aboriginal cultures and artists, as both analyze the far-reaching damages caused by the imposition of one language and worldview over a number of others. They illustrate in a hopeful and non-Manichean way the particular challenges of being cosmopolitan Aboriginal artists in contemporary Canadian society, with its pervasive contradictions between multiculturalism and neo-colonialism. In a nutshell, they are essential readings for anyone interested in topics such as Native literatures, Native and Canadian studies, and the mapping out of artistic vocabularies.

(Un)Covering Histories

Aislinn Hunter
The World Before Us. Anchor $21.00

Margaret Sweatman
Mr. Jones. Goose Lane $32.95

Reviewed by Olivia Pellegrino

Historical fiction is a genre particularly suited to demythologizing history and submitting it for contemporary reconsideration and re-evaluation. It challenges traditional discourses of history and generates new modes of thinking about the past and its relationship to the present, particularly through its interrogation of the ways in which historical "truths" are constructed. Aislinn Hunter's *The World Before Us* and Margaret Sweatman's *Mr. Jones* each broach such thematic issues as the subjectivity of truth and the relevance of looking to the past to create and substantiate identity in the present. Hunter and Sweatman approach history, the archive, and the construction of facts using different narrative techniques and structures, though they both tend towards a similar purpose: to elucidate the relativity of historical truth and explore its associations with the present.

The World Before Us, Aislinn Hunter's latest novel, follows archivist Jane Standen on her quest to discern the identity of a young woman, known only as N, who disappears from an asylum in 1877. Hunter carefully connects three disparate timelines, linking an intriguing historical narrative to a present-day scholar in search of answers important to her both personally and professionally. Jane's experiences and research become conduits through which the past expresses itself to the reader, though Hunter does not allow Jane to impart her own story, nor those she works to uncover. Rather, the novel is demandingly narrated by several ghostly figures. While they begin as a perplexing cacophony of seemingly unrelated voices, Hunter slowly and masterfully forges meaningful connections between Jane's research and the ghostly narrators, revealing a multilayered narrative that is subtly and effectively pieced together by the novel's conclusion.

Jane's role as an archivist is central to the novel and how it represents the connection between the past and the present, namely the ways in which Jane desperately grasps at and searches the past to provide her present life with meaning. Jane's attempts to fill in the blanks in the archive with her own imagination are, as the colourful narrators reveal, often inaccurate. The deliberate disconnections that Hunter intersperses throughout the narrative are especially effective and one of the great joys of this novel. It tends to remain unclear whether any given recollection originates in Jane's imagination, in the collective memory of the narrators, or from the two coalescing. The fact that there remain important storylines that are never given full closure works well to enhance Hunter's central theme that history is complex and incomplete—that personal identity and memory are influenced by, though also entirely separate from, cultural and historical memory.

One of Hunter's several appreciable talents is her ability to imbue her story with exquisite details. She marvellously brings to life settings, characters, and moments of the past and present, linking them through photographs, archival scraps of paper, and small trinkets. The ghosts that follow Jane hope to uncover some triviality about their vaguely remembered lives, generating a poignant story about constructing identity and the importance of stories in defining a person's life. Hunter's chronological fluidity, coupled with her complex characters, save one or two exceptions, makes for a memorable and engaging read.

Margaret Sweatman's *Mr. Jones* is a Cold War psychological spy thriller. Sweatman mimics the milieu of the Cold War, creating a novel that is not packed with action. Rather, her exploration of postwar paranoia and homophobia is terse and often grotesque, relying on the clash between private and

political worlds to propel the story forward. Sweatman's enigmatic protagonist, Emmett Jones, finds himself under the scrutiny of the RCMP and FBI, accused of Communist activity, leading to several tense and palpably uncomfortable scenes that Sweatman depicts with captivating dialogue. Like Hunter's novel, *Mr. Jones* moves fluidly through time, spanning approximately two decades during which the reader becomes acquainted with Emmett Jones, his photographer wife, and his inscrutable, sometimes unconvincingly characterized daughter. The narrative accompanies these characters through several years, but Sweatman is careful not to allow the reader to form an intimate connection with them. Contrary to Hunter's technique, Sweatman's bare characterization consistently keeps the characters at a distance from one another and from the reader. *Mr. Jones* is thus a novel (and a character) filled with secrets, mirrored by the role that seems to define Emmett above all others: his unrecognized and unrewarded participation in the Bomber Command of World War II.

Some of the most memorable moments in Sweatman's novel are metafictional and self-referential. Emmett Jones expresses his discomfort with the government investigation into his life, and the limited-omniscient narrator reveals that he feels as if, through interrogation and the stories he tells those investigating him, he is creating a fictional account of his life. Within his statement is the crux of Sweatman's novel. While Hunter's Jane Standen seeks to uncover the past and her ghosts aim to discover their memories, Sweatman purposefully muddles the histories of her characters; there is a sense that they know and remember much more than they are willing to share. Consequently, the reader becomes unsure of what is fact and what is fiction; of who in the novel can be trusted. Readers are drawn into the mistrust of McCarthyism that is Sweatman's topic.

Mr. Jones is dense with allusion and approaching it with at least a cursory knowledge of Cold War politics is beneficial. The novel is considerably well researched and invokes several major political players in the conflict. Sweatman's scope is international: much of the novel is set in Japan and Canada, while the powers and influence of America and the Soviet Union loom threateningly in the background. Sweatman does an excellent job of portraying the political climate of America and Canada during the Cold War, and is also able to delve into the personal fears of the masses, from the atomic bomb to the loss of privacy. Like Hunter, Sweatman finds strength in details. It pays to give each small action in this novel great attention. There is very little in *Mr. Jones* that is not purposeful or carefully contrived. Sweatman engages with the old adage that history repeats itself, but does so in a subtle way that depicts how the past can be destructive.

Despite Hunter's moments of flat characterization and Sweatman's challenging prose, both *The World Before Us* and *Mr. Jones* are masterfully composed novels that cleverly present complex chronological structures. Hunter and Sweatman offer readers a chance to reconsider the intricacies of human identity and the way it is shaped by past experience.

Avant, pendant et après la Révolution tranquille

André Langevin
Cet étranger parmi nous: essais et chroniques.
Boréal 27,95 $

Compte rendu par François-Emmanuël Boucher

Ce recueil d'essais et de chroniques d'André Langevin choisis et présentés par Karim Larose contient des réflexions sur les grands thèmes de la Révolution tranquille. Quiconque s'intéresse à cette période du Québec sera enchanté à la lecture de ce livre qui permet de découvrir ou d'approfondir la pensée d'un auteur phare de cette époque. Plus scolaire dans ses premières chroniques qui

touchent surtout au théâtre, au métier de comédien, au conservatoire d'art dramatique, à Sartre et à Camus, ses analyses ne s'arrêtent pas à ces sujets assez simplistes et quasiment incontournables pour le jeune intellectuel canadien-français qui rêve, en 1940, d'une plus grande ouverture sur le monde. La pensée ainsi que les intérêts d'André Langevin évoluent et se complexifient au bonheur du lecteur qui voit apparaître sous ses yeux des réflexions de plus en plus soutenues sur des sujets autrement plus profonds. Le sens et la nécessité d'une Révolution tranquille, la condition socio-économique, linguistique et intellectuelle du Canadien français et de ses productions littéraires de même que les premiers balbutiements du mouvement indépendantiste représentent les thèmes sur lesquels les analyses de Langevin sont les plus abouties. « [N]otre long mépris des choses de l'esprit, notre façon honteuse de parler français, l'affreux visage américain de nos villes et de nos campagnes, l'américanisation outrancière de nos mœurs, la médiocrité satisfaite de tant de nos hommes publics. L'indépendance ou la souveraineté ne modifierait rien de tout cela parce que rien de cela ne nous a été imposé par les Anglo-Saxons, » écrit Langevin dès 1961. Le débat est lancé. Que faire pour sortir de la sous-culture qui a été le lot de ces « 60 000 paysans qui ont mis trois cents ans à engendrer des intellectuels » ? Comment arrêter ce « génocide culturel » et redorer « cette langue humiliée qui fait partie de nous, [qui] est une part essentielle de notre condition et de notre identité » ? Aux yeux de Langevin, « [r]evaloriser l'homme canadien-français semble être . . . la tâche la plus urgente » des années 1960. Pour y arriver, ce dernier souligne quatre grands axes qui constitueraient la case départ du fait qu'ils seraient à la base des autres dysfonctionnements connus, quatre thèmes incontournables du projet à venir qui doivent être abordés de front si le Canada français souhaite enfin sortir de son marasme historique et de sa grande noirceur intellectuelle : la primauté et la qualité du français, l'intégration des immigrants à la communauté francophone, la lente et difficile *bilinguisation* de la minorité anglophone de même que sa surreprésentation économique et politique à l'intérieur de la province du Québec (voir, entre autres, « Un rapport pour le Canada anglais »). Langevin reste persuadé « qu'il n'y a pas incompatibilité entre la réalité socio-économique de l'Amérique du Nord et [l']épanouissement culturel [des francophones] ». Comme le dit ce dernier en 1998, lors de la réception du prix David, son travail intellectuel d'alors lui avait permis « de comprendre que la société de l'époque était trop pauvre, trop aliénée dans son identité pour se montrer généreuse ». Il restera à juger si le chemin a bel et bien été parcouru.

Simplicité volontaire

Roger Payette et Jean-François Payette
Une fabrique de servitude: la condition culturelle des Québécois. Fides 27,95 $

Janusz Przychodzen
De la simplicité comme mode d'emploi. Le minimalisme en littérature québécoise. PUL 32,00 $

Compte rendu par Louis-Serge Gill

Déjà en 1962, le militant et écrivain québécois Hubert Aquin publiait un essai bien connu, « La fatigue culturelle du Canada français », dans lequel il explicitait les raisons économiques, philosophiques, voire même ontologiques, de l'inexistence politique des Canadiens français au profit d'une *surproduction* culturelle.

À la suite d'Aquin, de Serge Cantin et d'autres philosophes, sociologues et historiens qui se sont intéressés à la question, Roger Payette et Jean-François Payette nous offrent *Une fabrique de servitude : la condition culturelle des Québécois* où ils démontrent qu'il existe un engrenage, un « aliénomoteur », bien huilé, de la servitude propre aux Québécois.

Ces derniers sont-ils, ou non, les artisans de leur propre incapacité à avoir une emprise sur le réel? Les auteurs placent le problème de la domination du côté de la production culturelle. Voués à ne pas avoir d'emprise sur le réel et à se réaliser dans un *faire*, les Québécois demeurent dans un *dire* qu'ils développent à outrance par le truchement d'œuvres d'art et de chansons, mais aussi, et c'est le cœur de la thèse des auteurs, dans les œuvres littéraires. Dans ces écrits, tout particulièrement, cet « aliénomoteur » se constitue et se transmet. Ainsi, « il faut démonter la mécanique du *dire* pour la comprendre, comprendre qu'elle peut autant servir la liberté qu'assujettir ce dire à un dessein d'oppression. » Le *dire* libère ou assujettit, c'est selon. Cependant, tout au long de l'ouvrage, c'est l'assujettissement qui nourrit la démonstration.

Les discours littéraires circulent entre les individus, les groupes et les nations, et reflètent la réalité sociale d'une époque, voire de tout un siècle. Pourtant, parmi ces discours qui circulent dans la société québécoise, les auteurs en ont privilégié trois qui, bien qu'emblématiques de moments successifs de la culture québécoise, ne témoignent pas forcément de tout ce qui se trouve en amont et en aval. D'*Un homme et son péché* (1933) de Claude-Henri Grignon aux *Belles-sœurs* (1968) de Michel Tremblay, en passant par le téléroman *La Petite Vie* (1993-1998) de Claude Meunier, le lecteur découvre l'avarice, l'incapacité de créer des conditions propices au changement et l'enfermement des Québécois face à la politique. Des mots comme « liberté », « indépendance » et « politique » inspirent la crainte de personnages et d'individus qui préfèrent le soliloque aux grands discours publics. Quant au *faire*, il semble ne se limiter qu'à des tentatives charnières : les rébellions de 1837-1838 et la Révolution tranquille.

L'essai s'appuie sur une riche documentation et, en faisant dialoguer des sources aussi diverses que Serge Cantin, Micheline Cambron, Paul Ricœur, Jean-Paul Sartre et Boris Cyrulnik, propose une réflexion intéressante pour quiconque s'intéresse au sort du Québec dans les rouages de la domination. Cependant, l'intérêt aurait été tout autre si l'on avait accordé une voix au chapitre à une plus grande diversité d'œuvres littéraires et surtout, si l'on s'était attaché à illustrer le contexte de production desdites œuvres puisque ce qui rassemble *Un homme et son péché*, les *Belles-sœurs* et *La Petite Vie*, est vraisemblablement leur large diffusion et leur grande appréciation du public. Si ces œuvres atteignent un large public, c'est qu'elles offrent au dit public une occasion de réfléchir sur lui-même. Revenons à la prémisse : l'absence de prise collective sur le réel des Québécois se manifeste dans leur « culture sociologique catatonique que décrit admirablement son art, particulièrement sa littérature, culture sociologique qui aujourd'hui est devenue elle-même un dispositif favorisant l'acceptation de leur subordination politique ». Difficile de se sortir de ce raisonnement autrement qu'en posant un regard critique sur soi-même, ce à quoi confie inévitablement Roger et Jean-François Payette.

À l'opposé de ces réflexions politiques, Janusz Przychodzen nous offre un ouvrage surprenant sur le minimalisme en littérature québécoise. La question de départ est fort riche : comment un style devient-il une forme, une poétique? Plusieurs aspects de cette poétique du minimalisme sont dévoilés dans cet essai sur une manière d'habiter le monde par les mots. En alliant à la fois les motifs, les discours, les incongruités, les événements et les non-événements, Przychodzen nous entraîne sur les traces de la littérature en « mode mineur » chez Louis Gauthier, Aki Shimazaki, Jacques Poulin et Dany Laferrière.

Cette « simplicité comme mode d'emploi » trouve ses assises théoriques et pratiques aussi bien chez Theodor Adorno que chez Maurice Blanchot. Peu discuté, le concept de minimalisme littéraire se rapproche du silence et de l'intimisme. Par exemple,

comment l'écrivain peut-il faire des questions morales, des questions de style? Par exemple, comme le relève Przychodzen chez Adorno, le minimalisme a une valeur éthique vouée à l'exploration de la subjectivité. L'exploration de la subjectivité passe, entre autres, par une descente dans le silence blanchotien qu'évoque l'œuvre de Louis Gauthier, *Voyage en Inde avec un grand détour*. Ce voyage qui n'en est pas un déconstruit l'idée d'aventure, « résultat de l'implosion de tout un monde social, culturel, politique et historique ». Chez Aki Shimazaki dans *Le Poids des secrets*, la simplicité de l'intrigue s'ancre dans la sensibilité. Ainsi, sont passés sous lorgnette de l'analyste toute une série d'éléments révélateurs de la recherche d'une vie simple, « imaginée en tant que source de bonheur et idéal de l'existence *naturelle*, sur l'arrière-fond d'un environnement social complexe et même hostile ». Dans le *Volkswagen blues* de Jacques Poulin, c'est Jankélévitch et la conquête du sérieux qui domine. Chez Laferrière, dans *Comment faire l'amour avec un nègre sans se fatiguer*, c'est primitivité, sexualité, éphémère et fragmentation qui prévalent pour en arriver à une « poétique de la chose », par la réification ou par l'attention accordée aux détails.

Malgré la richesse de ces analyses qui nourriront à coup sûr l'intérêt pour le minimalisme en littérature québécoise, il nous manque, en guise de conclusion, une synthèse de ces études qui allient brillamment narratologie et théorie critique.

Short Fiction Rides Again

Matt Rader
What I Want to Tell Goes Like This. Nightwood $21.95

Scott Randall
And to Say Hello. DC Books $21.95

Reviewed by David Eso

Short fictions find their stride midway between truncated novellas and overdrawn vignettes. The form makes contradictory demands of swiftness and patience, daunting for writers and risky for publishers. However, recent recognitions of Canadian short fiction—e.g., Guy Vanderhaeghe's Governor General's Award and Alice Munro's Nobel Prize—should encourage literary academies and industries to place greater value on practitioners of the art. *What I Want to Tell Goes Like This* and *And to Say Hello*, respectively, demonstrate the merits and pitfalls of short fiction.

And to Say Hello takes an irregular tour through central Canada and stages of life. The stories occupy urban retirement homes, high schools, funeral homes, and nurseries (in Manitoba, Quebec, and Ontario). Randall—who teaches English at Algonquin College—explores fitness and illness, family connections and misconnections. His characters build private fantasy worlds, particularly the male figures. One father imagines lives for his estranged daughter. An elderly bachelor invents absentee children while courting a neighbour. *And to Say Hello* is Randall's third collection of stories, following *Last Chance to Renew* (2005) and *Character Actor* (2008) from Signature Editions. Individual voices sometimes arise from Randall's spare realism, although his implacable narrators frequently generalize or over-narrate, thereby robbing some stories of their energies.

Rader—who teaches in the Department of Creative Studies at the University of British Columbia Okanagan—is well served by his poetic apprenticeship. After three collections of verse from House of Anansi (2011) and Nightwood Editions (2005, 2008), fiction allows this writer a longer view—especially in the story sequence that traces the murder, by police, of union leader Albert "Ginger" Goodwin. The book depicts violence, accident (one father unwittingly kills his son), and labour injustice (e.g., in "The Children of the Great Strike"). A good number of Rader's stories—"Wejack," for example, or "Grandforks,

1917"—create novel-sized worlds within their short lifespans. The richness of the collection stems in part from its multiplicity of sources. Rader sets contemporary situations against fictions populated by historical figures, such as the Doukhobor leader Peter Vasilevich Verigin and the outlaw Harvey "Kid Curry" Logan. Stories based on archival research depict extremes of cruelty and poverty; those themes haunt the comparatively tepid scenarios relayed in the contemporary pieces. *What I Want to Tell Goes Like This* is a dark, imaginative collection that explores the economics of survival in British Columbia ("a squatter's republic in the boundary country").

And to Say Hello studies the means by which joy and connection elude Randall's modern characters. The collection pursues these qualities in romantic relationships, lapsed friendships, professional work, and on "ratemymiddleage.ca," but comes up short. It shares the sombre temper of Rader's collection but lacks its unique flavour. Although Randall's narrative perspectives shift between male and female, young and old, these voices do not vary in sufficient measure to make those shifts believable or important. Randall does write of male adolescence with particular enthusiasm, and develops tender portraits of aged persons. When eccentric language surfaces, Randall demonstrates an ear for irony and paradox: the "non-denominational atheist," for example, or the man who suffers nostalgia for shopping malls in the era of Big Box stores. Moments like these, however, are checked by narrators' frequent over-explanations and indulgences of cliché ("truth is," "truth be told," "though I hate to admit it"). Randall's narrators too frequently universalize—e.g., "like every parent before him," "such is human nature." When sex emerges, it comes disguised in chaste euphemisms such as "gentleman callers," "special lady friends," and "life-giving delicates." "Comorbidities" focuses on bodily integrity as it bears witness to a family's care for an ailing mother over decades. This final entry aptly tops a collection that explores difficulties of parenting, aging, and growing up. However, amalgamating five siblings into an indistinct mass identified only as "we" impairs the potency and potential of this story. Despite these criticisms, the collection creates a curious admixture of bleakness and sweetness—although that combination may not convince all readers.

Rader's title introduces his narrators' struggles with their "want to tell." Telling proves complicated in the tales. In place of speech, one character "sucks the words back through his teeth." Listeners stare "like he might go on, like there was more for him to say." Concern for the ineffable inoculates *What I Want to Tell Goes Like This* against over-narration; here, important speeches go unspoken. Rader's plots devolve from misdirection, from confusion of recurrence. The stories often speak out defiantly against their narration: protesting repetitions of description, for example ("enough with the light"). Frequently, speech and silence interpenetrate. "The wisteria. The hosta. The apple trees": "Wejack" demonstrates how one might "grow dumb with plant names." Randall's characters possess an equivalent inability to relate themselves (in that they do not fully trust their readers to make necessary connections) but in comparison lack the diverting self-consciousness of Rader's speakers.

Within unromantic depictions of violent working environments, Rader uncovers unexpected humour. In "Children of the Strike," union members take exception when accused of attempting to dynamite local infrastructure—specifically, the railway bringing strikebreakers to Cumberland. They take offence not at the charge of criminality but at the idea that explosive experts among them would have failed, had they attempted the task. Humorous moments like these provide

useful digestive aids for a collection that deals in grief, regret, murder, and rape. If Rader makes a misstep, it comes with the final story about James Joyce. The quality of the story is high and "All This Was a Long Time Ago" won the *Malahat Review*'s 2014 Jack Hodgins Founders' Award. However, its inclusion clashes with the rest of the gathering. This partial history of Joyce marks the only overtly literary contribution to the offering and turns away from the strongest elements within the stories that precede it. Rader proves himself a competent craftsman with this collection, drawing on both writerly experience and the challenge of a new form. The result: a satisfying blend of confidence and freshness.

Narrative Transparencies and Other Melodies

Arleen Paré
He Leaves His Face in the Funeral Car. Caitlin $18.00

Al Pittman; Michael Crummey, ed.
Al Pittman: Collected Poems. Breakwater $24.95

Robyn Sarah
My Shoes Are Killing Me. Biblioasis $18.95

Reviewed by Catherine Owen

Narrative intent is at the heart of these works by three poets at varying stages in their vocations: Arleen Paré closer to the "start," Robyn Sarah long-published, and Al Pittman deceased since 2001 and only now "seeing" his *Collected Poems* released. Sarah and Pittman in particular are concerned to be lucid and comprehensible at all times, though Sarah presents more of an affinity with form; Pittman's style barely changes through his entire oeuvre, remaining plain-spoken lyrics, along the lines of a Peter Trower or an Al Purdy. Paré is also accessible though she frequently plays with the breath between lines and often offers the reader more of an ear for the particular music of poetry.

Sarah's *My Shoes Are Killing Me*, which won the 2015 Governor General's Award for Poetry, is a mostly predictable assemblage of unassuming lyrics about common topics: time, mortality, family. Sarah's aural gift is most potently apparent in her form poems, too few and far between in this collection. Pieces like "Spent" with the repeated initial refrain, "Afterwards, they slept," the perfectly cadenced "Villanelle on a Line from WCW," and the long sequential triadic stanzas of "Squares for a Patchwork Quilt" are brilliantly pared down to an intriguing mood as evidenced by even one stanza of the last poem:

> I don't dote on every leaf the way I should.
> We grew up in the very thick
> of a smoke cloud. I think it is all smoke.

The resonances between don't/dote, every/leaf, thick/think, and the slight but pungent melancholy sketched around then and now and the continuous presence of lack, are powerful. And lines from other poems, such as "The past is hazardous / as well as treasure house," or "the acid camaraderie of the office," sing with that complex tune that should be the core of poetry. Unfortunately, as a line in "Squares" attests, "the problem is on the very edge of cliché," and in many other poems, Sarah laxly falls into this typical abyss in which, aiming for the easily understood, she instead offers up the overly digested, in the manner of poems by Glen Sorestad or Allan Briesmaster. Such a well-lauded poet shouldn't be getting away with so many well-trodden phrases. The snow is like a "threadbare cotton blanket," there is not "a soul in sight," yellow leaves are "clinging to a branch," but it's "all spilled milk now / no going back," there's all "the bells and whistles," a farm offers a "breath of peace" and "a timeless place" while she "waits for her heart to find her." And then there's the title of the book itself. If Sarah were using these clichés ironically or as elements of "street speech" they would have their raison d'être,

but otherwise they simply serve to diminish the energies of what could be poems that, like Anne Compton's best, seek to etch a haunting vista of feeling in the mind.

Al Pittman, whose work was mostly self-published through Breakwater Books, the press he founded, now has all his poems collected in a sizable tome from that same outfit. His books span two time periods: 1966-1978 and 1993-1999, though the latter poems feel just as dated as the former, nearly all being free form "salt of the earth" stories of youth, fatherhood, marriage, and the quaintly urban/rural realm of his native Newfoundland. Pittman is emotively engaging in individual pieces such as his widely anthologized "April," "Confession," and "Charmer," in which he utilizes his gently evocative eye to provide moving, and near-Frostian, chants—"the woodpile, the fence, the chopping block"—or intimate silliness between lovers or even unlikely compatriots, as in the latter lyric. One of a few poems dedicated to Patrick Lane, "Charmer," provides evidence of the poet's satyr-like proclivities while allowing Pittman to dip into the coarse vernacular: "Well, I'll be damned! / And I damn well would have been had I said anything like that / to anyone's mother."

His most potent love lyrics remind one of Creeley's or even Cummings', in impulse if not linguistically. Whether for his daughters, his wife, or a monarch butterfly's "particular beauty" in "The Haunting," with its "wings all crumpled / from [his] foot having stepped / suddenly upon him," Pittman's tone is always humble, never contrived, and panging with the inevitability of mourning. Other strong poems in this nearly four-hundred-page volume are "Shanadithit," "Funeral," "Poem For Marilee, Sleeping," "Angelmaker", "Song Also," "Another Vesuvius," "The Worst Birthday Gift I Ever Gave," "The Dandelion Killers," "What My Father Said about Sound," "The Music in Your Mind," and "Wanderlust." His most essential pieces are in his 1978 book, *Once When I Was Drowning,* dedicated to Alden Nowlan, a major influence. A preface would have been welcome to explain why there is such a major gap between this collection and 1993's *Dancing in Limbo.*

Sadly, when Pittman sprawls out in lengthier poems during this era, he becomes blowsy and full of goofy exclamations like "Blessed is she among women!" or "Keep on dancing, kid!" Even in his final collection, 1999's *Thirty for Sixty,* he continues to proffer moments of song as in the lines from "The Pink, White & Green": "The waist-high hay falls away / in sea-green sheets with every swipe / of the stone-honed blade," though the endings often collapse into themselves rather than zing to a close. Pittman was mainly a poet of the 1970s, and thus while it's pleasurable to reread his poems, a Selected of his most memorable would have done his vision more justice.

Arleen Paré's "follow-up" to her stellar 2014 Governor General's-award-winning *Lake of Two Mountains* isn't quite as striking a volume, likely because it presents us with individual lyrics rather than an overtly linked sequence, although most do focus on the theme of mortality. Yet *He Leaves His Face in the Funeral Car* is still rich with intensely realized poems, especially dealing with grief. Paré opens vigorously with an Elizabeth Bishop-styled, or perhaps P. K. Page-reminiscent, piece called "If this turns into story it's gone too far." Its opening lines, "They were butchering a sprawled deer / big as a Beauty Queen," and closing images of "white curtains" and "frilly kale" that "emerald-greens all the bins" combine to create a solidly compelling juxtaposition. "These are the Trials of Water" is possibly Paré's most amazing poem to date. It begs to be recited like all the necessary poetry in the world. The openings of the first four stanzas are echoingly anaphoric: "That it weeps; . . . [t]hat it sleeps; . . . [t]hat it stains; . . . [t]hat it stinks." The remainder of the piece writhes its startling sinuosities over the pages towards the poem's "mouth" or conclusion,

where water becomes "the longing to be unfettered, / the common wish to be released."

The rest of this collection doesn't quite attain such an exquisite pitch again, though a wealth of pieces still spring out: "Once," "My Mother Had No Winter Coat," "In Nomine Dust" (the second most stunning poem in the book), the titular poem, "Interior: A Brief History of Landscape," "Memorial on the Boulevard," "Moonrind," "Nine Reasons to Prefer the Pear" (though it's a tad "Creative Writing School Exercise"), and "Fire Thorn." Clichés such as "velvet glove" (though the delectable words "ankylosing" and "gibbous" otherwise save this poem too) and the "crows hunch" are rare, and it is often only minor inconsistencies in the decision to use capital letters or not from poem to poem that irks. Otherwise, Paré has written another worthy text that deepens our knowledge of the grief-terrain and regularly rises beyond merely telling into less-forgettable melodies.

Tired Time Travelling

Craig Savel

Traversing Leonard. Anvil $16.00

Reviewed by Dani Spinosa

A review of Craig Savel's debut novel, *Traversing Leonard*, must inevitably start with the fact that the novel was produced over 2014's Labour Day weekend and was chosen as a winner of the thirty-seventh annual "3-Day Novel Contest." The contest is a fascinating practice in speed-writing that veers almost into automatic territory and it has a rich history which I have neither the space nor the expertise to discuss at length here, but that can be found on its website (3daynovel.com). As part of this competition, in *Traversing Leonard*, Savel unsurprisingly falls back on some of the more tried and tired conventions of the pseudo-science fiction it attempts to create. In its quick-paced 123 pages, *Traversing Leonard* relies on clichés of the genre ("What is science fiction but science that hasn't been invented yet?") and on pure dad jokes including a "sometimes a cigar is just a cigar" throw-away that made this reader groan audibly.

The real problem with *Traversing Leonard* is that its characters are either too stereotypical or too inconsistent to be engaging. The title character, Leonard, is an insane, old, and unhygienic former professor obsessed with traversing quantum bubbles and shunned by the more corporate-minded scholars in his department. Savel describes him in such a heavy-handed way that it is impossible to read him as anything other than generic convention; he knows only three things, "math, physics, and how to be really annoying." Leonard's counterpart, the younger Pavel/Paul (who isn't even consistent in name), has unclear motivations and desires, and his relationship with Leonard is fraught with vagaries and discontinuities. Though it is clearly a mentor-mentee relationship, we are told that their story "[i]sn't *Tuesdays with Morrie.*" It's unclear what either character gets out of their somewhat clandestine bond, but readers are meant to follow them as they—with relative ease—solve quantum equations well beyond this reader's comprehension and suddenly develop the ability to time travel into alternate quantum bubbles, to alternate universes in the past.

In the time travel sections of *Traversing Leonard*, the book's clichés move from trying to downright frustrating, as Leonard and Paul grapple with how to deal with gender and race politics in 1950s New York. While overhearing a conversation between Josie and Elise, Paul scoffs at one of the women's suggestion that women have to organize with and like the racial and class rights-based movements of the time, as though intersectionality has not been a hallmark of most feminist movements after 1980. It is not that Paul ignores gender politics in his move to the 1950s, but rather that his small gift to the rigid norms of femininity in that quantum bubble is to provide Elise with her

first oral sex experience and to ultimately belabour her discomfort with 1950s gender to the point that it almost feels like a joke.

On the point of sexual experience, I cannot help but add that the sex scenes in *Traversing Leonard* are some of the more uncomfortable and fumbling descriptions I have ever read. They read more like juvenile fanfiction than anything genuinely erotic or literary, and at one point Savel unironically uses the term "privates." But, perhaps the silliness of "privates" is not so farfetched for a character like Paul, who at one point notes that a sad piano song "matched [his] feelings," or who mourns the death of a religious acquaintance by proselytizing, "Jesus didn't save him, did he?"

The novel is not a waste of time, though. While the overall message of the work is unclear, at times dismissing the idea of reality and at other times warning that "you can't fool reality," the book's ending is a surprise. While I anticipated it to end as many time-travelling stories do—when characters realize that they should not interfere with the past, that what they must do to get what they want is to change their *future* behaviour—the book instead has both characters realizing, in their own ways, that they cannot escape the worst parts of themselves and that the problem is not the world, but their own flawed personalities. Neither shows signs of change, only a nihilistic resignation to his own inadequacies. It's not a happy ending, but it is perhaps more realistic considering the fact that both characters are academics.

Amours contemporaines, masculinités traditionnelles

Alexandre Soublière

Amanita virosa. Boréal 25,95 $

Compte rendu par Evelyne Ledoux-Beaugrand

Le champignon qui donne son titre au deuxième roman d'Alexandre Soublière, *Amanita virosa*, est une espèce à la fois commune et mortelle : sous ses dehors agréables, voire banals, l'amanite virale est un poison violent. Comme dans une chanson connue de Gainsbourg et comme dans *Roméo et Juliette*, une référence importante du roman, le poison est ici indissociable d'un amour ensorcelant. Winchester Olivier, narrateur du roman, tombe pour Elsa, « Démone. Sorcière. Succube, » ce qui provoquera la chute de sa société Hyaena. L'entreprise interlope, fondée avec son acolyte Samuel Colt, se spécialise dans l'espionnage intime. Les deux hommes exploitent un voyeurisme ambiant, déjà alimenté par Internet et les réseaux sociaux; ils fournissent à de riches clients les images de leur « proie », leur procurant ainsi l'illusion d'« être au centre des ébats ».

Le roman de Soublière oppose de manière dichotomique et même caricaturale amour et érotisme, le premier étant synonyme de civilisation, le second l'attribut d'une animalité. L'érotisme y désigne en effet une sexualité étayée sur le mensonge et tient surtout de la possession avilissante et non consentie de l'autre, c'est-à-dire de son intimité via les images dérobées par Hyaena et parfois de sa personne. En revanche, l'amour, « *le vrai* », est forcément tragique suivant la référence shakespearienne, et il devient révélateur de « vérité » : vérité sur l'innocence d'Elsa, accusée à tort du meurtre de son mari, et dévoilement du vrai visage d'un Winchester Olivier charognard qui fait des proies des autres sa pitance.

Au-delà de ce binarisme, c'est la question des rapports de pouvoir et de la masculinité qui se trouve au cœur d'*Amanita virosa*. Un pouvoir viril qui s'exerce aux dépends des personnages féminins et dont sont significatifs les noms de fabricants d'armes portés par les deux principaux protagonistes, les lexiques de la chasse et de la guerre, ainsi que la récurrence de certaines expressions semi-traduites (« ils n'ont jamais fuck », « mère fucker », etc.) présentes dans la bouche des personnages masculins

indifféremment de leur appartenance de classe, et qui ont pour effet d'aplanir les différences sociales entre eux. Autrement dit, les hommes sont tous également dominants dans *Amanita virosa* et c'est là la tache aveugle du roman qui aurait pu dénoncer le patriarcat et proposer de nouveaux modèles masculins, mais qui n'arrive qu'à reconduire ses formes les plus éculées. La masculinité de Winchester, de Colt et de leurs clients masculins est soit violente et possessive, soit tempérée par l'amour et mise au service de la protection de celle qui était d'abord une proie. Or, que les hommes soient posés en chasseurs ou en défenseurs, les femmes restent vis-à-vis d'eux des victimes, des proies à prendre, de gré et surtout de force, ou des objets à protéger de la voracité des autres prédateurs.

Si, comme l'écrit Isabelle Boisclair dans *Mines de rien*, « dès qu'on adopte un regard féministe, plus moyen de voir le monde autrement qu'à travers ces lunettes, qui révèlent comme en surimpression la dissymétrie des rapports entre les hommes et les femmes », il suffit d'un coup d'œil minimalement féministe pour constater que la domination masculine imprègne tout le roman et fait achopper la critique, pourtant pertinente, que fait Soublière d'une société artificielle, narcissique et capitaliste.

Western Vistas

Maria Tippett
Made in British Columbia: Eight Ways of Making Culture. Harbour $32.95

Rhea Tregebov, ed.
Naked in Academe: Celebrating Fifty Years of Creative Writing at UBC.
McClelland & Stewart $11.99

Reviewed by Krzysztof Majer

Over the last several decades, British Columbians have found ever newer ways of challenging the cultural dominance of central Canada. As these two publications show, the amount of artistic production in the westernmost province is now unprecedentedly high, as is its diversification and overall quality. While *Naked in Academe* focuses on the dazzling output of the UBC Creative Writing Department since its inception in 1963, *Made in British Columbia* offers a back story of the rich artistic ferment which helped bring it about. A mere four years earlier, George Woodcock almost single-handedly established *Canadian Literature*, permanently altering the rules of the domestic critical game and shaping a context for many writers from the West; this is just one of historian Maria Tippett's arresting accounts of the province's cultural life.

Tippett had demonstrated her vast knowledge of the region's artistic and geographical landscape in numerous earlier publications, such as her award-winning critical biographies of Emily Carr and of Bill Reid. In her new book, she juxtaposes eight artists working in a number of fields: apart from Carr and Reid, they are Francis Rattenbury, Martin Grainger, George Woodcock, George Ryga, Jean Coulthard, and Arthur Erickson. Although her focus is on traditional media, Tippett's backward glance at a century of British Columbian creativity is not one of easy nostalgia.

The account is framed by two chapters on architects (Rattenbury and Erickson), as if constructing a textual equivalent of space in which a century of culture-making will occur. Both contain reports on famous but initially flawed edifices: Victoria's Legislative Building, the 1897 contours of which were originally traced with lights as a cover-up, and Burnaby's SFU, where—upon opening in 1965—some buildings remained unfinished. Yet the structures not only delighted the public, but also made their respective architects' reputations. Here, unobtrusively, one of the book's key themes reveals itself: that of contingency or chance.

Although Tippett builds her narrative around (canonical) artist figures, she steers

clear of aggrandizement or romanticization. Notions such as "greatness" or "genius" give way to ideas of talent, coincidence, industry, social and economic privilege, self-promotion, and networking; after all, the larger story in the background is the gradual professionalization and institutionalization of Canadian culture. What unites *Made in British Columbia*, apart from geography, is the precariousness of these frequently intersecting storylines; absent is the familiar narrative arc of mythic inevitability. This method may occasionally result in overplaying certain events, as with the unclear sexual incident between Carr and her father—"the brutal telling"—which is authoritatively linked with her lifelong devotion to art. Mostly, however, it offers insight into lives that register as decidedly human, often fractured or even tragic. For these careers were hardly all successful or fulfilling: there is a pattern of early ascent and slow decline (Rattenbury, Erickson), sometimes complicated by ethnicity and/or activism (Ryga) or a gender-driven sidelining (Coulthard, Carr).

Another thread in these yarns is, naturally, the landscape. Sometimes it is a "butchered" colonial garden, as in *Woodsmen of the West* (1908); it may also become a powerful source of the sublime, e.g., in Carr's paintings; alternatively, it forms an almost organic whole with architecture, as in Erickson's post-Japanese houses. However, it is invariably a concern for Tippett, who invests these accounts with an ecological consciousness.

No less ubiquitous is the theme of Indigenous rights. Although of the eight artists only Bill Reid is of Native ancestry, the issue—with references to dispossessions, residential schools, and the anti-potlatch law—figures prominently in chapters on Rattenbury's "Edenic" Victoria, Carr's landscapes, Ryga's plays, and Coulthard's music. By today's standards, even the well-intentioned engagements with Aboriginal art would risk being dismissed as cultural appropriation; nevertheless, Tippett is careful to point out not just the earnestness of Carr, Coulthard, and especially Ryga in *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* (1967), but also the effect of such encounters on subsequent generations of artists. At the other end of the spectrum, she boldly queries Reid's vexed relationship with the authenticity of the Native tradition, and his idea of the "artifake." Here, too, Tippett refuses to provide comfortable answers to cultural riddles, opting for a nuanced report.

The research is unsurprisingly solid and all the more impressive given the range of methodologies, but Tippett rarely allows these to weigh down the narrative. The latter is frequently bolstered by a well-placed anecdote (e.g., of the impoverished Erickson living in a Florentine bathroom, or Grainger's "healthy" foot-long cigarettes) but never gossipy; ready to debunk myths and legends, the accounts are always detailed, honest, and witty.

Having emerged from the heady environment described by Tippett, UBC's writing program is understandably strong. The number of writers of high critical standing represented in *Naked in Academe* is impressive: among the alumni are Steven Galloway, Madeleine Thien, Bill Gaston, Sina Queyras, Eden Robinson, Michael Christie, Nancy Lee, and Stephanie Bolster. Exploding the usual prejudice against creative writing (that "it can't be taught" and that the resulting pieces are uniform in style and tone), *Naked in Academe* offers a plethora of stylistic positions across a number of genres (such as fiction, drama, and poetry). Although mostly published in this century, some of these pieces have arguably become "classics" (e.g., Thien's "Simple Recipes" or Lee's "Dead Girls"). Rhea Tregebov—a poet and novelist in her own right, as well as a professor in the Program—has demonstrated remarkable expertise in selecting texts which enact diversity, cutting across cultural borders (e.g., Kevin Chong's "No

Christmas at the Happy Panda"), confronting taboos (e.g., Alison Acheson's "Soft Palate Remembers"), and bending the rules of genre (e.g., Sarah Leavitt's graphic poems). Sandwiched between Keith Maillard's foreword and a postscript by Jack Hodgins, the contents of *Naked in Academe* are—in keeping with its subtitle—a cause for celebration, and a worthy continuance of the creative ferment that once defined British Columbian culture.

L'odeur du printemps érable

Élise Turcotte

Le parfum de la tubéreuse. Alto 19,95 $

Compte rendu par Daniel Laforest

Le parfum de la tubéreuse est le récit d'une saison empreinte de doute dans la vie émotionnelle d'une écrivaine et professeure de littérature au collégial. Le métier de la littérature y est vécu comme une alternance de dépressions et de livres écrits « pour s'en sortir ». Cela pourrait être le résumé d'au moins la moitié des livres d'Élise Turcotte. Néanmoins cette nouvelle plaquette écartelée entre la prose poétique et le réalisme gagne des zones qu'on sent inexplorées dans l'esprit même de son auteure. La raison est que Turcotte a choisi de situer son angoisse dans un contexte autrement alourdi par l'agitation sociale et le sentiment historique. « L'atmosphère était fébrile au collège. . . . Les étudiants se préparaient à une grève qui durerait des mois. Mais pour le moment, nous l'ignorions. » La grève se muera en une convulsion à l'échelle de la société. Ce sera le « printemps érable » québécois dont *Le parfum de la tubéreuse* ne cache pas son ambition de touiller les cendres encore tièdes. Comment s'y prend Turcotte? Par le biais de l'interrogation; et cela avec une intelligence et une profondeur de vue admirables. Avoir été enseignant, écrivain, lecteur, artiste et thuriféraire du langage durant ces mois chauds, c'est avoir dû vivre chaque jour avec la question visant non pas à savoir si la poésie peut être politique, mais d'abord si elle peut être partagée. Cette question angoissée occupe à mots couverts le centre du *parfum de la tubéreuse.* Voilà sans doute pourquoi l'odorat, celui parmi les cinq sens qui se rapporte le plus immédiatement à ce qui existe au milieu de nous et n'appartient à personne — les humeurs, les atmosphères — se voit consacré dans le titre du roman. Les miracles de cohésion collective comme celui du printemps 2012 sont condamnés à la désagrégation dans l'opportunisme récupérateur de leurs lendemains. Restent leurs motifs, la rémanence de leurs clameurs, et de leur atmosphère justement. C'est en ce sens que le récit de Turcotte est une méditation sur le métier d'enseignant qui porte loin. La narratrice se rend réceptive aux résonances des événements, elle rassemble les motifs qu'elle voit s'organiser dans l'air de son temps et tente d'en communiquer quelque chose à une étudiante plus allumée quoique plus imprévisible que les autres. Mais la faculté d'agir, quant à elle, a passé dans l'autre camp. Elle s'est incarnée dans les ressources humaines, dans la bureaucratie pédagogique, et spécifiquement dans le pragmatisme buté d'une collègue de la narratrice qui tente de torpiller sa carrière. Le récit conjugue ainsi les mondes : le rationalisme mesquin est une faillite de l'imagination exactement équivalente à celle dissolvant les exhalaisons symboliques de la foule politique dans le retour au consensus flasque. La prose de Turcotte est ce qui survit de tout cela. Mais elle exprime une énergie déjà à moitié épuisée d'avoir voulu nommer tout ce qu'elle n'aime pas et tout ce contre quoi elle résiste. L'odeur de la tubéreuse, qu'on croyait autrefois incommodante pour les femmes et déroutante pour les jeunes filles, n'est en rien détestable chez Turcotte. Tout au plus est-elle un peu moite dans ce récit étouffé par sa propre sensibilité et qui donne l'impression de chercher son air.

Truths and Consequences

Jean Barman
French Canadians, Furs, and Indigenous Women in the Making of the Pacific Northwest.
U of British Columbia P $39.95

Margery Fee
Literary Land Claims: The "Indian Land Question" from Pontiac's War to Attawapiskat.
Wilfrid Laurier UP $38.99

Reviewed by Nicholas Bradley

In 2015, when Justin Pierre James Trudeau was elected to serve as the twenty-third prime minister, and when the *Final Report* of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was issued, Canadians were compelled to think about the past and the future at once.[1] The memory of the father was summoned by the dash and confidence of the son, who promoted an idea of Canada that, while different from the polity envisioned by Pierre Elliott Trudeau, would be a more perfect version of the Just Society. Only forty-three years old at the time of his election, Trudeau the younger appeared to represent a generational shift in perspective. And after years of inquiry and testimony, the Commission produced a revisionary account of a squalid aspect of Canadian history. Its recommendations moreover were tied to a new national narrative of reconciliation and progress:

> Although much of the . . . report has focused on the federal government and the churches that ran the residential schools, other institutions, sectors, and organizations in Canadian society must also contribute to reconciliation. Public dialogue and action on reconciliation must extend beyond addressing the history and legacy of the residential schools. If Canada is to thrive in the twenty-first century, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples must also thrive. This requires healthy communities and real economic and social change. (193)

Reconciliation—the restoration of amicable relations, the mending of fences—could lead, the *Report* suggests, to a new state of affairs, and the reassessment of the past should permit a happier and perhaps once unimaginable future.[2] Canada's ideals would be not merely peace, order, and good government, but instead both universal prosperity and the recognition of the inalienable claims of Indigenous peoples to the country's lands.[3] Reconciliation is not synonymous with absolution, and the acknowledgement of injustices does not wipe clean Canada's historical slate, but the aspirational *Report* departs from the prevailing attitudes of officialdom.

Nearly fifty years ago, when the first Trudeau was in office and Jean Chrétien was the Minister of Indian Affairs, his own prime ministership a quarter-century away, the *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy* (1969) proposed repealing the Indian Act in order to achieve an unprecedented equality among Canadians. The foreword to the infamous White Paper was marked by rhetorical flourishes:

> Governments can set examples, but they cannot change the hearts of men. Canadians, Indians and non-Indians alike stand at the crossroads. For Canadian

> society the issue is whether a growing element of its population will become full participants contributing in a positive way to the general well-being or whether, conversely, the present social and economic gap will lead to their increasing frustration and isolation, a threat to the general well-being of society. For many Indian people, one road does exist, the only road that has existed since Confederation and before, the road of different status, a road which has led to a blind alley of deprivation and frustration. This road, because it is a separate road, cannot lead to full participation, to equality in practice as well as in theory. (Department of Indian Affairs 5)

The government may indeed have been sure of its convictions, but the White Paper was met with hostility by the "Indian people" it purported to help. In *The Unjust Society* (1969), a damning polemic, Harold Cardinal denounced the policy as a denial of rights and a relinquishment of responsibilities that would lead to annihilation: "The new Indian policy . . . is a thinly disguised programme of extermination through assimilation" (1). The *Statement* represented to Cardinal only the latest manifestation of a treachery as old as the country itself—if not far older:

> The history of Canada's Indians is a shameful chronicle of the white man's disinterest, his deliberate trampling of Indian rights and his repeated betrayal of our trust. Generations of Indians have grown up behind a buckskin curtain of indifference, ignorance and, all too often, plain bigotry. Now, at a time when our fellow Canadians consider the promise of the Just Society, once more the Indians of Canada are betrayed by a programme which offers nothing better than cultural genocide.[4] (1)

The White Paper was abandoned by Chrétien and Trudeau, but a sense of deception persisted.[5] The span of time since 1969 has witnessed shifts in policy, public opinion, and the composition of Canadian society; yet it may also appear that little has changed, for despite the recent language of reconciliation, "[t]he question of the land," as Margery Fee writes in *Literary Land Claims* (2015), "has not been resolved" (38), and "[t]he powerful stories of imperialism, nationalism, and capitalist development are all alive and well" (213).

In the decades after 1969 a series of legal judgements gradually upheld the existence of Aboriginal title and eroded the legitimacy of the doctrine of *terra nullius*.[6] *Literary Land Claims* is an inquiry into the perpetually contested nature of land in Canada as it has been represented in Canadian literature before and during the present era of legal land claims and treaty settlements. Fee asks how "the formation of a Canadian literature" has "been complicit in the colonial process of occupying and claiming land" (4). In response, she ranges through the period "between Pontiac's War (1763–1765) and 1990, when an armed struggle between the people of Kanehsatake and the town of Oka, the Sûreté du Québec, and the Canadian army made it perfectly clear that the Indian land question was unresolved" (13). Although she analyzes recent events, Fee lingers on John Richardson's *Wacousta* (1832) and on other works and figures of an early phase of Canadian letters—Richardson's *The Canadian Brothers* (1840), the courtroom speeches of Louis Riel, the writings and performances of E. Pauline Johnson/Tekahionwake—before moving to the later examples of Archibald Belaney/Grey Owl and Harry Robinson. She discovers in the works at issue a vital counter-narrative that disputes the overarching Canadian claim to Indigenous territory: "marked by the history of colonization," they render visible "the outlines of the powerful but dynamic discourses that stabilize the colonial claim to land" (2). And when "contemporary Indigenous writers . . . make what look like literary land claims," they deviate from Canadian convention because "their notions of land and the

human relationship to it are grounded not in Romantic nationalism but in Indigenous epistemologies tied to specific stories, languages, communities, histories, and lands" (8). The narrative and counter-narratives that Fee identifies frequently intersect, leading to seemingly irresoluble contradictions. Of Riel's trial for treason in 1885 Fee writes that "[o]nce again, a case regarding Indigenous land rights ended in a way that seriously damaged the honour of the Crown. All of these cases are governed by the same paradox: even if the government has broken the law, it still runs the trial" (103).[7] Yet she finds that "Riel demonstrates in his speeches a clear awareness of the paradoxes of his situation and heightens them for effect" (101). Paradox, a figure that frustrates and illuminates at once, may be the national literary trope.

Fee was a student during the exuberance of the Centennial moment. She notes that the very critical mode that she now resists still commands attention: "Often, because it formed me, I find myself writing both with and against Canadian literary nationalist approaches" (38). That period was marked by contradiction, however, and in an instance of personal reflection, Fee describes an encounter with Harold Cardinal that suggests that an uncomplicated nationalism was never truly tenable:

> In the fall of 1968, I had the good fortune to meet and talk to many Native activists at a student-run conference held at Glendon College of York University in Toronto. . . . I even got to drive Cardinal in from the airport. Although I was impressed by his beaded buckskin jacket and his amazing way with the audience, he was too earnest for my taste. (I had just turned twenty; he was twenty-three, and had just been elected leader of the Indian Association of Alberta—I had no idea how impressed I should have been by that!) (17-18)

Fee's PhD thesis—"English-Canadian Literary Criticism, 1890–1950: Defining and Establishing a National Literature" (1981)—examined the Romantic ideology of earlier critics who sought to discern in Canadian literature an expression of the nation's soul, the *Volksgeist* (*Literary* 49). (It was supervised by no less august a figure than Claude Bissell.) In *Literary Land Claims*, Fee presents alternatives to the "Romantic nationalist" view that "a national literature constitutes a land claim" (1). Her book's provocative title originates in an essay published in 1987, bespeaking a preoccupation of long standing (ix), and *Literary Land Claims* is perhaps the culmination of a project started forty years ago.[8] Fee, who began teaching at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in 1993, belongs to an illustrious group of Canadianists at that university whose names—Grace, Kröller, New, Ricou—are known to everyone in the field. Although there is no paradigmatic UBC method or school of thought, the critics' varied approaches are linked by their resistance to the pat and conventional; *Literary Land Claims*, which tests the assumptions of Canadian literary studies, is decidedly iconoclastic and always stimulating.[9]

Fee suggests that Canadian literary scholarship should continue "to move away from narrowly nationalist histories and perspectives to those that better articulate the multiple dilemmas of colonization" (226). Her challenge to her field, however, is also a challenge to the study of literature in its entirety:

> If literary studies are to take Indigenous oratures and literatures seriously without either appropriating them or segregating them into the corners of the curriculum and the margins of research, the discipline will have to consider how its borders and its methods have been formed. . . . If we cannot rethink the Romantic nationalist critical ideas that have had such a firm grip on Canadian literary studies for so long, we support continuing colonization. If we do not accept that there are other worldviews

> that we need to learn about and respect, we support continuing colonization. (38-39)

Some of Fee's observations pertain to disciplinary custom—"oral tradition is generally the province of anthropology rather than literature departments" (184)—while others concern scholarly style:

> Many Indigenous intellectuals use stories —often funny stories—to convey their truths, a practice that allows them to avoid the lack of respect embedded in the conventions and genres of academic writing. For example, academic writing often constructs a small group of specialists as its audience, avoids expressions of humility or uncertainty, and conceals the author's own position and experience while criticizing others to the last detail. And it avoids humour like the plague, tending toward the pompous and the pedantic. (223)

It follows that "[t]he decolonization of Canadian literature will require a new genre of academic writing, one that signals its acknowledgement not only of emerging from Indigenous land, but also of learning from Indigenous storied thinking" (223).

Diversity in modes of expression is to be welcomed, but perhaps the confrontation that Fee sees as inherent in academic writing is only a travesty of intellectual curiosity, albeit one that is too much with us: knowledge has always been attained through dialogue as well as discord. Literary criticism, its roots in philology, can proceed from the love of language and ideas, and although it begins with solitary imaginative encounters with works of literature, it can be pursued for the common good. Fee often professes her hope that scholarship will affect public discourse and governmental policies and that her critical labours will contribute to reconciliation. But such ambitions, unquestionably laudable, give pause. Literary criticism stands at a distance from the pragmatic and the public, and it may be that the most brilliant criticism, the commentary most like literature itself, is the farthest removed from those realms: criticism that aspires to the condition of poetry tends to be personal, passionate, and without end. "The kind of problem that literature raises," Northrop Frye wrote, "is not the kind that you ever 'solve'" (1). As the discipline is broadened and reshaped, the ardour and modesty at its heart could be retained. To teach literature is first to ask (and to inspire) students to see the delights and enigmas that reside in literary language. When I teach the works of Indigenous orators and writers, I strive to show where pleasures, mysteries, and sorrows reside, even as I must admit that I cannot claim such works as my cultural inheritance.[10] A stranger, an eternal beginner, I tread lightly. Yet as Fee knows, works of literature in all linguistic traditions teach of dilemmas and doubts, and common ground may be seen, if we care to look, in the unlikeliest of circumstances.

Jean Barman closes *French Canadians, Furs, and Indigenous Women in the Making of the Pacific Northwest* (2014) by asserting the historian's imaginative power: "If it is impossible to alter the course of events as they unfolded, it is not beyond our capacity to view the past more inclusively than we have tended to do" (336). Her study offers an original interpretation of the Pacific Northwest in the period from 1793, the year of Alexander Mackenzie's overland crossing from Fort Chipewyan to the Pacific, to 1858, "when the last part of the region acquired external governance" (318)—that is, when mainland British Columbia became a separate colony, the border at the forty-ninth parallel having been established by the Oregon Treaty of 1846. During this time, 1,240 French Canadians came to the Northwest under the auspices of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company; they "sustained the Pacific Northwest fur economy for a good half century" (221). They did not all remain

in the region, but collectively they were a formidable presence: "Without them," and without the political sway of the HBC, "the United States would today almost certainly extend north through Alaska, which the Americans purchased from Russia in 1867. The Canadian province of British Columbia would not have come into existence, and Canada would have no Pacific shoreline" (193-94). Barman contends that the formative role of French Canadians in settlement and social life has been ignored by regional historians. The city of Quesnel in the Cariboo owes its name to Jules Maurice Quesnel, a young *Montréalais* who accompanied Simon Fraser on the expedition of 1808, but the toponym and others like it only hint at the rich history that Barman surveys.

Her corrective account emphasizes the complexity of individual lives and the relations among denizens of past times. "Once we attend to the backstories of the past as opposed to limiting ourselves to the headlines," she writes, "we uncover in the Pacific Northwest lives having major influence on the course of events" (7). Barman's Northwest is populated by settlers and Indigenous people engaged in a variety of pursuits; family life and the labours of women are recounted in addition to the work of navigation, trade, agriculture, and administration. Her region is also utterly diverse, a multilingual world inhabited not simply by Canadians and Americans, as the modern international border implies, but by Kalapuya and Tillamook people, Chehalis and Nisqually, Saanich and Songhees, Pend d'Oreille and Spokane, and by arrivals of sundry origins who were met with the gamut of responses. A detailed portrait is drawn of a social world in flux. "Colonialism came late and gradually to the Pacific Northwest" (4), Barman observes, and although its devastation and miseries cannot be overstated, she shows that interactions between people were always varied. Marriage and other partnerships between French Canadian men and Indigenous women are treated at length despite historiographical barriers to the outlooks of the people themselves, including "the illiteracy of women and of almost all the French Canadians in their lives" (116). If French Canadians "eased relations with [I]ndigenous peoples" in the Pacific Northwest (318), the children of French Canadian men and Indigenous women faced a changing and challenging world: "Newcomer men, and virtually all women, took male superiority for granted. The self-assurance of persons perceiving their skin tones as white was morphing into a racism viral in its self-assurance, which then rebounded on all others, including [I]ndigenous peoples" (258). By the late nineteenth century, "[r]eciprocal relations between newcomers and [I]ndigenous peoples, to the extent they existed earlier, had long since soured" (291). The British colonial system restructured and polarized social arrangements in the Northwest. Nonetheless colonization before and after 1858 occurred, as Barman demonstrates, not as an abstraction but instead through particular encounters and actions that historians can describe and interpret; it was implemented, enacted, endured, and resisted by actual people.

Barman's methods lead to novel and bracing conclusions. Her study of the *Making of the Pacific Northwest* supplements her many contributions to regional history, both general, as in *The West beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (1991, 1996, 2007), and specialized.[11] The scholarship will be useful to historians and other commentators as a source of information. The biographical sketches of French Canadians from Joseph Allard to Louis Vivet, for example, form a tremendous resource. The greater significance, however, lies in Barman's ambition "to face up to the complexities of the past" so that the present will be understood with nuance and precision (325). As Fee and Barman both suggest, historians and literary

critics must attend to texts, lives, and phenomena in their specific and manifold incarnations, and to the contradictions and paradoxes that arise. The aim is not simply to revel in uncertainty but instead to recognize the paths that have led us here, and to find the right roads out of dark woods.

NOTES

1 *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*, the *Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, was released in June 2015; the complete *Report* appeared in December. A multi-volume edition of the mammoth *Report* has been published, in both official languages, by McGill-Queen's University Press. The University of Manitoba Press meanwhile has prepared *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (2016), a volume based on two reports of the TRC—*What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation* and *Calls to Action* (both 2015). Although the *Report* and the change of government were coincident, the Commission was created during the previous administration: the TRC was established on June 1, 2008, and the Statement of Apology to former students of Indian Residential Schools was read in Parliament on June 11, 2008.

2 The abuses enumerated in the *Report*, which must test divine mercy, bring to mind an older sense of the term *reconciliation*: to be restored to God's favour.

3 The *Report* thus bears comparison to such reconsiderations of Canadian history and identity as *A Fair Country: Telling Truths about Canada* (2008), by John Ralston Saul, and *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* (2012), by Thomas King.

4 The phrase "cultural genocide" recurs in *The Unjust Society* (139, 161), but despite his furious tone, Cardinal expressed a liberal view of national accord not wholly unlike that of the government: "The vast majority of our people are committed to the concept of Canadian unity and to the concept of participation in that unity. . . . More truly than it can be said of anyone else, it is upon this land that our heritage, our past and our identity originates" (12).

5 Cardinal possessed a biting wit. His portrayal of Chrétien and Robert Andras as Hollywood cowboys was devastatingly clever: "the two novice ministers hitting the consultation trail like John Wayne and Gary Cooper to discover which path the Indians wanted to follow" (121).

6 For example: *Calder et al. v. Attorney General of British Columbia* (1973), *R. v. Sparrow* (1990), *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* (1997), *Haida Nation v. British Columbia* (2004), *Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia* (2014).

7 "It seems paradoxical," Fee writes elsewhere, "that reconciliation will be managed as a bureaucratic and state-run process, the same process that caused the problem in the first place" ("Truth" 8).

8 "Essay": "a white 'literary land claim,' analogous to the historical territorial take-over" (Fee, "Romantic" 17). The subtitle of *Literary Land Claims* resembles that of Paul Tennant's *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849–1989* (1990), which, although much has occurred since 1989, remains a useful regional companion to Fee's study. Tennant's final two chapters, "Aboriginal Title in the Courts" and "The Province and Land Claims Negotiations, 1976–89," are especially relevant.

9 Fee was the editor of *Canadian Literature* from 2007 to 2015. Several articles on subjects related to those of *Literary Land Claims* appeared in the journal during her tenure, including essays on Duncan Campbell Scott by Sarah Krotz (#204 [2010]) and a response by Niigonwedom James Sinclair (#203 [2009]) to the egregious claims made by Frances Widdowson and Albert Howard in *Disrobing the Aboriginal Industry: The Deception behind Indigenous Cultural Preservation* (2008). *Canadian Literature* 215 (2012) was a special issue: "Indigenous Focus."

10 Fee, who has taught Indigenous literatures since 1985 (*Literary* 19), observes the difficulty of her position as a cultural outsider: "This book, like all books by non-Indigenous people about Indigenous issues, negotiates . . . problematic ethical ground" (37). Scepticism and even mistrust come with the territory, but such reactions are salutary reminders that humility is a prerequisite of teaching and scholarship.

11 An emphasis on women's lives is also seen for instance in *Good Intentions Gone Awry: Emma Crosby and the Methodist Mission on the Northwest Coast* (2006), by Barman and Jan Hare.

WORKS CITED

Barman, Jean. *French Canadians, Furs, and Indigenous Women in the Making of the Pacific Northwest.* Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 2014. Print.

—. *The West beyond the West: A History of British*

Columbia. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1991. Print.
—. *The West beyond the West: A History of British Columbia.* 2nd ed. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1996. Print.
—. *The West beyond the West: A History of British Columbia.* 3rd ed. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2007. Print.
Cardinal, Harold. *The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canada's Indians*. Edmonton: Hurtig, 1969. Print.
Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy, 1969*. Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1969. Print.
Fee, Margery. "English-Canadian Literary Criticism 1890-1950: Defining and Establishing a National Literature." PhD Thesis. U of Toronto, 1981. *TSpace*. Web. 4 Oct. 2016.
—. *Literary Land Claims: The "Indian Land Question" from Pontiac's War to Attawapiskat.* Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2015. Print.
—. "Romantic Nationalism and the Image of Native People in Contemporary English-Canadian Literature." *The Native in Literature: Canadian and Comparative Perspectives.* Ed. Thomas King, Cheryl Calver, and Helen Hoy. Toronto: ECW, 1987. 15-33. Print.
—. "The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada." Editorial. *Canadian Literature* 215 (2012): 6-10. Print.
Fontaine, Phil, Aimée Craft, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.* Winnipeg: U of Manitoba P, 2015. Print.
Frye, Northrop. *The Educated Imagination*. Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1963. Print.
Hare, Jan, and Jean Barman. *Good Intentions Gone Awry: Emma Crosby and the Methodist Mission on the Northwest Coast*. Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 2006. Print.
King, Thomas. *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America*. Toronto: Doubleday, 2012. Print.
Krotz, Sarah. "Shadows of Indian Title: The Territorial Underpinnings of 'The Height of Land.'" *Canadian Literature* 204 (2010): 85-101. Print.
Saul, John Ralston. *A Fair Country: Telling Truths about Canada*. Toronto: Viking, 2008. Print.
Sinclair, Niigonwedom James. "Inks of Knowledge, Permanence, and Collectivity: A Response to *Disrobing the Aboriginal Industry*." *Canadian Literature* 203 (2009): 196-200. Print.
Tennant, Paul. *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849–1989*. Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 1990. Print.
Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. "Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action." *National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.* U of Manitoba, 2015. Web. 11 Oct. 2016.
—. *Reconciliation*. Vol. 6 of *Canada's Residential Schools: The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2015. Print.
—. "What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation." *National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.* U of Manitoba, 2015. Web. 11 Oct. 2016.

Forum

Asian Canadian Critique Forum

Introduced by Christopher Lee and Christine Kim

In assembling this forum, we sought to explore how and why we do Asian Canadian studies. We asked our contributors to discuss their relationships to Asian Canadian critique, how their particular locations inform their approaches to diaspora studies, and their views on pedagogy. Contributors were encouraged to use these questions as launching points into a conversation about reimagining Asian Canadian studies rather than as a checklist. Their responses move between personal, professional, and intellectual registers and reflect the ongoing commitments and debates that have underscored the field. They also remind us of the ways in which our methodologies are shaped by particular narratives of Asian Canadian studies.

Inside/out the Field: The Asian Canlit Imaginary

Smaro Kamboureli

This is my fourth attempt to write about my "engagement with Asian Canadian critique." Each time I tried to address it, I stumbled on the problem of origins, a spectral figure stalling me. You see, I could not help but hear this invitation as one that calls upon history, that demands a kind of recuperative or archivist approach, initiating a return to an originary moment: my encounter with "Asian Canadian critique." Intimations of "first contact."

But what constitutes "Asian Canadian critique" in this context, I wondered. Does it include only critical discourses or does it posit "critique" as an assemblage of the literary—the literary as critique—and the critical? Was I approached as an insider or an outsider to the field? (The guest editors' invitation referred to "experts" in the field, those who are in "conversation" with it, and those who stand "outside" it.) Who had drawn these lines, this compartmentalization of critical discourse? Why delineate the field's terrain in such terms? Was my narrative supposed to be about the field's emergence or about my own emergence within the field? There was, I felt, an *après-coup* element at play, echoes of belatedness (a recurring motif in the field), this time my own belatedness in relation to "Asian Canadian critique." For how could I have engaged with it if it hadn't already pre-existed my encounter with it, at least with one manifestation of its diverse materialities?

Assuming—wrongly so perhaps—that this forum was an invitation to summon up memories, I recalled the late 1970s: the time I arrived in Canada (the diasporic subject seems to be inexorably marked by belatedness), but also a time that coincided with the beginnings of the Japanese Canadian Redress movement: Roy Miki's frequent visits to Winnipeg where I lived at the time—listening to him talk about the

Internment, a shocking revelation for this brand New Canadian, and the challenges of the redress process; visiting Ste. Agathe where his family was forced to relocate, his mother pregnant with him, and finding the house where they lived. I remembered meeting Roy Kiyooka during my first visit to Vancouver, reading *Transcanada Letters*, seeing and reading *StoneDGloves*, a bit later "Dear Lucy Fumi." I remembered, too, hearing Fred Wah talking about his trip to China and his coming upon the ghost of his father (it was in a train station, I think). I remembered meeting Jim Wong-chu, finding out about the Asian Canadian Writers' Workshop and subscribing to its magazine; hearing Jam Ismail reading *From Sacred Texts* (Hey, Jam, where have you been? It's been ages); reading *Yellow Peril Reconsidered*; visiting *Racy/Sexy* (I still wear the event's t-shirt, though it barely fits me now) and interviewing Henry Tsang; participating in *Inglish*, a symposium at Vancouver's Western Front (I remember walking out of one session in a huff but can't recall why); encountering Larissa Lai, Rita Wong, Hiromi Goto, Scott Toguri McFarlane, Ashok Mathur, all graduate students at the time and variously located in anti-racist and cultural work.

A range of personal and intellectual, as well as highly affective, encounters and turning points that were absolutely critical—"critical" in more ways than one—in my varied engagements with "Asian Canadian critique." These engagements have mediated and shaped as much my own diasporic subjectivity as my writing about diaspora and CanLit in general. Asian Canlit has been an integral part of my thinking about what I prefer to call Canlits.

Still, I felt stymied by this re-turn to origins until I remembered what Walter Benjamin says about origins. At the same time that he acknowledges that origin is indeed a historical category, he also disengages it from the process of genesis: origins "describe that which emerges from the process of becoming and disappearance" (45). Now things began to make some sense.

My gradual foray into what the editors of this issue might mean by "Asian Canadian critique" has followed an array of (often overlapping) trajectories. It has always involved visibility and invisibility, e.g., Roy both present and absent in that Ste. Agathe photo (sorry, Roy, for turning you into a figure of speech—metaphor and metonym at the same time), but also (in some contexts) my non-Asianness, my off-whiteness; destruction/disappearance and restoration of justice; what had/has been silenced and various processes of articulation/restitution.

Being inside *and* outside of it. In tension with it.

So, yes, I believe I can say that I have experienced Asian Canlit as a coalitional space, a site of resistance and creativity, of various practices and discourses that have reformed as much the literary landscape as the social, cultural, and institutional sites I happen to inhabit. Asian Canlit and Asian Canadian critique as a field, if you want, that is by necessity unfinished and interminable. *In flux*.

Is it possible or even desirable for Asian Canadian critique to move beyond the nation? Of course it's possible; some critical discourses have already taken it on that route. Would this be desirable? Well, that's a different kettle of fish altogether.

I've been trying to answer these questions while on the road, crossing various nation-state and cultural boundaries. From Israel to the West Bank. From the Palestinian Occupied Territories to Greece, a nation-state in economic and refugee crisis mode. From Greece to Canada, where my mother and I were invited by Rifaat and Fatma to celebrate Iftar during Ramadan with them and their four children, my extended family for over half a year now. From Canada to Chile, on a road trip that is as much about arrivals as it is about returns. I'm on this

road trip practicing and testing shadowing as a methodology, more specifically bearing witness to *Return Atacama*, Monica Martinez's collaboration with the artist collective *Constelaciones*. Monica, a Chilean Canadian artist, has taken our group to the Atacama Desert (we're in the middle of it right now actually). At various stop points, so far on long stretches of sand along the Pacific coast, she's paying homage to those who have disappeared or gone away during the Pinochet regime and his Caravan of Death by placing, and leaving behind, cross-shaped ceramic sculptures. Solid yet ephemeral (the tide may wash them away or someone may pick them up), threading together different broken narratives, they are the preamble to the *Constelaciones* collective's performance in two days, much deeper into the Atacama Desert, on the same theme, *return*: coming to terms with dis/appearance, un-belonging, grief and the celebration of perseverance, the efficacy of cross-cultural alliances.

You think I'm all over the place now, don't you? Yes, of course I am (in more ways than one). But in the course of these crossings and encounters, I have developed an embodied understanding that we do inhabit transnational spaces, often unbeknownst to us. We may inhabit them as interlopers or as subjects formed by them; as hosts or guests; as subjects in transit. Their relationality to our lives and the narratives that have shaped them often remains buried or forgotten until an image, a name, a word, a happenstance brings it back to life. (In my case, it was Allende's name and its connection to my high school years and the Greek junta, a recollection that has rescripted my role as witness [witness as a distant other] in the Atacama Desert as that of someone who has her own dues to pay in this Chilean space.)

Yet it's important to remember that the embeddedness that constitutes the transnational is not necessarily innocent; it can be as fraught as the nation's own hold on us. So I don't think we can afford to do away with the nation—and the nation-state. I think we have to remain alert to how the nation thrives by instrumentalizing us and our constitutive narratives and locations, but also to remind ourselves that it has the potential to help us resist neoliberalism and neocolonialism. As a condition that crosses over and moves through more than one (kind of) nation—nations can be independent states or lacking a state, occupied territories or colonized within states, or nominally independent but completely under the thumb of, say, the IMF or the Troika in the Euro Zone—the transnational is at once complicit with and resistant to the nation-state. Working with/in the dialectical tension between national and transnational paradigms might perhaps be the most productive way to advance Asian Canadian critique.

On Queer / Asian / Canadian Critique

Robert Diaz

For many queer diasporic communities, inclusion within institutionalized forms of national belonging are often illusive, ambivalent, and unresolved. This reality has been the vantage point from which scholars, artists, and activists have traced the contours of Asian Canadian—as a collective term and as a means of pursuing social change. By focusing on diasporic communities, Richard Fung, Shani Mootoo, Wayson Choy, Larissa Lai, Nayan Shah, and many others have convincingly foregrounded how non-normative sexualities exist within transnational circuits of intimacy, mobility, and kinship. They also highlight how queerness functions not just as an identitarian term but as a means of ethically engaging with the world. Queerness, as José Esteban Muñoz reminds us, is that "thing that tells us that the world is not enough, that indeed something is missing" (1). Queerness is

a tactic for animating performances of world-making that insist that our now is not necessarily our future. Queerness is a horizon, a utopic futurity that we sense and that we create. This horizon is made up of differently situated investments, gestures, pleasures, and desires culled from the debris of our past that may be reoriented, reimagined, and reactivated in unexpected ways to craft a more humane and just reality. In this regard, queerness has been an essential tool for problematizing the insidiousness of multiculturalism and settler colonialism—processes that rely on the occlusion of racist and colonial histories.

Despite such crucial interventions, however, one could argue that Asian Canadian critique has not been queer enough. It has yet to fully examine the lived realities of sexually marginalized Filipinos/as, for example. Such an oversight compartmentalizes certain queer archives within an "area studies" framework that views global south sexualities as always already foreign to Canadian culture and society. My research on LGBTQ Filipinos/as in Canada further demonstrates that the paucity of knowledge around these communities is not accidental but is in fact systemic. This absence stems from the differently situated hierarchies and material inequities that already exist within ethno-specific categories like Asian Canadian. As Roland Coloma, Ethel Tungohan, and John Paul Catungal note, Filipinos/as experience high levels of de-professionalization and disempowerment that limit their full participation in society. This absence is also a symptom of migration research that unwittingly reifies ethno- and homo-nationalistic ideals of gender, masculinity, citizenship, and cultural acceptance, most evident in studies that focus on the lack of role models for boys and men. These heteronormative tropes are reified when Filipino/a Canadian studies circulate notions of labour, leadership, and kinship which unwittingly exclude those whose lives do not fit into currently existing theoretical models or whose experiences are illegible within normalized analytical schema. Martin Manalansan has demonstrated that such heteronormative investments in transnational migration research offer a limited view of the realities that many diasporic Filipinos/as—queer and non-queer identified—face on the ground.

In order for Asian Canadian critique to be truly radical and capacious, then, we must continually question the ways in which these three terms—queer / Asian / Canadian—exist within a nationalist paradigm that functions through the continued disempowerment of certain communities and the privileging of others. We must interrogate how the terms queer / Asian / Canadian coalesce and are severed from each other, depending on the vastly different geopolitical stakes of their deployment. By acknowledging that these terms exist in critical tension, we can then pursue interdisciplinary and intersectional ways of thinking that are attentive to the machinations of marginalization, power, and privilege. This critical approach also enables us to re-evaluate the political contributions of queer of colour critique—a predominantly United States-based framework that has mapped the confluences of racialization and sexuality—from a comparative North American frame. In so doing, we can problematize narratives of national exceptionalism that erase racist, settler colonial, and homophobic histories within Canada. A reanimated queer of colour critique shifts our political concerns beyond the United States, as we understand how queers of colour in Canada have thrived and survived despite the disempowerment they face. Such a shift is needed as certain queer communities (often white and upwardly mobile) have been allowed entry into facile notions of acceptable citizenship through laws normalizing domesticity, inclusion, and tolerance. Such a shift is needed as

contemporary social movements against anti-black racism and settler colonialism in Canada continue to lay bare the state's systemic dehumanization of Black and Indigenous bodies through strategies that pit minoritized communities against each other. Such a shift is needed as we witness globalization's inequitable distribution of resources between the global north and the global south—a process that has also influenced the migration and movement of diasporic, often precarious, communities into Canada. Queer utopias are made to cross borders. The political usefulness of queer / Asian / Canadian critique thus lies in its ability to acknowledge the multiple histories that make up our relationship to Canada, as a geographic site, as an ideation, and as a point of divergence. Its radical politics lies in the stubborn insistence that although these histories inevitably assert themselves in our present, they should not be the only basis for creating and willing a future that is yet to unfold before us.

Alice Munro Country and Refugee Havens

Y-Dang Troeung

If it is now desirable for Asian Canadian critique to move beyond the nation, what does this mean for the interrogation of local genealogies of Asian Canadian identity that continue to remain invisible? I have been thinking in particular about the history of Southeast Asian refugees in small-town southwestern Ontario, a region of Canada that has for the most part been left out of discussions of Asian Canadian transnationalism, globalization, and transpacific exchange. Scholar Eric Tang has recently called for a rethinking of transnational methodology in Asian American studies by focusing on those whose migration has been produced not by economic circuits, but rather by state war and violence. Whereas Tang examines the refugee presence in spaces such as the urban hyperghetto, I'm interested in how the transnational may be accessed through the attention to the rural, and specifically to the presence of the Asian Canadian refugee in the rural.

When Alice Munro won the 2013 Nobel Prize for Literature, I couldn't help but feel a twinge of pride that a writer from the place "where I was from" had received such world recognition. Having lived the first eighteen years of my life in Goderich, Ontario, a small port town on Lake Huron (named after the Huron Indigenous people of North America), I grew up immersed in the world of Alice Munro and her stories. The town of Goderich often appears in Munro's fiction disguised as Walley, Tupperton, Tiplady, Wawanosh, or Mock Hill. Munro's stories undeniably helped inspire my deep love of literature at a young age. In the turmoil of my adolescence and the alienation I felt as one of the only Asian bodies in my small town of 7,000 people, I took refuge in her engrossing tales of family betrayal, sexual rebellion, and the strangeness of a familiar place. Hiding away reading in a corner of the only public library in town, Munro's stories carried me away to an imaginative place, and yet I felt a mixture of recognition and dissonance in how she portrayed the landscapes, rhythms, and feelings of small-town life.

One reviewer comments that Canada's "dominant author of short fiction, after all, is so identified with small-town Ontario that the rural countryside beyond Toronto is known as Alice Munro Country" (Armstrong 1). Whenever I hear the term "Alice Munro Country," I feel uneasy about the myths that it perpetuates about this region, myths of white settler inhabitance and homogeneity that make it seem frozen in time. That "Alice Munro Country" continues to be seen as an exceptional space of rural, Canadian whiteness is troubling to me.

As a former refugee from Cambodia

whose family, along with that of many other Southeast Asian refugees throughout the 1970s and 1980s, resettled in Huron County in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, I have often wondered, over the years, if my family's story would ever make it into Alice Munro's fiction. After all, she was well known for drawing inspiration from historical sources, and we made national headlines in December 1980 when Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau held a ceremony on Parliament Hill to officially welcome my family, the last of the 60,000 Southeast Asian refugees to be sponsored to Canada as a part of a special government program ("Pierre" n. pag.). Later, we made it into the history books. As one scholar notes, "St. Peter's Catholic Church in Goderich sponsored two brothers and their families in December 1980" (McLellan 38). In many small towns or villages across Huron County, from Goderich to Vanastra to Exeter, I knew other Cambodian, Lao, or Vietnamese families who had crossed the Pacific as refugees. Within our communities, stories circulated about the forms of kindness shown to us by our sponsors, as well as the cruel forms of hate and aggression against which we had to constantly steel ourselves. From the factories to the graveyards to the card parties, we established networks of local exchange and leisure to survive.

Over thirty years later, some of these families continue to reside in the county and have put down roots in the region, yet I continue to wait for their stories to be written into the national imaginary. In the literature of new writers such as Kim Thúy, Vincent Lam, Madeleine Thien, and Souvankham Thammavongsa, some of these stories have begun to emerge. On a website called *Compassionate Canada*, a group of Southeast Asian Canadians have mobilized through social media to provide testimonial accounts of a time when Canada seemed more compassionate towards incoming refugees. These days in Goderich, storefront shop signs in English and Arabic read, "Ah-I-an wan San-I-an Welcome" and "Mar-ha-bun Welcome," and I recently read a story in the town's local newspaper, the *Goderich Signal Star*, about how some members of the community had banded together to sponsor a family of Syrian refugees (Broadley n. pag.).

Alice Munro's 2012 story "Haven" is a subtle and sensitive meditation on the terror of domesticity felt by a regretful white, middle-class woman in the 1970s. I'm interested in producing a different kind of narrative about rural southwestern Ontario as a "haven," one in which the figure of the Asian Canadian refugee, past and present, is central. How have these rural havens been produced through continuous wars of empire? Which refugee affects circulate within these spaces? And what kinds of circuits and economies of exchange help sustain these refugee lifeworlds? These are some of the questions Asian Canadian critique should make room for.

Resituating Displaced/Replaced Subjects in and of Japanese Canadian History

Masumi Izumi

I am a historian by training, and have written in both English and Japanese on Japanese Canadian uprooting and incarceration from legal and historical perspectives. As I got to know the community activists and artists personally through my historical research, I learned that their political awakenings came hand in hand with their cultural and artistic explorations of identity, and that both elements were essential in the postwar reconstruction of the Japanese Canadian ethnic community. Cultural analysis based on ethnography became an important part of my research methodology in addition to archival work. I also have been trying to integrate findings

in Japanese emigration studies conducted in Japan with those in North American ethnic studies, as there is a disparity in knowledge production between these two fields. Bringing information from the other shore of the Pacific about Japanese Canadian history, I have contemplated how adding "Canadian elements" to Asian American Studies or bringing "Asian perspectives" to Asian North American Studies can induce paradigmatic changes in the ways Asian American Studies have considered issues and notions such as race, ethnicity, and citizenship. Instead of treating migration as a legacy, if we place "migration" in the centre of analysis, Asian North Americanists can elucidate how migrants strategize their moves in multiple directions, and how they are not simply subjects of state restrictions and/or controls of migration, but active agents in choosing, exploring, and even creating alternative living spaces far away from the one that they were born into.

Migration patterns and Japanese migrants' experiences were affected by the complex relationships among three empires—Japanese, British, and American—and transpacific historical studies elucidate how Japanese migrants have strived to maximize their skills, productivity, and income by choosing to live at the borderlands between those empires. Studying the emigration patterns at the micro level of home villages, we are finding that geographic locations and economic/class backgrounds affect Japanese emigrants' destinations as well as the occupations they choose in the destinations. Canada, for example, became a destination for better-off emigrants from Shiga, who had advantages over others in terms of cultural as well as economic capital in their homeland. This explains their relative ease in achieving success on Powell Street, the major Japanese ethnic enclave in prewar Canada, and their higher rate of return migration. The confiscation of property during World War II was all the more devastating for Japanese Canadians because many of them had achieved stable lives before Pearl Harbor.

In the past couple of years, various people contacted me regarding Japanese Canadian history and returnees/deportees to Japan from Canada. A couple of them were returnees/deportees themselves, several were families and descendants of such people, and others were academics, including those involved in the Landscape of Injustice, a Canada-based multidisciplinary research project on the confiscation and property losses of Japanese Canadians during World War II. The sudden rise in interest in Japanese Canadian history in Japan is partly due to the publication of a novel, a comic, and a spin-off fictional film, *The Vancouver Asahi* (2014), based on the story of a prewar Japanese Canadian star baseball team. Even though the film did not achieve box office success, the production connected people related to Asahi through blood ties and academic interests who never knew each other before.

There are two things I would like to do in my research on Japanese Canadians in the next couple of years. One is an urgent endeavour of collecting oral history and preserving historical materials such as documents, letters, and photos stored in the houses of the returnees/deportees. Their experiences, unless interviewed now, will be lost as the migrant generation passes. Many of the descendants of returnees have not heard their parents' experiences of relocations, and the old photographs, letters, and artifacts will disappear before long. As the returnees were re-integrated into the Japanese society, they did not form organizations comparable to ethnic organizations in North America. This makes it difficult for researchers to locate Japanese Canadian returnees, and thus, incidents such as the Vancouver Asahi connection offer precious opportunities for discovering returnee families scattered all over Japan.

The second endeavour is to place the experiences of Japanese Canadians in the overall history of structural transitions in British Columbia regarding the land, resources, and production. In the field of Canadian literature, connections have been made between Asian, Asian Canadian, and Indigenous experiences at textual levels by authors such as Joy Kogawa and Ruth Ozeki. While sympathetic relationalities can be more easily drawn in literary texts, analyses in empirical academic fields such as history and ethnic studies might reveal conflicting interests among minorities and Indigenous communities, as exemplified in the heated debates concerning similar issues in Hawaii. However, in the February 2016 special issue of *Amerasia Journal* entitled "Carceral States," Karen J. Leong and Myla Vicenti Carpio proposed to construct relational histories involving Asian Americans and Native Americans via the concept of the "carceral state." Such kinds of critical analyses need to be conducted on British Columbian history as well, because, as Leong and Carpio point out, relational history can be an effective tool for us to deconstruct settler colonialism and illuminate white supremacy working along with expansionist capitalism, in which different racial groups have been pitted against each other. Such illuminations are important, for not just our academic endeavours but our pursuit of social justice and peace in the face of expanding militarism and intolerance in today's world.

Possibilities of Asian/Canadian Transnationality

Lisa Yoneyama

In 2011 I left the University of California, San Diego, to join the Faculty of Arts and Science at the University of Toronto. Shortly after arriving in Canada, I participated in a commemorative event that reflected on the *Maclean's* "Too Asian" controversy. In discussing the nation-wide protest against the problematic representation of Asian students in a *Maclean's* article on Canadian universities, the participants also addressed multiple issues that ranged from the freedom of press, white supremacy, and xenophobia, to the legacies of British imperial violence (Findlay and Köhler n. pag.). Arguably, this was my first encounter with "Asian Canadian critique" in action. Before moving to Canada, I had taught Asian American studies-related courses in which we engaged the seminal works of such "Asian Canadian" intellectuals as Joy Kogawa, Richard Fung, and Henry Yu, to name a few. Yet I confess, it was only after I crossed the national border that I began to take note of their interventions as distinctly "Asian Canadian." If the distinctiveness of Canada is lost in the United States, the statements about "Asian Canadian" I frequently encounter in Canada—whether as census category, object of academic inquiry, or grounds for collective organizing—generally underscore its under-recognition. There is indeed very little institutionalization of Asian Canadian studies or Ethnic studies as an overarching academic rubric.

For me, the pedagogical challenge in this new environment was not so much posed by the lack of established space for such work. More urgently, my concern focused on how I might connect the productive challenges of emergent transnational and transpacific Asian/American inquiries to the new location's "here and now." In my own research and teaching on memory and historical justice, I have foregrounded transpacific inquiries in order to expose and challenge hegemonic Cold War institutional arrangements and epistemologies. At the same time, I have cautioned myself not to treat Asian/Americans as an analogical equivalent to Asian/Canadians. As Iyko Day has compellingly demonstrated, Canada has a distinct racial formation that

is also punctuated by the long history of Indigenous activism. Whenever a critique travels from one location to another, we need to exercise utmost care in attending to the critique's situatedness in its geohistorical specificities.

In the United States, "Asian Americans" emerged as a product of the US juridico-political apparatuses that define and regiment the nation through racialized knowledge, surveillance, incarceration, and selective inclusion. It has no intrinsic relation to the imagined geography of Asia. Moreover, the viability of "Asian" as an identificatory category has been contested from within. Still, the enunciation of "Asian Americans" as racialized pan-ethnicity, as opposed to discretely compartmentalized ethno-nationality, has often proven vital for political mobilization against State violence. It seems to me that Canada's political reality—in which state-sanctioned multicultural and humanitarian nationalism are supplemented by the ethno-nationalisms of different diasporic and migrant populations—has made it especially difficult for many of my students to articulate a sustained critique from the position of "Asian Canadians."

Asian American studies emerged out of the internationally politicized moment of anti-Vietnam War protests. As such, it has called on the genealogies of US military violence that continue to haunt knowledges about Asia and diasporic memories. Yet in the process of disciplinary formation, Asian American studies was severed from Asian studies and institutionalized as a single-national, civil-rights model of academic inquiry, while Asian studies remained a site of knowledge production that facilitates US Cold War policies. What became lost in the disciplinary divide was the US military-security presence in Asia and the Pacific Islands. The recent move to transnationalize Asian American studies has posed critical challenges to such disciplinary boundaries. It conjured up memories of violence that were foundational to the field. Transpacific critique that connects Asian/American inquiries to Pacific Islands studies, moreover, has illuminated the interimperial colonial legacies in the region, where newly "liberated" regions emerged after the Japanese empire's collapse only to quickly come under the military supremacy of the Cold War US liberal empire. The interface between inter-Asia cultural studies and transnational Asian/American critique has furthermore questioned the uneven capitalist development in the region. If Asian/Canadian critique were to be critically intersected with transpacific Asian/American critique, this might open up a way to relearn how Canada as a subimperial nation has been deeply implicated in the transpacific Cold War order.

Transnationality as a critical analytic suggests that transformative knowledges about any given cultural production or social process cannot be effectively generated without attending to the historical sedimentation of conquest, colonialism, imperialism, and globalization. Clearly, the concept is implicated in the demands of globalized capital. At the same time, insofar as transnationality points to capital's transgressive nature, it also indexes the limits of the nation-state's ability to regiment its population through managing normative identities and the authenticity of belonging. Transnationality in this sense refers to the excess elements that threaten to unsettle the discourse and institutions centring on nation-states.

To the extent that transnationality is a critical epistemology borne out of colonial-modern histories, and once transnationality is grasped as a *longue durée,* we will begin to see that there is no text, historical event, or social identity that is not transnational. This will lead us to pose the following questions: what power is at play in the occlusion of transnational histories? What are the mechanisms whereby our sociality, cultural

practices, and histories are made to appear solely national even in the diaspora? Which memories are erased in the production of nationalized knowledge and in what ways do they haunt and unsettle neatly defined national contours? Asking these questions may potentially unravel the habitual forces that have made us see our histories as separate, exceptional, and indeed exclusively national. A distinctly fertile ground for such a transnational inquiry, the geohistorical location of "Asian Canadian" can shed light on the often disavowed, yet shared and deeply interconnected genealogies of violence, which are constitutive of the world we live in.

Transnationalism Within

Iyko Day

My engagement with Asian Canadian critique began when I was an English major at the University of Calgary in the 1990s. There I had the good fortune of taking a course with Fred Wah called "Disjunctive Poetics," which had a profound impact on me. His class opened my eyes to the intersection of racial, cultural politics, and aesthetic experiment. I eventually wrote an undergraduate thesis on his *Diamond Grill* and went on to Dalhousie University to write a Master's thesis on the critical reception of Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*. From there, like others who sought a way to concentrate on Asian Canadian studies when the field was virtually nonexistent, I ended up in the US studying Asian Canadian cultural production under the support and guidance of Asian Americanists. I remember the first sentence of my SSHRC proposal was "Asian Canadian literature is almost a subject." Working through the experience of being Asian Canadian in Asian America, I gravitated toward comparative examinations of Asian Canadian and Asian American cultural politics, as well as comparative racial formation in the US and Canada. Ultimately, this led me to explore the transnational intersection of settler colonialism, Indigeneity, and Asian racialization in North America.

As I attempt to demonstrate in my own work, I think it can be useful for Asian Canadian critique to move beyond the nation, as long as we remain critical about what constitutes "the nation." If we don't take the Canadian nation form as axiomatic and instead privilege First Nations land and sovereignty claims, Asian Canadian critique is always already transnational. You don't have to leave the territorial boundaries of the Canadian settler state to engage in transnational politics. In my own work, I have identified more strongly with a hemispheric transnationalism than the east-west axis of more familiar approaches to transnationalism and diaspora in Asian Canadian and Asian American studies. While acknowledging the importance of east-west migratory flows, I've tried to highlight the structure of hemispheric Orientalism in a framework of settler colonialism in North America. A lot of difficult but urgent questions emerge from this standpoint. How might we approach Asian labour migration and settlement alongside the forced relocation and dispossession of Indigenous nations? How can Asian Canadian cultural politics challenge anti-immigration policy or labour exploitation while supporting First Nations' sovereignty and resistance to Canada's resource agenda? Or, how might we rethink national belonging alongside a politics of refusal of settler citizenship articulated by scholars Audra Simpson (Mohawk) and Glen Coulthard (Dene)? These are only a few questions that can animate the ways Asian Canadian critique can think beyond the settler nation.

As a professor at a small liberal arts college in the US, Asian Canadian critique has shaped my teaching in two principal ways. First, it has enabled me to complicate

the idea that Asian racialization exists "between" black and white. Drawing on an Asian Canadian context, I can demonstrate to students how parallel expressions of anti-Asian sentiment intersect but also *exceed* a US-based racial formation anchored by white supremacy and a paradigmatic anti-blackness. This is not to deny the violence of anti-blackness in Canada, but to also recognize the existential otherness of First Nations populations, and how settler colonial logics are embedded in white supremacy in North America. This helps me push students to think about Asian America in relation to both race and Indigeneity. Secondly, I regularly draw on Asian Canadian critiques of legislated multiculturalism in order to caution students from turning toward an uncritical embrace of state mandates for "tolerance," "inclusion," "equality," and "recognition." Unlike the history of Asian American cultural nationalism, which prioritized "claiming America," Asian Canadian critique was forged as a challenge to the fictive unity of the settler nation and in opposition to the mandates of liberal multiculturalism.

WORKS CITED

Armstrong, Bob. Rev. of *The Odious Child and Other Stories* by Carolyn Black; *Shag Carpet Action* by Matthew Firth; *The Reverse Cowgirl* by David Whitton. *Prairie Fire Review of Books* 12.1 (2012): 1-4. Print.

Benjamin, Walter. *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Trans. John Osborne. London: Verso, 1998. Print.

Broadley, Laura. "Goderich Ready to Welcome Syrian Refugees." *Goderich Signal Star*. 1 Feb. 2016. Web. 1 July 2016.

Compassionate Canada. Compassion International Inc. 2002. Web. 6 Sept. 2015.

Findlay, Stephanie, and Nicholas Köhler. "Too Asian: Some frosh don't want to study at an Asian university." *Maclean's*. 10 Nov. 2010. Web. 12 Jan. 2012.

Leong, Karen J., and Myla Vicenti Carpio. "Carceral Subjugations: Gila River Indian Community and Incarceration of Japanese Americans on Its Lands." *Amerasia Journal* 42.1 (2016): 103-20. Print.

McLellan, Janet. *Cambodian Refugees in Ontario: Resettlement, Religion, and Identity*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2009. Print.

Muñoz, José Esteban. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity.* New York: NYU P, 2009. Print.

Munro, Alice. "Haven." *Dear Life: Stories*. New York: Vintage, 2012. 110-32. Print.

"Pierre Elliott Trudeau Welcomes Cambodian Refugees in 1980." *CBC News*. 8 Dec. 1980. Web. 9 Dec. 2015.

Scrivener, Leslie. "Where Alice Munro Found Her Stories." *Toronto Star* 20 Oct. 2013. Web. 1 July 2016.

Tang, Eric. *Unsettled: Cambodian Refugees in the NYC Hyperghetto*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2015. Print.

ACADEMIC/LITERARY PUBLISHER?

Let us take a load off your mind

At Hignell Book Printing, we have been working with some of the best literary journals in Canada ... for over 10 decades

Our team has the knowledge and experience to do it all for you.

*Book printing and manufacturing * offprints*
*sub card insertion * mail preparation*
*poly-bagging * shrink wrapping*

We love our planet — FSC Certified

488 Burnell Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3G 2B4

Dave Friesen
1-204-784-1049
dave@hignell.mb.ca

http://www.hignell.mb.ca

MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE ...
ONE BOOK AT A TIME

Contributors

Editorial, Articles, Opinions and Notes, & Forum

Guy **Beauregard** is Professor at the National Taiwan University and a collaborating member of the SIAAS collective. Over the past decade, his work has appeared in *Amerasia Journal*, *Canadian Literature*, *Concentric*, *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, *Studies in Canadian Literature*, *Tamkang Review*, and *West Coast Line*.

Nicholas **Bradley** is Associate Professor in the Department of English at the University of Victoria. He is the editor of *We Go Far Back in Time: The Letters of Earle Birney and Al Purdy, 1947–1987* (2014), the co-editor of *Greening the Maple: Canadian Ecocriticism in Context* (2013), and the author of numerous reviews and essays on aspects of Canadian literature.

Iyko **Day** is Associate Professor of English and Critical Social Thought at Mount Holyoke College. Her research focuses on the intersection of Asian racialization, Indigeneity, and settler colonialism in North America. Her book, *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism*, retheorizes the history and logic of settler colonialism by examining its intersection with capitalism and the racialization of Asian immigrants in Canada and the United States.

Robert **Diaz** is Assistant Professor of Women and Gender Studies at the University of Toronto. His activism, teaching, and scholarship contribute to Sexuality, Filipino, Transpacific, and Postcolonial Studies. With Marissa Largo and Fritz Pino, he is co-editing *Diasporic Intimacies: Queer Filipinos/as and Canadian Imaginaries* (forthcoming), which is the first collection to bring artists, scholars, and community workers together to examine queer Filipinos/as in Canadian culture and society.

Donald **Goellnicht** is Professor in the Department of English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University, where he teaches Asian North American literature and culture with a focus on critical race studies, diaspora and transnational studies, and gender and queer studies. His recent publications include a special issue of *Modern Fiction Studies*, co-edited with Stephen Sohn and Paul Lai, on "Theorizing Asian American Fiction."

Masumi **Izumi** is Professor of North American Studies at the Faculty of Global and Regional Studies, Doshisha University, in Kyoto, Japan. She researches about Japanese American and Japanese Canadian wartime experiences and cultural as well as political revitalization of post-internment ethnic Japanese communities. Her dissertation, "Japanese American Internment and the Emergency Detention Act (Title II of the Internal Security Act of 1950), 1941-1971: Balancing Internal Security and Civil Liberties in the United States," was subsequently published as a book in Japan by Akashi Shoten.

Smaro **Kamboureli** is Professor of English and holds the Avie Bennet Chair in Canadian Literature at the University of Toronto. Before joining the University of Toronto, she taught at the School of English and Theatre Studies at the University of Guelph, where she was Canada Research Chair (CRC) Tier 1 in Critical Studies in Canadian Literature

and the founder and director of the TransCanada Institute. Her recent publications include *Writing the Foreign in Canadian Literature and Humanitarian Narratives*, a *University of Toronto Quarterly* special issue that she guest-edited, and *Critical Collaborations: Indigeneity, Diaspora, and Ecology in Canadian Literary Studies* (co-edited with Christyl Verduyn).

Christine **Kim** is Associate Professor of English at Simon Fraser University. She specializes in Asian North American literature and theory, diaspora studies, and cultural studies. She is the author of *The Minor Intimacies of Race* (2016) and co-editor of *Cultural Grammars of Nation, Diaspora, and Indigeneity in Canada* (2012). Currently, she is working on an SSHRC-funded book-length project on representations of North Korea, cultural fantasies, and Cold War legacies.

Christopher **Lee** is Associate Professor of English at the University of British Columbia, where he is the director of the Asian Canadian and Asian Migration Studies Program. He is the author of *The Semblance of Identity: Aesthetic Mediation in Asian American Literature* (2012). His current research focuses on literary thought in the Chinese diaspora during the Cold War and the cultural politics of Chinese Canadian historical fiction.

Helen Hok-Sze **Leung** is Associate Professor of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies at Simon Fraser University. During 2015-2016, she is a visiting scholar at the University of Melbourne. Her books include *Undercurrents: Queer Culture and Postcolonial Hong Kong* and *Farewell My Concubine: A Queer Film Classic*.

Malissa **Phung** completed her PhD in the Department of English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University. Her dissertation examines representations of Chinese labour and exclusion under the framework of Asian-Indigenous relationality. While she currently lives and works on the territories of the Neutral, Wendat, Haudenosaunee, and Mississauga peoples, she was born and raised on the territories of the Cree, Blackfoot, Métis, and Nakado peoples, where her family migrated as Sino-Vietnamese refugees.

Y-Dang **Troeung** is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at City University of Hong Kong, where she researches and teaches in the fields of Asian and Asian diasporic literature in English, film studies, human rights, and cultural studies. Her current project is a study of refugee aesthetics and the afterlife of the Cambodian genocide. Her publications can be found in the journals *Concentric*, *ARIEL*, *MELUS*, *University of Toronto Quarterly*, *Interventions*, *Canadian Literature*, and *Modern Fiction Studies*.

Jenny Heijun **Wills** is Associate Professor of English at the University of Winnipeg where she teaches ethnic American literature, and in particular, Asian/American literature. She is currently working on a project about (anti-)essentialism, race, and ancestry in the post-human genome era.

Lisa **Yoneyama** is Professor at the University of Toronto. Her book publications include: *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory* (1999); a co-edited volume, *Perilous Memories: Asia-Pacific War(s)* (2001); *Bōryoku, sensō, ridoresu* (2003); and *Cold War Ruins: Transpacific Critique of American Justice and Japanese War Crimes* (2016).

Timothy **Yu** is Associate Professor of English and Asian American Studies and Director of the Asian American Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is the author of *Race and the Avant-Garde: Experimental and Asian American Poetry Since 1965* and of a poetry collection, *100 Chinese Silences*.

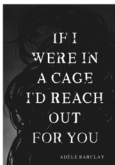
Poems

Kim **Fu** lives in Vancouver. Jim **Johnstone**, Julie Anne **Joosten**, and John **Reibetanz** live in Toronto. Nathaniel G. **Moore** lives in Madeira Park, British Columbia. Corals **Zheng** lives in North York, Ontario.

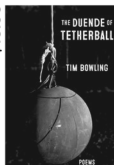
Reviews

Guy **Beauregard** teaches at National Taiwan University. Liza **Bolen** teaches at the University of British Columbia. Natalee **Caple** teaches at Brock University. François-Emmanuël **Boucher** teaches at the Collège militaire royal du Canada. Kit **Dobson** teaches at Mount Royal University. David **Eso** lives in Calgary. Alicia **Fahey**, Stephanie L. **Lu**, and Laura **Ritland** live in Vancouver. Alana **Fletcher** teaches at the Université de Sherbrooke. Louis-Serge **Gill** lives in Trois-Rivières, Quebec. Daniel **Laforest** teaches at the University of Alberta. Dorothy F. **Lane** teaches at the University of Regina. Maude **Lapierre** lives in Montreal. Evelyne **Ledoux-Beaugrand** teaches at the Université de Gand. Sarah **MacKenzie** lives in Ottawa. Krzysztof **Majer** teaches at the University of Lodz. Niall **McArdle** lives in Eganville, Ontario. Robin **McGrath** lives in Goose Bay, Newfoundland and Labrador. Catherine **Owen** lives in New Westminster, British Columbia. Olivia **Pellegrino**, Dani **Spinosa**, and Christina **Turner** live in Toronto. Shelley **Scott** teaches at the University of Lethbridge. Hilary **Turner** teaches at the University of the Fraser Valley. Eleanor **Ty** teaches at Wilfrid Laurier University. Sylvie **Vranckx** lives in Brussels. Ziyan **Yang** lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

NIGHTWOOD EDITIONS FALL 2016
#READNIGHTWOOD

$18.95


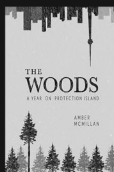
IF I WERE IN A CAGE I'D REACH OUT FOR YOU
Adèle Barclay
Traveling through time and place, these poems occupy the chasm between Canadian and American mythologies.

$18.95


THE DUENDE OF TETHERBALL
Tim Bowling
Poems that fearlessly ransack the scrutinizing role of the past on the present and the challenges and pleasures of growing older.

$18.95

WITNESS, I AM
Gregory Scofield
A collection of poems exploring themes of identity and belonging, and the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women.

$19.95


THE WOODS
Amber McMillan
A probing collection of experiences depicting what happens when you leave your life in downtown Toronto and move to a small secluded island.

$18.95

DIGSITE
Owain Nicholson
Poems with an archaeological lens, reimagining tens of thousands of years of human existence.

www.nightwoodeditions.com | @nightwooded | facebook.com/NightwoodEditions

New Poetry from MQUP

Trio
Sarah Tolmie
Paperback

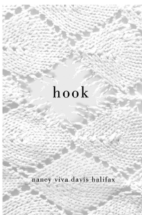
One woman. Two lovers. It's a complicated dance.
Finalist for the PAT LOWTHER AWARD, 2016

The Unlit Path Behind the House
Margo Wheaton
Paperback

"This is simply a brilliant collection of poems. Margo Wheaton is one of the finest poets to come out of the Maritimes in a generation." –David Adams Richards

Where We Live
John Reibetanz
Paperback

Our relationships with the places we inhabit and that inhabit us.

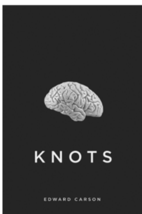


hook
nancy viva davis halifax
Paperback

Witnessed and lived experience that bridge literary and activist worlds.

Small Fires
Kelly Norah Drukker
Paperback

Poems that illustrate the stories that lie buried in landscapes and in human lives.



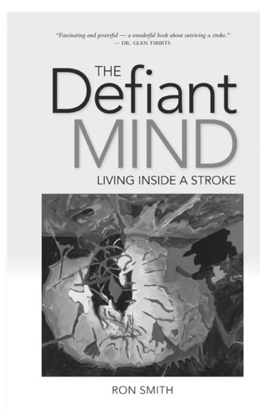
Knots
Edward Carson
Paperback

Sculpted from the persuasive mind, erratic heart, and enigmatic art of love's most devious puzzles.

McGILL-QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY PRESS
mqup.ca

Follow us on Facebook.com/McGillQueens and Twitter @Scholarmqup

New from Ronsdale Press

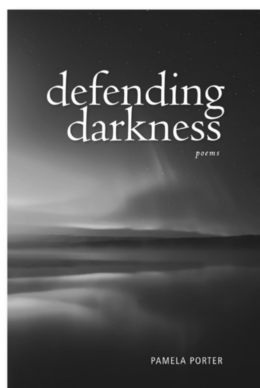


The Defiant Mind: Living Inside a Stroke

Ron Smith

Smith takes us through the carpet bombing of the brain, the frustrations of being misunderstood and written off, the barriers to treatment, the painful recovery process, and the passionate will to live.

978-1-55380-464-2 (PB) ■ $22.95 ■ 6 x 9 ■ 316 pp
978-1-55380-480-2 (HC) ■ $29.95 ■ 6 x 9 ■ 316 pp

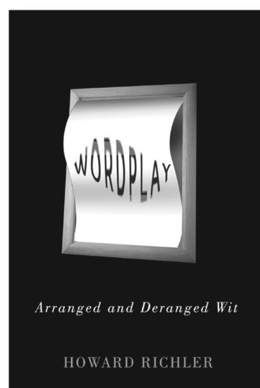


Defending Darkness

Pamela Porter

Searing and lyrical, these poems explore the wisdom in starting over and moving on while enduring adversity — with a kind of singing that can defend darkness itself.

978-1-55380-470-3 (PB)
978-1-55380-471-0 (EBOOK)
6 x 9 ■ 86 pp ■ $15.95



Wordplay: Arranged and Deranged Wit

Howard Richler

Laugh out loud as Howard Richler takes us through the unbelievably funny English language — at its most creative.

978-1-55380-452-9 (PB)
978-1-55380-453-6 (EBOOK)
6 x 9 ■ 160 pp ■ $19.95

Available at your favourite bookstore ■ Distributed by PGC/Raincoast
www.ronsdalepress.com